A MODEL FOR FACILITATING SUSTAINABLE TRADITIONAL CULTURE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Gunta Siliņa-Jasjukeviča  
Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy, Latvia  
guntasilina35@gmail.com

Abstract: The main objective and instrument of any development is an individual who continues and develops culture of the particular society from one generation to another. If there are no people who speak the same language, inherit and develop their cultural traditions, then the nation stops its existence as one social community and turns into a museum exhibit of human culture. Latvian regional cultural traditions display the unique relations with nature, history and other people. It fulfils the function of the world integrity so essential for human orientation and interpretation of this world, the other world and the whole universe. The objective of this article is to offer a theoretically well-grounded didactic model for facilitating sustainability of Latvian regional traditional culture in education. The discussion is based on the conceptual guidelines of an individual’s socio-ecological development. Theoretically supported regional traditional culture model in primary school is created and its most meaningful structural components are described.

Keywords: regional traditional culture, primary education, traditional culture study model.

Introduction

It is necessary to think about sustainable development not only from an economic or ecological point of view. Culture as the resource for sustainable development can be used to achieve economic, social, environmental and educational objectives. It also possesses symbolic features and meaning, which is the foundation for an individual’s cultural affiliation. Culture is an objective and an instrument at the same time.

The objective of the cultural unit in the document ‘Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030’ is to develop cultural environment for competitive national identity, creativity and regional development of our nation, formation of the sense of belonging. As the long-term activity priorities here are mentioned: political national development, comprehension of national identity, retention of our Latvian language and use of the potential of various other languages, use of cultural capital for qualitative environmental development and development of creative society in the regions, as well as involvement of society in the cultural processes (Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, 2010).

Culture gains its importance only when being applied. Multicultural reality requires from any individual very good comprehension of his/her culture. It requires preserving of the true national spirit, not only its external cover.

The latest researches show that it is a problem to ensure sustainability of Latvian regional culture in education – the existing educational materials have to be improved from the content and methodological point of view (Anspoka, Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011ab). It is necessary to have more active and purposeful cooperation in the process of transmitting traditional culture between the tradition bearer and the acquirer. Also the teachers, more than ever, need quite a lot of methodological support for the implementation of purposeful regional traditional culture learning process within various stages of school education (Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011a; 2011b).

The primary environment for acquiring one’s own culture is the family, the secondary – various social and state institutions, including schools, where any individual consolidates and learns the norms of activities, behaviour and communication. It helps to socialize and to fit in well in the particular community, ethnos and nation (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 1989; Rogoff, 2003).

What should an ideal model for traditional culture studies be like in primary schools? The model, which ensures sustainable development of traditional culture and allows to responsibly maintain the variety of Latvian regional culture for future generations?
**The aim of the study** is to provide a theoretically supported model for the promotion of sustainable regional traditional culture in the pedagogical process in primary schools.

**Methodology**

The theoretical method has been used in the research - analysis of scientific literature and documents.

**Results and discussion**

Culture as a phenomenon is not inherited biologically. It has to be taught and transferred from an individual by the method of group socialization or *inculturation*. The most intensive process of socialization takes place in one’s childhood (Rogoff, 2003; Piažē, 2002).

The process of *inculturation* helps any individual to exist and accomplish oneself within the particular culture, thus allowing to receive not only “information about cultural traditions, values, norms, symbols, realities, etiquette, fashion, styles, formal and informal spiritual authorities, prestigious activities, behaviour and communication forms, aesthetic and intellectual streams”. (Geertz, 1973, 56), but also experience the mentioned cultural expressions as personally important and valuable.

Traditional culture is a set of creations based on peoples’ traditions, the people living in a particular socio-ecological environment, where this set is recognized as their heritage, reflects identity and the general values of this community and is passed from one generation to another with some modifications.

The forms of traditional culture are language, folklore, music, dances, games, myths, rituals, customs, craft skills, architecture, etc.

Latvian regional culture forms the foundation for our national culture. In various regions of Latvia it contains differentiated content and its manifestation form, which includes our historical memory for many centuries, experience and objectives in a very concentrated way. Traditional culture is the core for an individual, kin, group, community and national identity.

According to the theoretical viewpoint of socio-ecological development about an individual as a person capable to adjust creatively to any environment, the person forms individual relationships with the particular socio-cultural environment, shows relevant behaviour and interaction with it (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 1989).

It is essential for the development of any individual to have comprehension not only about the general relations among individuals, but also relations in the particular cultural environment (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 1989; Piažē, 2002; Špona, 2006, Rogoff, 2003).

Respecting this opinion about the importance of socio-cultural environment for acquiring traditional culture, the ecological individual development concept was analysed (Bronfenbrenner, Morris, 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Baacke, 1999; Sebba, 1991; Eratuuli, Sneider, 1990). This conception helps to understand the role of various systems for the development of personalities within certain cultural environment. It also provides a possibility to notice interaction of these levels in the process of transmitting cultural traditions and sustainable development.

There are 4 important systems for individual development and activities (Bronfenbrenner, 1994):

- **microsystem** (family, primary school, where an individual situational self-feel changes into the dominating self-feel);
- **mesosystem** (extended experience provided by the family, group mates, including various skills, attitudes and knowledge);
- **exosystem** (is an environment in which the individual is indirectly involved and is external to his experience yet);
- **macrosystem** (experience of relationships between the individual and his/her socio-cultural environment. In wider meaning values, norms functioning in the society and being transferred from one generation to another generation thus influencing any individual identity). Each generation develops in a unique;
- **chronosystem** (encompasses change or consistency over time).
Diether Baacke adds to the conception of Urie Bronfenbrenner and points to the 4 important zones or factors for the development of any individual (Baacke, 1999):

- **ecologic centre**, which includes the person’s family, nearest nature and cultural environment around it.
- **the nearest ecologic space**, which includes the nearest society (neighbours, friends, classmates).
- **the nearest external contact places** and cultural environment.
- **ecological sectors** like schools, interest centres, shops, a culture house, where the person acquires good behaviour and ecologic periphery, which he/she contacts from time to time.

To the ideas included in the Ecologic conception he adds spatially objectful surroundings, time structure and intrapersonal communication or necessity for interaction between nature, cultural environment and society.

Studies where the possibilities of socio-cultural environment are applied, provide unlimited possibilities for an individual to be in contact with regional nature, cultural artefacts and the society (Sebba, 1991; Eratuuli, Sneider, 1990). All the named parts as a unity allow implementation of sustainable regional traditional culture studies.

It has been stressed in all the theories of cultural and individual development that cultural environment, society and cultural facts help any individual to form understanding of the world grounded on the associated system of values. This understanding of the world is used within the process of studies of other cultural systems, regularities and values in later stages of one’s life (Rogoff, 2003; Vigotskis, 2002).

The above mentioned facts allow us to say that the following structural components are important within the model of regional traditional culture studies:

- **spatially objectful surroundings** or the place for presenting traditional culture – **nature and socio-cultural environment**, which influences the factual and the procedure aspects of the model;
- **time structure or content of regional traditional culture (the factual part of the model)**, which has been chosen according to the calendar dates (seasonal festivities) and include also celebrations related to the changes in one’s social status (family celebrations), as well as every-day traditions.
- **intrapersonal communication**, which is reflected in **the social multiform interaction and cooperation among the teacher ↔ the student ↔ the family (the procedural part of the model)**.

Primary school children are connected to the regional nature and socio-cultural environment most of all. The cultural and natural landscape, cultural facts (home, school, natural objects, cultural and historical objects), society (family, mates, traditional folklore experts– story tellers, musicians, craftsmen), all this is unique in every area and town of Latvia. It is important to get acquainted with the environment and people who create and use this culture, in order to have the sense of belonging to the local culture, to personalise and value it.

Traditional culture is not only a list of dry facts in a study book, in a story told by a teacher or in a museum exposition. It has to be shown as a phenomenon within any pedagogical process, which is used by the society in their everyday life and celebrations.

If the content of traditional culture is included into various school subjects and its link with the local cultural environment is displayed, it creates a very positive situation for ensuring sustainability of traditional culture, as each generation activates its culture “again and again” (Bula, 2000; Rogoff, 2003).

Both, regional nature and socio-cultural environment suggest which content from the factual model should be chosen, but practice provides a real link with it. According to the theories mentioned before, the model includes several important layers (Figure 1).
Spiral layers reflects traditional culture pedagogical process in school - cultural environment of the school, student’s family, region, regional nature and cultural landscape, the particular area within the socio-cultural environment of Latvia, Latvia within the multicultural world. They are considered as a whole (Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011ab).

Figure 1. The model for regional traditional culture studies in primary school (Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011).

Educational policy of Latvia in general is oriented towards traditional cultural studies via the content of various school subjects (Anspoka, 2007, Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011ab). Acquiring of cultural heritage is included within all the primary school subjects – languages, technologies, sciences, arts, humans and society, the class lessons, so that students gain a row of necessary skills, competencies, opinions needed for their future socialization (Noteikumi par valsts.. , 2008).

The model of regional traditional culture studies emphasises inclusion of traditional culture aspects from the particular region into all of the compulsory educational areas and subjects. This is achieved by social cooperation and interaction in nature and socio-cultural environment, thus allowing gradual achievement of sustainable traditional culture for the particular area.
When implementing the factual and procedural part of the model, it is important to pay attention to the correctional, developing and educational aspects.

It means that it is necessary to saturate the content of various school subjects with plenty of factual materials. It will not only help to acquire certain facts about Latvian culture, but first of all, it will help to study the content of regional traditional culture by exploring and understanding:

- regional nature and cultural artefacts within the regional cultural area;
- contribution of the local celebrities to the development of local traditional culture;
- the characteristic social every-day habits, farming and economic traditions, craftsmanship;
- the essence of traditional seasonal festivities, celebration times, the main ritual activities, their utilitarian and symbolic meaning.
- regional folklore associated with the every-day and seasonal habits and the related traditional singing, instrumental, choreographic, language/dialect application skills (Table 1).

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<th>Appropriate educational areas for studies of traditional culture content components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Regional folklore</td>
<td>Theoretical studies and practical learning of the regional seasonal festivities and family celebrations, by using various folklore genres: folk songs, fairy-tales, legends, stories, ghost stories, riddles and puzzles, beliefs, proverbs, sayings, jokes, dances, games, etc. Focus on the ritual structure, the main ritual activities, their symbolic and utilitarian meaning.</td>
<td>Languages – Latvian language and literature. Arts – music, literature, visual arts. Humans and society - social sciences, ethics, sports. Science and technologies - housekeeping, handicraft, maths. Class lessons.</td>
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<td><strong>Latvian language/Regional language dialect</strong></td>
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<td>Gradual studies of the local language dialect by using the local folklore materials: (folk songs, folk stories, short folklore) and collaborating with families and the local society in this cognitive process.</td>
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<td><strong>Natural and cultural landscape</strong></td>
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<td>Theoretical and practical studies of the regional geographic situation and objects (rivers, lakes, mountains, ravine, caves, huge ancient boulders and ancient trees, etc.). Theoretical and practical studies of cultural and historical sites (mounds, ancient ritual sites, sacred sites, etc.) and studies of the related cultural heritage.</td>
<td>Languages– Latvian language and literature. Arts – music, literature, visual arts. Humans and society - social sciences, ethics, sports. Science and technologies - housekeeping, handicraft, maths. Class lessons.</td>
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<td><strong>Regional traditional skills</strong></td>
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According to the learning and educational theories, which emphasise the necessity of direct, immediate experience in the learning process (Dewey, 1997; Eratuuli, Sneider, 1990) and according to the theoretical guidelines which focus on the necessity of collaboration for creating positive learning environment (Anspoka, 2007; Maslo, 2006), in the procedure part of the model it is important to use the teaching methods, methodological means, learning forms, self-control and control tools, which activate and control the individual’s exploring, emotional and social activities for learning traditional culture and are oriented towards active, systematic teacher, student, family, society interaction and collaboration between each other.
The result of this model for regional traditional culture studies is an individual’s gnoseologic, axiologic, communicative and creative personality potential’s development (Eratuuli, Sneider, 1990; Sebba, 1991; Siliņa-Jasjukeviča, 2011b):

- one’s knowledge about regional nature and cultural environment, society as the bearer of traditional culture, Latvian language and the dialects, regional folklore and traditional skills,
- awareness of values based on understanding of the regional traditional culture content, its recognition and further development in the daily activities,
- capability to form one’s self-reference about the acquired traditional culture for oneself as a personally important phenomenon,
- capability to apply regional traditional culture in the daily activities in a creative way, making oneself aware of his/her own contribution to sustainable regional traditional culture development.

To facilitate the preservation of cultural heritage, it is necessary to activate the functional and symbolic meaning of cultural traditions nowadays in the opinion of culture users. Individuals who continue social life activity from one generation to other is the main aim and means of nation development.

Conclusions

- Traditional culture as the result of an individual’s creative activity is manifested both, in material and immaterial forms – the cultural environment, cultural artefacts, language and dialects, regional every-day and seasonal traditions and the related skills.
- An essential role in the promotion of sustainable Latvian regional traditional culture plays purposefully organised cultural education. To implement sustainable traditional culture studies a didactic model can be used, where the following structural components are emphasized:
  - spatially objectful surroundings or the place of traditional cultural presentation – nature and the socio-cultural environment, under influence of which the factual and procedure part of the model is being implemented.
  - the content of regional traditional culture (the factual part of model), which is selected according to the calendar events (seasonal festivities) and includes celebrations related to the changes in one’s social status (family celebrations) as well as learning of every-day traditions.
  - intrapersonal communication, which is implemented through various interactions and collaboration among teacher ↔ student ↔ family ↔ (the model’s procedure part).
- Any individual confirms regional traditional culture as an important phenomenon for oneself through gnoseologic, axiologic, communicative and creative activities.

Bibliography


