USING WALDORF PEDAGOGY 
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FORMATION OF 
SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF THE YOUTH

Z. Saliyeva
Tashkent State Pedagogical University, 103, Yusuf Hos Hojib ko'chasi, Tashkent 100100 Uzbekistan
tgpu-info@edu.uz

Abstract. Peculiar educational systems are formed in our Republic as in other countries. Most common feature of these educational systems is their inclination to free educational principle. One of the most widespread modern educational systems is Waldorf School. Waldorf schools play significant role in society. Firstly, with the development of technology and science life is getting easier yet causing spiritual impoverishment of people. This educational system can stabilize person’s spiritual world. Secondly, ecological issues are crucial today. Scientist state that the best effective way to solve these ecological problems is to influence in intellectual sphere. In this article, author clarifies the content, main directions and significance of using Waldorf pedagogy opportunities in the formation of the youth’s spiritual culture based on educational philosophy.

Keywords: youth, spiritual culture, Waldorf pedagogy, anthropology, person, educational philosophy, intellect, spiritual world.

In the modern world, education shall be seen as a process of creating world image for oneself and forming a system of person’s attitudes towards nature, other people, society and himself through imagining that person is located among culture world. Person perceives cultural values through his conscience, will, senses and knowledge; as a result, his individual creativity develops. Such individualism itself necessitates not only the heredity nature of the culture and its application but also its continuous development. Such understanding of pedagogy leads to a new paradigm – formed new values in the society in the core of which person-oriented education lies – spiritual culture that reflects and supports self-development, self-education and self-presentation of the person.

Spiritual culture is a term that reflects person’s spiritual peculiarities and features, and society’s cultural level. Moreover, this term also gives information about the educational process of society and its members, and how deep spiritual principles are imbibed in person’s behavior and image. Spiritual culture differs from “material culture” yet interrelated and is represented in uninterrupted relationship. If the term “spirituality” is used to explain the complex of all spiritual things and features – person’s creative, scientific, philosophical, legal, artistic, religious, moral and other conceptions and ideas, then spiritual culture reflects the application of these conceptions, ideas, knowledge and experience in everyday life. Spiritual culture, observed in person’s behavior can be understood as a complicated program, i.e. person gains additional experience about how to behave in this or that situation spiritually. At the same time, spiritual culture deals with person’s behavior, his ability to evaluate the reality, moral knowledge and experience, and ability to use them when necessary, and the ability to distinguish good-bad or positive-negative situations; therefore, developing single pedagogical system for the formation of students’ spiritual culture is very significant. It is known that integration process is being held in educational area as in other areas. One can easily say that this process is developing fast due to the fact that all countries are seriously approaching to this issue. At this point, it is important to study the best experiences of other countries and apply them for our state.

Nowadays, peculiar educational systems are formed in our Republic as in other countries. Most common feature of these educational systems is their inclination to free educational principle. One of the most widespread modern educational systems is Waldorf School.

Waldorf pedagogy was developed in XX century and based on an anthroposophy (anthroposophy – Lat. antropos – man and sophia – wisdom) that is a concept of human philosophy; the first Waldorf school was founded in 1919 to serve the children of employees of Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette Factory in Stuttgart,
Germany. For this reason, the name of this pedagogy is called “Steiner pedagogy” by its founder’s name R. Steiner (Quziyeva, 2007).

At present, there are more than 1000 independent Steiner schools and 2000 Steiner kindergartens throughout the world. Educational systems of many countries use Steiner pedagogy simultaneously widely and successfully (2002).

Waldorf pedagogy distinguishes three broad stages in child development, each lasting approximately seven years. The early-years education focuses on providing practical, hands-on activities and environments that encourage creative play. In the elementary school, the emphasis is on developing pupils’ artistic expression and social capacities, fostering both creative and analytical modes of understanding. Secondary education focuses on developing critical understanding and fostering idealism. Throughout, the approach stresses the role of the imagination in learning and places a strong value on integrating academic, practical and artistic pursuits.

The educational philosophy’s overarching goal is to develop free, morally responsible, and integrated individuals equipped with a high degree of social competence. Main idea of Waldorf pedagogy is the integrity of physical, spiritual and inner worlds. The founder tried to create a school where pupils can study in harmony with nature and external world.

Another peculiarity of Waldorf pedagogy is a deep analysis of every person and respect to everyone’s specific features. The doctrine tries to develop person’s strong capacities. It is highly possible, for this reason Waldorf pedagogy was limited by totalitarian regimes like Nazi. Only after World War II, Steiner schools were reopened firstly in central Europe, later throughout the world. Waldorf pedagogy simultaneously develops person physically, intellectually and morally. Main principle in organizational works – is independence. Such independence surely implies certain responsibility.

Steiner pedagogy differs from other educational systems and it has its peculiar features. The schools have a high degree of autonomy to decide how best to construct their curricula and govern themselves. There are no generally established methods, curricula or programs in Waldorf schools. Students have full freedom to select content, form and methods of educational process. Main link in the person’s development is considered culture. When one says word “culture”, everything what surrounds person is included in the word “culture”. Therefore, religion, folklore, various vocations, music, painting, theatre, other integrated knowledge about surrounding world ground the pupils’ and teachers’ activity (Ventsel, 1995).

It is known that any system limits the free movement of both pupils and a teacher because systems are designed to constrain activities within certain framework. In this sense, educational system, no matter what kind, has a tendency to teach similar things to its participants. Waldorf schools in this principle differ from other schools – they don’t constrain their students’ movement and interests. Education’s versatility is its initial point. Every pupil is treated differently based on his or her abilities and peculiarities. Steiner pedagogy won in many areas based on this approach by defining every pupil’s temperament and treating that student based on this information (Quziyeva, 2007).

Waldorf graduates are highly qualified and prepared specialists. Teachers of Waldorf schools state that the most important thing in education is the development of one’s strong abilities, creativity, and knowledge about nature and aesthetic preferences.

Teachers’ roles are very important in Waldorf schools because, they have to find ways to influence every pupil which is not an easy task. Solving such issue cannot be found in textbooks – every teacher should find this way to approach a pupil and even if he finds, he should apply and continuously correct it to find what best suits for every pupil. That’s why teachers’ responsibility is very high.

Teachers teach pupils to accept all living beings in the nature. Every student, at least once, should personally plant a seed and even bake bread. Main principle in such requirement is to show the result of pupils’ work to themselves.

According to general rules in Waldorf schools, group leader and other pedagogues do not give ready recipes to their pupils but throw a question or issue for all and try to find solution for these question altogether. Doing so, pedagogues show to pupils that it is not easy for them as well. And pupils are freed from fear of erring. Another peculiarity of Waldorf’s schools is the absence of evaluating system – there are no grades for pupils. Teachers generally use formative (qualitative) rather than summative (quantitative) assessment methods, particularly in the pre-adolescent years.
Methods, means, principles and forms are also unique in Waldorf schools. Teacher’s eloquence, natural materials, games and creative approach are main means of education. Stories, conversations, dialogues, integrated lessons and excursions are main methods and forms used in Waldorf schools (Sheyner, 1994).

Nowadays, when human factor is very important, Waldorf schools play significant role in society. Firstly, with the development of technology and science life is getting easier yet causing spiritual impoverishment of people. This educational system can stabilize person’s spiritual world. Secondly, ecological issues are crucial today. Scientist state that the best effective way to solve these ecological problems is to influence in “intellectual sphere” (noosphere). Waldorf educational system deserves attention with the fact that it has this feature as well.

References