



PAPER ID: 10A19M



## REGIONAL MODEL OF INDIGENOUS EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE SAKHA REPUBLIC (YAKUTIA)

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 14 June 2019  
Received in revised form 19  
September 2019  
Accepted 15 October 2019  
Available online 30 October  
2019

#### Keywords:

Indigenous approach;  
community; Ethnic  
culture; Ethno-pedagogy;  
Indigenous peoples;  
Small-numbered peoples  
of the North;  
Ethnocultural education;  
The Arctic; general  
education; Specifics of  
the North; Regional  
characteristics;  
Educational content;  
Indigeneity concept;  
Ethno-pedagogy;  
Indigenous education  
model; pedagogy training  
method; Indigenous main  
stages policy.

### ABSTRACT

The article considers the introduction of an indigenous approach to the learning process, with a focus on the concept of “indigeneity” and the indigenous approach. The authors defined the indigenous approach as a methodological basis for the stable development of creative ethnocultural values in the general education of indigenous peoples of the North. The study goal was to create a model of primary general education in the Arctic region based on the indigenous approach that adapts child’s personality to the extreme lifestyle and traditional culture of indigenous peoples of the North. With a scientific and theoretical substantiation of ethnocultural and ethno-pedagogical issues related to the preservation and development of original national culture of the indigenous tribes of the North within this approach, this implies creating ways for adapting a child to the seasonal climate cycle and developing his personality as a representative of the people of the North. The authors classified the basic concepts and categories of the indigenous approach from a scientific and pedagogical perspective. The core proposed concept uses training methods deeply rooted in folk pedagogy, as implemented in the Regional Model of Indigenous Education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The model aimed at the development of a person who is aware of himself as a Russian citizen, a carrier of the unique culture of his people, and who is brought up with ethnocultural educational technologies. The educational content within this model enables the younger generation to creatively master their ethnocultural values (language, literature, history, culture and spiritual heritage): traditional culture is integrated into modern educational systems, ideas, and technologies, developing educational environment and ensuring the unity and interconnection of educational institutions, family and society. This allows forming the integral of the educational ethnocultural environment in the region.

**Disciplinary:** Pedagogic/Educational Sciences, Socio-cultural Sciences, Human and Family Development (Child and Family Studies, Self-development).

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, researchers both in Russia and abroad see the indigenous approach as the main fundamental idea in the development of ethnocultural concepts and programs. The significance of the study of the indigenous approach within regional research projects is connected with the need to preserve and promote the centuries-old traditions of the peoples living in the Arctic and Russian subarctic territories in the modern conditions of the information age. In this context, bringing up the indigenous youth of the North from early childhood according to the requirements of the updated all-Russian standards of education means that it is necessary to apply an adequate methodological approach that reflects the specifics of national and regional school education. The comparison of the indigenous approach and the ethno-pedagogical theory and practice in Russian science will promote ethnocultural and ethno-pedagogical research in all regions of the Russian Federation

Modern researchers all over the world are just beginning to systematically study the phenomenon of “indigeneity”. In the last decade of the 20th century, the problem of indigenous peoples was recognized by the world community as one of the central ones. According to the United Nations, in total, there are about 370 million people belonging to the category of “indigenous peoples” in about 70 countries around the world.

Researchers became interested in the ethno-pedagogical aspects of educational systems in the late 1960s. This interest was clearly inspired by the national liberation movements of the colonial countries, as well as the formation of the American nation and the Soviet people regarding the ethnocultural diversity of these countries (Pankin, 2009; Baklanova, 2015). In his study “Ethno-pedagogy: A manual in cultural sensitivity: with techniques for improving cross-cultural teaching by fitting ethnic patterns”, Burger (1968) explores the idea of studying the ethno-pedagogical characteristics of small-numbered peoples to improve the quality of education.

In the USA, aboriginal peoples were given the right of self-determination in accordance with the Indian Education Act (1972), which established a comprehensive approach to meeting the unique needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives (Vinokourova, 2017).

David Beaulieu reviewed and assessed culturally-oriented educational programs for American Indians in the United States (2006). He concluded that learning is a socially driven activity, a sociolinguistic and semiotic network of stories and relationships. Australian Soenke Biermann notes that many students, especially among vulnerable groups, feel a growing rejection, apathy, and alienation from the education system. Indigenous children are not the only ones struggling with monocultural education. Therefore, he proposes to revise the existing models of teaching and learning, as well as to reconsider alternative pedagogies and the underlying epistemologies (Biermann, 2008). A Canadian scholar and a representative of Canadian natives, Margaret Kovacs develops transgressive pedagogy, assuming that education should serve as a way to create mutually beneficial coexistence of nations based on respect and understanding (Kovach, 2010).

In recent years, indigenous peoples have become an influential political force, and the category “indigenous peoples” is one of the most studied issues in social sciences (Chilisa, 2012; Harvey, 2002; Nogovitsin, 2018; Fasihi et al., 2019). In this research, we have analyzed how the concept of “indigeneity” is considered in the papers of Russian authors and what sciences study it.

The phenomenon of “indigeneity” in our country has been explored mainly within history, anthropology, ethnology and ethnic sociology.

In social sciences a trend for modern social development is called an “indigenous perspective”, which implies the recognition of indigenous peoples as discrete communities with certain collective interests (Yudin, 2013). The increasing attention to the economic potential of the Arctic region underlies the growing interest in the socio-economic situation of the indigenous peoples of the North in economic studies.

The issue is considered from a political point of view in the monograph of Yakut political scientist Yu. D. Petrov “Peoples of the North: Power and Politics” (1997).

This research paper is highly relevant for Russia due to several reasons (Kuropyatnik, 2006):

1. Russian social sciences and legislation recognize the existence of a special group of the population—the small-numbered peoples of the North. At the same time, these peoples insist on the recognition and legislative consolidation of their special status as indigenous people, endowed by the international community with a wider range of rights.

2. Indigenous peoples of the North are actively involved in the international movement of indigenous peoples, the activities of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), adopting the experience of aboriginal self-government in Australia, Canada, the Nordic countries, the United States and constantly appealing to the world community, including this third party in their relationships with the state.

3. There is a fundamentally new phenomenon—the transnational strategies of indigenous peoples scattered over large territories or belonging to several national states.

4. In modern Russia, the trends of “indigenization” are characteristic of various peoples and groups, which in certain social and cultural contexts define and position themselves as indigenous, filling this concept with their own meaning.

In line with the fundamental change in the political foundations of the Russian state, the thesis “The Indigenous Perspective in the Context of the Modern State Policy” names three main stages of the indigenous policy (Yudin, 2013):

1. The Imperial stage. As a rule, state did not interfere in the lives of indigenous peoples. Thanks to this policy, the natives of the North of the Russian Empire managed to preserve their ethno-cultural specifics, traditional economic structure and social organization by the beginning of the 20th century, which enabled to maintain the ethnic identity of these peoples (this can also be explained by the absence of human impact on the region since at that time industrial development of the North was not possible).

2. The Soviet stage. The thesis shows that the Soviet policy on indigenous peoples underwent quite significant changes over time: at first it was based on the principle of “uniqueness” of indigenous peoples (until the 1930s), the need to take into account and preserve their traditions, and then on the principle of “universalization”, that is, the need to assimilate them within the dominant society and to get rid of the so-called “backwardness” of indigenous peoples. The state played the main role in this process, so one can say that the policy of “state paternalism” was the dominant one.

3. The post-Soviet years and the modern stage (from 2000 until present). During the period of transformation of social relations and an abrupt transition to a market economy, indigenous peoples were in an extremely vulnerable position. The communities lost the former organizational structure imposed from above by the Soviet authorities, but they could not figure out their new role in rapidly changing political and economic conditions. Many indigenous communities experienced tremendous

difficulties, and some were on the verge of extinction during this period, which was proven by a sharp increase in unemployment, poverty and alcoholism. However, despite all this, the indigenous peoples of Russia were able to preserve their unique original identity, culture, language and traditions. During post-Soviet transformations, a new perspective on the status of indigenous peoples began to evolve. The state policy on the small-numbered peoples of the North is undergoing some changes. Currently, the main goal of the state policy on indigenous people is the development of “partnerships”.

## 2. THE THEORETICAL BASIS

Argunov (2015) laid the foundations of Indigenous Methodology in Yakutia. Tyrylgin (2017) also worked in this field. Vinokurova (2016) applied Indigenous Methodology to the Yakut culture and revealed the fundamental values of self-preservation of the Sakha people.

Indigenization trends are developing as more and more researchers are working on scientific principles that are based on indigenous values and beliefs. The latter, in turn, reflect the philosophical and religious, ethno-national tradition of a certain people (Baisheva, 2015). It is assumed that ideally, each civilization and cultural community should develop its own indigenous approach, which is the result of the collective centuries-old creativity of many generations, the expression of the interests of the majority and generates its own educational folk traditions and folk pedagogy.

Russian progressive thinkers and teachers considered the idea of nationality, history, geography of the people, their moral and spiritual creativity as the basis for educating the younger generation. In the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries, a great attention was paid to the role of national culture in educating the youth, the ideas of pedagogical regional studies, the focus on ethno-pedagogy, development and implementation of the national and regional component in the learning content, the role of family and school in forming the national culture. There are some invariant components that are the same for folk pedagogies of various nations and ethnic groups. Such constants are the national ideal of man, the means of education and upbringing (folklore, folk crafts, songs and music, customs, traditions, etc.), some aspects of training and education (nature, labor, play, etc.), methods, principles and forms of training and education (community and peer training and education, respect and love for children, the example of adults, etc.)

The founder of ethno-pedagogy, Volkov (2000) defines it as “the science of the empirical experience of ethnic groups regarding the upbringing and education of children; moral, ethical and aesthetic views on the original values of a family, clan, tribe, and nation.” Volkov believes that eternal spiritual and moral values should be regarded as the highest universal values: love for children—the cult of the child; love for the mother, turning into a cult; devotion to family and ancestral memory; hard work; love for man, for the motherland; sincerity, openness, and honesty; sense of justice, mutual tolerance, and gratitude. The scholar assumes that these values can be assimilated by comprehending the culture of other nations and other generations (Volkov, 2000).

In this regard, it is also viable to analyze how concepts “Emic” and “Etic” from Indigenous Methodology are used in ethno-pedagogical research in a textbook by Berezhnova et al. (2013).

Ethnocultural education is believed to be a significant social and educational problem, which is considered as an area of realization of human rights and peoples’ potential (Marfusaloova, 2003). Ethno-pedagogy is called the pedagogy of national salvation since it is the basis of multicultural education in the dialogue of cultures (Kozhurova, 2016).

As Mamedov (2015) rightly notes that new dimensions of capital have emerged: intellect, creativity and bright personality. For indigenous peoples, this means relying on a kind of “internal capital,” that is, Indigenous Methodology, developing a personal creative interest in the intellectual heritage and worldview of their ancestors, accumulating and incorporating them into the modern scientific and educational paradigm, vocational education programs, and spiritual values of the global civilization.

It can conclude that Russian research on the phenomenon of “indigeneity” primarily deals with the small-numbered peoples of the Russian North. Northern civilizations are unique and are of a significant interest for the whole world as they are on the verge of extinction due to globalization trends. Studying the northern regions helps understand the role of the Arctic as an international area, with cultures that are the most resilient and adapted to the extreme conditions.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this research the authors compared the current state of Russian and international developments in the field of Indigenous Methodology. The new transformative paradigm of Indigenous Methodology is aimed at enriching science with the worldview and experience of indigenous peoples—carriers of the northern culture. Indigeneity (local, aboriginal, autochthonous, endogenous, and permanent) is inherent in a certain cultural group of people united by a specific traditional lifestyle. Indigenous peoples pay special attention to the upbringing of the younger generation, in particular, the use of Indigenous Methodology as an educational paradigm (Kovach, 2010; Parkes, 2000; Porsanger, 2004; Smith, 2005).

This article authors claim that it was Indigenous Methodology that helped create ethno-pedagogy as a science in post-Soviet Russia, which is clearly manifested in the works of Volkov (2000), Afanasyev (1979), Neustroeva, and Semenova (2005). The scientific heritage of Volkov (2000) represents the embodiment of the principles, values and ideas of Indigenous Methodology. Understanding of this methodological idea makes education creative through ethnocultural potential and opens up new prospects for the development of various areas of ethno-pedagogy.

### 4. RESULTS

A significant event in the regional education system of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) occurred on May 23, 1991, when a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Yakut (Sakha) SSR approved the “Concept for the renewal and development of national schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)”. This event reflected the interconnection between the democratization of the education system and a growing role of folk pedagogy. The Law “On Education” was adopted on July 10, 1992, and on October 16, 1992—the Law “On Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)”. Practical implementation of the main provisions of these documents implied solving a range of scientific, pedagogical and organizational problems. For instance, 17 elective curricula have been developed since this year for different levels, profiles, reflecting language and ethnocultural specifics.

Schools are introducing a course on the national culture of Russians, Yakuts and the small-numbered peoples of the North. The following programs on the national Yakut culture have been developed: “Uraanhay Sakha Ogoto” (Neustroeva, 2005), “The National Culture of the Peoples of Yakutia” (Baishev, 2015), “Aiyy Teaching” (Vinokurova, 2016), “Studying Folklore in Yakut

Schools” (Nikolaev, 2019), “The Folklore of the Yakuts” (Prokopyeva, 2016), “Kyys Kuo” (Ivanova and Fedorov, 2017), “The National Culture of the Peoples of Yakutia” (Izbekova, 2018).

For many years, the Pedagogical Institute of the North-Eastern Federal University has been establishing research ethno-pedagogical schools and laboratories. Fundamental works such as “Ethno-pedagogy of non-Russian peoples of Siberia and the Far East” (Afanasyev, 1979), “Ethno-pedagogy “kut-sur” (Portnyagin, 1999), “Folk pedagogy and the modern national school” (Danilov, 1993), “Ethno-pedagogy of the Peoples of the North” (Neustroyev, 1999), “Ethno-pedagogical views of the Sakha people: on the material of Olonkho” (Baisheva, 2008), “Ethnopedagogization of the holistic process of educative upbringing (on the material of schools of the Republic of Sakha)” (Semenova, 2003) opened new directions in regional science and laid foundations for further research.

The consistent work on the introduction of ethnic culture in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) led to the emergence of new models and types of schools with a new educational indigenous content. These various options can be grouped according to the specifics of educational ideas and priorities:

- Agricultural projects with a focus on traditional types of economic activity;
- Museum projects studying local history and ethnology of the region;
- Programs developing traditional skills (satabyl);
- Language programs on teaching the native language;
- Health-saving programs restoring traditional methods in combination with modern achievements in this field.
- Sports projects creating conditions for mastering popular sports;
- Ecological projects, reviving traditional forms of environmental protection in the North.

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has accumulated positive experience of using Yakut analogues of well-known Russian educational technologies adapted for national schools that have a unique complex effect on the personality of students and take into account their ethno-psychological and ethno-pedagogical specifics. These are such programs as “Kuolaan Ueretiy” by Semenova (2005), “Satabyl” by Kondratiev (2009), “Olonkho Pedagogy” by Chekhorduna (2013), technologies of ethno-psychology and ethno-sociology in the educational process by Vinokurova (2016, 2017). However, educational technologies for rural, including nomadic, Arctic schools require further development.

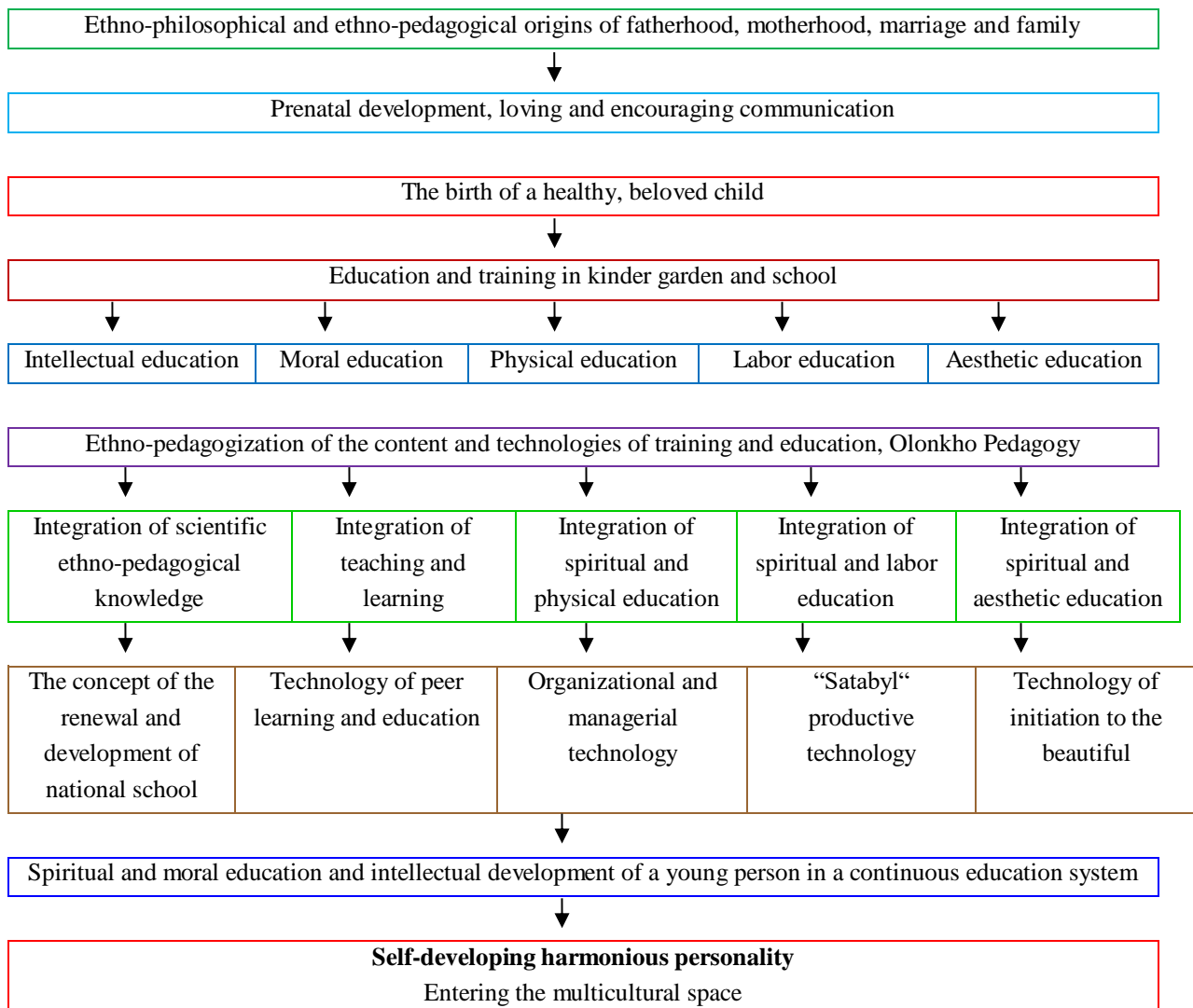
We have developed a model of how the younger generation can use the indigenous approach. The proposed model is based on the idea of applying educational technologies rooted in folk pedagogy, and thus being of great educational value, as well as the principle of the activity approach as a holistic meaningful activity of children in their everyday, life, personally important interaction and the subject-subject dialogue in a multi-ethnic environment (Semenova, 2015).

This model is mainly aimed at creating favorable conditions for educating the individual who recognizes himself as a citizen of the Russian Federation, a carrier of the unique culture of his people by means of ethno-cultural educational technologies, literature, history, culture and spiritual heritage. This includes integration of traditional cultures with modern educational systems, ideas, technologies that form the developing educational environment and ensure the unity and interrelation of educational institutions, family and society, as well as the educational integrity of ethno-cultural space in the region (Figure 1).

The indigenous approach is based on the following principles:

- 1) Ethno-pedagogical, ethno-psychological and ethno-philosophical focus of education goals and content, methods, means, and general organizational forms of students activities and learning technologies aimed at the formation of a self-developing and harmonious personality;
- 2) The activity approach in the system of everyday, life, and personally important interactions and the subject-subject dialogue of students based on cooperative learning;
- 3) Focus on the person, which implies that training is organized in accordance with abilities of an individual;
- 4) Collectivism ensuring cooperation, mutual assistance, peer learning and peer education;
- 5) Patriotism, forming the national identity of students;
- 6) Tolerance which implies recognition and respect for all parties in the educational process, regardless of their ability, social status, ethnic origin or religion;
- 7) Integration of resources and efforts of educational institutions, family, social and cultural environment.

### The Model of Indigenous Education



**Figure 1:** Model of Indigenous Education.

The indigenous approach is based on the following fundamental ideas of the educational process:

- 1) Creative and robust folk traditions are seen as the basis.

- 2) The regional and ethnic orientation of the folk traditions is further developed, which includes:
  - a. Maximum availability of education to people (opening schools that do not separate children from their parents or family, and that preserve language, culture and economic traditions adequate to their lifestyle);
  - b. Enriching the content of school subjects with local history and including regional content into textbooks and teaching aids;
  - c. Improving learning technologies according to ethno-psychological characteristics of children;
  - d. Providing training and education in students' native language.
- 3) The ethno-pedagogical environment implies the joint work of schools and public, municipal and state organizations in students' place of residence.
- 4) Learning process should be more natural, in line with the factors of natural human development in the regional conditions.

This educational approach can be successfully implemented only by preserving ethnic traditions, since psychologically the child genetically bears some behavioral stereotypes, ancestral memory, innate talents and abilities (Kozhurova, 2015).

Natural learning and upbringing is also implemented in extracurricular educational work. In addition to artistic and aesthetic functions, folklore acts as folk philosophy and folk pedagogy (Baisheva, 2015).

The method of peer learning helps deal with problems that are difficult to solve at a lesson: individualization and differentiation of the course content; the development of communication skills; independent learning-self-education-self-development-self-education-self-organization-self-management-self-evaluation-self-control; optimization and intensification of the educational process; student-centered learning; the relationship between school and family, etc. (Semenova, 2005).

In the harsh conditions of the North, economic activity was carried out by accumulating relevant experience related to the development of efficient and universal methods of activity of the nation. The essence of "Satabyl" productive technology fully corresponds to the development of activity and patriotism, as it is closely connected with life and work tradition of the peoples of Yakutia.

Next, let us consider technologies of getting familiar with aesthetics and a healthy lifestyle through the pedagogy of Olonkho epos (Chekhorduna, 2013). The main goal of spiritual, moral and aesthetic education is forming and developing the highest-level needs of the individual, spiritual revival based on traditions and culture of the native land and universal values. The spiritual symbols of Yakutia peoples are founded on the aestheticization of nature, the environment, and human relations.

The integration of physical, spiritual and moral education in physical and sports activities makes it possible to change the focus typical of the traditional educational system to the ideology which implies the self-formation of the personality, the transition from the reproductive-pedagogical paradigm to the creative-pedagogical one. This facilitates students' self-regulation and self-management of their physical, intellectual, and moral development by emphasizing such internal regulators as values, meanings, needs, and moral.

The developers of the indigenous approach to education prove that ethnocultural educational technologies can work "in a routine mode" and can become an efficient tool for developing the required universal learning skills at school and competencies in secondary vocational schools and universities.



## 5. DISCUSSION

The need for the development and implementation of indigenous education is determined by certain contradictions in modern education and ethnocultural situation:

- The population of Russia includes more than 160 nations and ethnic communities, the overwhelming majority of which are at the stage of ethnic frustration, that is, disappearance. To preserve them in the 21st century, it is necessary to adopt urgent comprehensive measures that go beyond the capabilities of institutions of pre-school and school education. This goal can be achieved by mobilizing, integrating and coordinating the resources of the whole society for preserving and developing the cultural diversity of the Russian peoples. However, the previously adopted concepts, programs, and management decisions were not effective enough and could not solve current and future problems in this area due to the lack of appropriate ethno-pedagogical technologies.

- Russia does not have a state targeted program of ethnocultural education. The introduction of normative per capita financing, a new system of teachers' pay scale does not take into account the specifics of the republican curriculum reflecting the national-regional component. The situation is particularly difficult for urban schools that teach in the languages of the peoples of the republic and offer ethno-cultural courses of academic subjects. At the same time, the educational and cultural policy of the Russian Federation implies that regions should preserve and ensure the continuity of ethno-cultural education. Consequently, the legislative and executive branches of government in Yakutia can and are obliged to regulate the issues of ethnocultural education and the cultural and pedagogical situation in the republic.

- In the context of increasing educational content and insufficiently effective learning technologies, school's focus on teaching and lack of attention to the huge potential of education; innate talents and abilities of students and the atmosphere of school life; the objective need for ethno-pedagogization of learning technologies by introducing group training sessions and the insufficient development of this problem by researchers; the need of society to familiarize the younger generation with national and human values, the national culture and traditions of the people, contrasted with the insufficient training of teachers for ethno-pedagogization of the learning process.

- Indigenous education of the peoples of Siberia, including Yakutia, reveals a noticeable reverse trend from the positions of the 1990s. Ethnocultural education is defined as an organic component of the general public education of Russia as a multi-ethnic country. Ethnocultural education is a multidimensional historical, political, social, cultural, pedagogical and organizational phenomenon, based on the creative development of a value (language and literature, history, culture, and spiritual heritage) (Nikolaeva, 2009).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Thus, an educational model aimed at the formation of a person capable of managing his own activities and his own education in line with the modern educational standards can eventually develop into a model of an educational institution of a new type, provided that the mechanisms for timely organizational, financial and resource support are developed.

The innovative nature of the indigenous approach is determined by:

- the content of the educational model based on original teaching technologies that ensure the unity of training and education, with self-developing harmonious competitive students graduating

from educational institutions, the future generation capable of maintaining ethnic security in the world;

- scientific and methodological support of ethno-pedagogization in an educational institution and preparing teachers who are able to form universal learning skills of the federal standard of general education for each student (educational module, electronic educational and methodical kit, monographs, conferences, electronic methodical resource pack of the teacher, webinars, practical experience of the leading schools);

- openness, which implies numerous forms of interaction with the social and cultural environment.

Thus, the project of the indigenous approach to regional education may be interesting for modern educational organizations and practicing teachers who want to improve the quality of training and education. According to Russian experts, ethnocultural educational models have great potential, and their active introduction is to become an important task in the near future.

## 7. DATA AND MATERIALS AVAILABILITY

Relevant information is available by contacting the corresponding author.

## 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The article was written as part of the RFBR research project Grant No. 19-013-00730.

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