

# Finno-Ugric Studies as One of the Priority Directions of Development of the Ogarev Mordovia State University

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## Abstract

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By the order of the Government of the Russian Federation #812-r of May 20, 2010, the Ogarev Mordovia State University was granted the 'Research University' category. Taking into consideration the 'Research University' status, 'Energy Saving and New Materials' and 'Fundamental and Applied Research in the Field of Finno-Ugric Studies' were identified as the priority areas for development. In order to plan, organize, conduct and analyze the complex work (of effective quality) in these areas, we believe that a draft program should be developed and discussed among the faculty of the University. This paper presents our view on the contents (theoretical and applied) of one of the variants of such a draft program.

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Keywords: Mordovian State University, Finno-Ugric Studies, Priority Directions of Development.

## 1. Introduction

*"... That is about the most important thing – the preservation and augmentation of the Russian people. No economic progress will be effective if there are very few of us."*

*(from the speech of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia at the consecration of the Church of the Kazan Icon of Mother of God on July 21, 2011, Saransk, the Republic of Mordovia) (PW 2011).*

*"... To my regret, one of the main causes of troubles of our people is the fact that during the many centuries of the history we have repeatedly pulled down the fundamental values and foundations ... breaking the connection of times and succession of generations".*

*(from the speech of the Head of the Republic of Mordovia N. I. Merkuskin at the consecration of the Church of the Kazan Icon of Mother of God on July 21, 2011, Saransk, the Republic of Mordovia) (PW 2011).*

By the order of the Government of the Russian Federation #812-r of May 20, 2010, the Ogarev Mordovia State University was granted the ‘Research University’ category. Taking into consideration the ‘Research University’ status, ‘Energy Saving and New Materials’ and ‘Fundamental and Applied Research in the Field of Finno-Ugric Studies’ were identified as the priority areas for development. In order to plan, organize, conduct and analyze the complex work (of effective quality) in these areas, we believe that a draft program should be developed and discussed among the faculty of the University. This paper presents our view on the contents (theoretical and applied) of one of the variants of such a draft program.

## **2. Mentality of the Finno-Ugric peoples**

Mentality of the Finno-Ugric peoples is regarded as the **first component** and, at the same time, as the core of the draft program ‘Priority Direction of Development (PDD-2) of the University - Fundamental and Applied Research in the Field of Finno-Ugric Studies’ (hereinafter ‘Finno-Ugric Studies’).

This component includes a number of directions. **The first direction is a scientific and research one. The goal** of this direction is to reveal the pronounced turn of the Finno-Ugric peoples for certain areas of scientific knowledge. To do this, one should determine what areas of science representatives of the peoples of the Finno-Ugric family have made the greatest contribution to, in which sciences representation of Finno-Ugric peoples is the most extensive and productive. For instance, in the 18th century, the famous Finnish botanist P. Kalm (a student of C. Linnaeus) traveled to Europe, America and Asia. These trips resulted in improvement of agriculture and forestry in Finland. Developments by P. Kalm formed the basis of the theory of forest types by A. K. Kyander. This teaching helped to rationalize forestry in Finland. Y. Ilvessalo continued the development of the predecessors and made a comprehensive study of the scientific principles of forest valuation and led the work on systematic forest inventory in Finland. P. Escala developed the doctrine of the mineral facies and helped to reveal the genesis of granite. M. Sauramo, the author of the classic book ‘Baltic Ice Lake’ made a great contribution to the Quaternary geology. During the last 100 years,

works by Finnish scientists in the field of natural science, physics, mathematics won international recognition. It should be noted, that although the given data reveal the essence of the major scientific achievements of the Finnish people, they are not comprehensive and require further additions and refinements. In particular, achievements of scientists of other nationalities and ethnic groups (e. g. Estonians, Hungarians, Karelians, etc.) of the Finno-Ugric language family should be considered.

We consider it necessary to note that the scientific world of the Finnish people (historically) has always tended to be attracted to practically oriented knowledge areas (forest science, mechanical engineering, metallurgy, etc.) as their life activities had not been connected much to fundamentality and theorization. 'Industrialization of Finland, as well as that of Russia, began with the construction of paper mills ... in the late 19th century' ... After the Second World War, Finland ... as a former ally of Germany, was forced to pay three hundred million dollars as reparations to the Soviet Union within six years. At the request of the Soviet Union quotas on the machinery, tools and products were set: wood products accounted for one third, transport, machine tools and vehicles – for another, and ships and the cables made the last third. First of all, Finland has launched production of woodworking machinery and equipment for pulp and paper industry, as well as production of locomotives, ships and icebreakers. It were these productions that subsequently became the foundation of the growth of the Finnish economy' (EOF).

**The second direction** of the first component of mentality is the **ethno-geographical** one. **The goal** of this direction is to examine geographical features and, above all, the landscape of the area of dense habitation of Finno-Ugric peoples in order to determine the specificity of their mentality through the landscape.

Landscape exerts significant influence upon the psychology, physiology, genetics, etc. of peoples; it also influences the choice of the main activities of peoples (including Finno-Ugric peoples). For instance, the geographic features of Finland are such that: '... 65% of the country's territory are forested, the aggregate volume of all forest resources is nearly 2 billion cubic meters of wood. Forests cover more than 25 million hectares of Finland, 18 million of which are forest land' (IOF).

Landscape also influences types of activities relating to services. Ecotourism is one of them. 'Ecotourism is a rather new trend in tourism business. It's prospects are quite favorable... and therefore Finland pays the development of ecotourism much attention. Its

nature [*we would say landscape – I. Vintin*] perfectly features to the development of this type of tourism, because here are a great many lakes, rich vegetation and the sea coast with healthy air' (Ecotourism).

Landscape and settlement territories of the Finno-Ugric peoples as well as other landscapes are destroyed and modified during the process of historical development connected with life and activities of people living in them, which inevitably leads to modification of the shape of the occupied territories. All this leads to changes in traditional activities the Finno-Ugric peoples were engaged in for centuries.

Thus, the landscape significantly affects the choice of activities which are given preference by certain peoples (Finno-Ugric peoples in this case). Preferred activities in turn exert an enormous influence on the mentality of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

**The third direction** of the first component of mentality (the mentality) of the Finno-Ugric peoples is **environmental education** (as an ethical component of mentality). **The goal** of this direction is to plan, organize, conduct and analyze environmental upbringing and teaching (as a single process of environmental education) to form, establish and develop environmental culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

The present situation sees the changes of the landscapes of different territories because of the barbaric attitude of a man to forest reserves (to land, water and air resources in particular) and to the ecology of the planet in general. Forests are being cut down without mercy, as well as being burned in large quantities as a result of careless handling of fire. There is a massive pollution of land, water and air sources of the Earth. This human activity (in this case of a Finno-Ugric man) leads to the need to update the environmental education (environmental upbringing and teaching) component in the mentality of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

1) For this purpose, in our opinion, it is necessary to consider and pay particular attention to the processes of upbringing and teaching (education) within the Finno-Ugric society, particularly, to environmental upbringing and teaching (environmental education). These elements (among others) will constitute the ethno-cultural model of our draft program.

2) Basing on the abovementioned environmental education, it is necessary to build and organize the study of models of environmental consciousness: nature conservation

consciousness, which (as we hope) will be the basis for nature conservation technologies in production, agriculture and in the structure of everyday life activities in general.

### **3. Ethno-cultural model of science and education of the Finno-Ugric peoples**

**The second component** of the draft program for the implementation of one of the priority directions of development of our University - 'Finno-Ugric Studies', in our opinion, is the necessity to elaborate an ethno-cultural model of science and education of the Finno-Ugric peoples. **The goal** of this component is to study and analyze the creative potential of the Finno-Ugric peoples and to develop an ethno-cultural model of educational subjects and a system of extracurricular activities, social and educational work to develop and improve this potential.

In order to study and analyze the creative and potential abilities of the Finno-Ugric peoples, and to improve their efficiency and effectiveness of these opportunities at our University, it is necessary to elaborate an ethno-cultural model of educational subjects within the didactic activities and a system of measures as well as a system of collective creative activities (CCA) within the structure of extracurricular activities and social and educational work. Because, if the cycle of educational subjects is not determined, the training within the priority direction of development (PDD-2) will not be organized either; and if diversified educational activities and collective creative activities are not carried out there will be no social education within the Finno-Ugric studies. In other words, no subjects and activities means no training and relevant education.

The linguistic component should also be included into the ethno-cultural model of science and education. According to Doctor of Philosophy, professor, head of the Chair of the Humanities of the Ruzaevka Institute of Mechanical Engineering of the Ogarev Mordovia State University A. A. Gageev, '... a language which is not used for large scientific developments and discoveries is doomed to oblivion' (FUCP: 175-176). In his opinion (if the situation in demographics, science and education remains unchanged), by 2100, only a few languages have the chance to stay on the globe: English, as a language of international communication, Spanish, as a means of communication throughout Latin America, Arabic as the language of the whole Muslim world and Chinese as the language of many millions of

people. India with its huge population, unfortunately, can also lose its native languages (Hindi and Bengali), since all of its state organizations, institutions and educational structures in everyday activities use the English language. As for the Russian language, according to Professor A. A. Gagaev, if the demographic situation in Russia has not fundamentally changed, by 2100, the population of the country will be only 50 million people compared to 140 million people at present. This is a direct threat to the Russian language as a linguistic unit (FUCP: 175-176).

Therefore, for the deployment of the second component of the PDD-2 program, it is necessary, in our view, to pay special attention to the Finno-Ugric languages (in our case, mainly to the Mordvin languages) and to include them in the process of scientific and research activity, education and training as much as possible.

#### **4. Identification and identity**

We single out identification and identity as **the third component** of the draft PDD-2 program. We suggest that identification is the process of comparing sameness (likeness) and identity is the result of this process. The goal of this component is to find out whether it is possible to preserve the national identity (whether it is disappearing or not) when loss of a language as a means of communication happens. It is necessary to understand whether the ethnic identification is preserved when loss of a language happens. Here is one of the humanitarian problems of this component of the program. The presence of this socio-linguistic problem nowadays we can see by the example of the Mordvin ethnoses and the Mordvin languages.

#### **5. System of the Finno-Ugric values**

**The fourth component** of the draft program is the system of the Finno-Ugric values. The goal of this component is to analyze the system of values of the Finno-Ugric peoples and to define its main issue.

1) The system of the Finno-Ugric values should be regarded in the broad and narrow sense of the phenomenon.

a) In the broad sense, the generalized system of values characteristic for all the Finno-Ugric peoples should be studied and analyzed.

b) In the narrow sense, it is necessary to understand the specific value orientations of the particular Finno-Ugric peoples.

2) We must define the issue of the Finno-Ugric system of values and its relation to European and Russian systems of values. This aspect should be considered only in comparison.

Development of any ethnic group, including the Finno-Ugric peoples, is always connected with such processes as: a) reception – the complete borrowing of something from other peoples; b) acculturation – the partial borrowing of something from other people; and c) retorsion – the phenomenon in which the borrowing is strictly excluded. In the development and self-development processes of ethnic groups, these phenomena should be seriously considered.

Each ethnic group should be conscious of what kind of borrowing (from other peoples) it should exercise for its own benefit, and which ones (to avoid negative consequences) must not be used under any circumstances. This is a kind of prosperity formula for any ethnic group. It is impossible to succeed in education and training suggesting that 'if we structure certain processes according to American or German educational technologies we are sure to be a success'. One must bear in mind that the Russian system of values is radically different from the American and German ones. Therefore, one should never borrow technologies in any sphere of human activity (in industry, agriculture, economy, science, education, health, culture, etc.) without taking into account the system of values (value orientations) of a certain people. For example, if the Germans want to acquire (borrow) from the Finnish a technology of a certain production line and the Finnish will manufacture, assemble and test this line themselves and start it on the German ground, even then the German specialists may face great challenges in the use, maintenance and repair of the technical means. This is because in the process of inventive activity, design and introduction of the production line Finnish experts solve technological problems in a different way than German employees in the same industry.

Concluding from the contents of the fourth component of the program one can state that the values of an ethnic group (its value orientations) suggest development of its own (specific) technologies in all spheres of its activities.

## **6. Creativity of the Finno-Ugric peoples**

**The fifth component** of our program is creativity of the Finno-Ugric peoples. The goal of this component is to determine the content and specific features of the phenomenon of the creative work of the Finno-Ugric peoples.

1) Within this component, we should determine what we mean by the creative work of the Finno-Ugric peoples in the broad and narrow senses of this phenomenon.

2) Next, it is necessary to reflect the statistical side of creativity of the Finno-Ugric peoples, that is, to identify those areas of life of the Finno-Ugrics, which most clearly manifest their creativity and how it is expressed.

3) Then, we should determine whether our University deals with or is interested in similar areas of science, education, health, culture, engineering, etc. As well as what results the University shows in those areas, what achievements it has when implementing activities within those areas.

## **7. Conclusion**

In our opinion, special attention should be paid to the achievement of our University in the field of mathematics, physics and natural sciences, since Finns have succeeded mostly notably in those areas. It is also necessary to define in what areas of scientific research other Finno-Ugric peoples manifest their creativity.

As mentioned above, the Finno-Ugrics are most focused on the applied areas of scientific knowledge (related to metallurgy, machine building, shipbuilding, forestry, pulp and paper industry, and electronics) (EOF, Economy). All of these basic and other industries of the Finn's practical activities are directly connected with engineering. Therefore, in our view, the unit of engineering sciences must not be reduced at our University: on the contrary, it should be expanded and strengthened. We assume that the unit of engineering sciences, in this



case, can act as the first engineering and technological specialization of the priority direction of 'Finno-Ugric Studies', in addition, this approach, in our opinion, is not contrary to implementation of the priority direction of 'Energy Saving'.

Unit of engineering sciences should be strengthened and its further active development should be continued. It is necessary for the center for engineering and technical training (if we may say so) with the Finno-Ugric creative content to be in our University and for young people of different ethnic groups related to the Finno-Ugric language family and aimed at these specialties to be able to receive a decent education at our University. Having this engineering specialization of Finno-Ugric orientation, our University has the potential to become a European University, as no one provides training in this specialized area (of ethno-engineering). Such an institution of higher education that has organization of specialties partially or fully focused on the specificity of Finno-Ugric studies, will confidently and deservedly join the structure of the global model of science.

We suggest to single out ethnic culture as a **second specialization** of the priority direction of 'Finno-Ugric Studies', components of which will be: 1) ethnic culture (proper), 2) ethnic pedagogy, 3) gender psychology and pedagogy of the Finno-Ugric peoples. As part of the musical ethnic culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples (as such) we believe it necessary to consider the musical ethnic culture. To do this we need to analyze the theory of substrate aesthetics and the nature of art in general and music in particular, developed and introduced into scientific circulation by Professor A. A. Gagaev.

This theory is based on the philosophy of art in general and the philosophy of ethnic music by Professor N. I. Boyarkin in particular, but this is a topic for another article.

## References

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IOF = *Промышленность Финляндии: аналитика* - <http://e-finland.ru/travel/general/promyshlennost-finlyandii-analitika.html>

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