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EDUCATION AND CULTURE AS VESSELS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: UKRAINE AND BEYOND

Introduction

In the modern era of globalisation and hybrid warfare, forming and preserving national identity has become an urgent issue, particularly for countries with complex historical trajectories like Ukraine. Culture and education are central to shaping collective memory, values, and civic consciousness, serving as vessels for transmitting national identity from generation to generation.

Purpose

The aim of this paper is to explore how education and cultural practices in Ukraine and other countries contribute to the construction, reinforcement, and defence of national identity. A comparative perspective allows us to understand shared mechanisms and unique national approaches.

Main part

In Ukraine, culture and education have historically served as instruments of national resistance and revival. During periods of foreign domination, including tsarist and Soviet regimes, Ukrainian intellectuals, educators, and artists preserved national identity through underground schools, language preservation, folklore, and religious customs [1, p. 45]. In the post-independence period, the Ukrainian education system has undergone reforms emphasising the importance of the Ukrainian language, history, and national values in curricula [2, p. 3]. Culture has been institutionalized through museums, heritage centres, and artistic programs [3, p. 36].

Today, amid conditions of full-scale war, educational institutions in Ukraine have intensified civic education initiatives by incorporating topics such as national dignity, human rights, and historical truth into school programs. The

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine promotes the development of a new Ukrainian school that prioritises national-patriotic upbringing as one of its key values. Simultaneously, public and volunteer initiatives organise informal educational events to strengthen national awareness among youth and internally displaced persons [2, p. 6].

Digital technologies also play an increasingly significant role in shaping identity through culture and education. Ukrainian digital platforms like «Diia. Education» and virtual museum tours facilitate the dissemination of cultural knowledge and values both within the country and to the global Ukrainian diaspora. Online educational resources in Ukrainian history and culture have become essential during wartime, particularly for students and teachers in temporarily occupied or war-affected territories [2, p. 7; 3, p. 38].

International experience demonstrates that education and culture are central to a cohesive national identity. For instance, in Finland, the education system is closely tied to promoting the national language, cultural heritage, and civic responsibility. Teacher autonomy and trust in educational institutions support student engagement with national values. Japan emphasises cultural continuity in curricula through moral education and national holidays, reinforcing a collective sense of belonging without diminishing a global outlook. Canada employs multicultural education to shape a flexible yet unified national identity that respects ethnic diversity while promoting shared democratic values [4, p. 11; 5, p. 14-15; 6, p. 6].

In these examples, we observe diverse strategies: Finland and Japan rely on strong cultural continuity, while Canada emphasizes integrative multiculturalism. What unites these approaches is the intentional use of education and culture as tools for social cohesion and identity preservation.

In Ukraine, the ongoing war has intensified efforts to consolidate identity through education and culture. Schools promote civic education and historical awareness, while cultural institutions and initiatives engage with national heritage innovatively. These actions demonstrate that, beyond resilience,

education and culture serve as frameworks for long-term societal development and continuity [1, с. 58].

Conclusion

In conclusion, education and culture are essential for constructing and preserving national identity. Ukraine's experience, especially during times of crisis, highlights the role of these spheres not only in national security but also in ensuring civic integrity and democratic potential. International comparisons show that while models vary—from civic nationalism to ethnocultural preservation – each underscores the significance of education and culture in forming coherent, self-aware societies capable of facing internal and external challenges.

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