

## **Empowering futures: Mehmet Akif Ersoy's vision of youth education as a pillar of nation-building and moral integrity**

*Boltaboyeva Hulkaroy Hamidullo qizi*  
[hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com](mailto:hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com)  
*Doctor of Philosophy, lecturer*  
*Uzbekistan State World Language University*

**Annotation:** *This paper explores Mehmet Akif Ersoy's profound vision of youth education as central to nation-building, moral development, and personal growth. Set against the sociopolitical upheaval of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Türkiye, Ersoy's literary works – particularly his renowned Safahat and the national anthem İstiklal Marşı – highlight education not merely as a means of acquiring knowledge, but as a moral and civic obligation. Ersoy presents youth as active agents in the regeneration of the nation, emphasizing the integration of ethical values such as honesty, bravery, and empathy into educational frameworks. His philosophy advocates for a holistic model of education, combining intellectual enlightenment with spiritual and moral refinement. Ersoy's educational ideals align with the Republican vision of a modern, secular, and cohesive national identity, transforming education into both a universal right and patriotic duty. Through poetic narratives, he envisions a generation prepared to face modern challenges while remaining rooted in cultural and ethical traditions. His vision remains highly relevant for contemporary discourse on educational reform and civic responsibility.*

**Keywords:** *youth education, nation-building, moral values, civic responsibility, Safahat, Turkish identity, ethical development.*

## **Расширяя возможности будущего: видение Мехметом Акифом Эрсоем образования молодежи как основы государственного строительства и нравственной целостности**

*Болтабоева Хулкаррой Хамидулло кызы*  
[hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com](mailto:hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com)  
*Доктор философии, преподаватель*  
*Узбекский государственный университет мировых языков*

**Аннотация:** *В этой статье исследуется глубокое видение Мехметом Акифом Эрсоем образования молодежи как важного элемента государственного строительства, нравственного развития и личного роста. Литературные произведения Эрсоя, написанные на фоне социально-политических потрясений в Турции начала XX века, в частности его знаменитый «Сафахат» и национальный гимн «Истикляль марши», подчеркивают важность образования не только как средства получения знаний, но и как морального и гражданского долга. Эрсой представляет молодежь как активных участников процесса возрождения нации, подчеркивая важность интеграции этических ценностей, таких как честность, храбрость и сопереживание, в систему образования. Его философия выступает за целостную модель образования, сочетающую интеллектуальное просвещение с духовным и нравственным совершенствованием. Образовательные идеалы Ersoy соответствуют республиканскому видению современной, светской и сплоченной национальной идентичности, превращая образование одновременно в универсальное право и патриотический долг. Посредством поэтических повествований он представляет поколение, готовое противостоять современным вызовам, сохраняя при этом приверженность культурным и этическим традициям. Его видение остается весьма актуальным для современных дискуссий о реформе образования и гражданской ответственности.*

**Ключевые слова:** воспитание молодежи, национальное строительство, моральные ценности, гражданская ответственность, Сафохат, турецкая идентичность, этическое развитие.

### **Kelajak imkoniyatlarini kengaytirish: Mehmet Akif Ersoyning yoshlar ta'limini davlat qurilishi va axloqiy yaxlitlik asosi sifatida qarashlari tahlili**

*Boltaboyeva Hulkaroy Hamidullo qizi*  
*[hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com](mailto:hulkarboltaboyeva5@gmail.com)*  
*PhD, o'qituvchi*  
*O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti*

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada Mehmet Akif Ersoyning davlat qurilishi, axloqiy rivojlanish va shaxsiy o'sishning muhim elementi sifatida yoshlar ta'limi haqidagi chuqur qarashlari o'rganiladi. Ersoyning XX asr boshidagi Turkiyadagi ijtimoiy-siyosiy notinchlik fonida yozilgan adabiy asarlari, xususan, uning mashhur "Safahat" va "Istiqlol marshi" milliy madhiyasi ta'limning nafaqat bilim olish vositasi, balki axloqiy va fuqarolik burchi sifatida ham muhimligini ta'kidlaydi. Ersoy yoshlarni millatni qayta tiklash jarayonining faol ishtirokchilari sifatida namoyish etadi, halollik, jasorat va hamdardlik kabi axloqiy qadriyatlarni ta'lim tizimiga kiritish muhimligini ta'kidlaydi. Uning falsafasi intellektual ma'rifatni ma'naviy va axloqiy takomillashtirish bilan birlashtirgan ta'limning yaxlit modelini qo'llab-quvvatlaydi. Ersoyning ta'lim ideallari zamonaviy, dunyoviy va yaxlit milliy o'ziga xoslikning respublika qarashlariga mos keladi, ta'limni bir vaqtning o'zida universal huquq va vatanparvarlik burchiga aylantiradi. She'riy rivoyatlar orqali u madaniy va axloqiy an'analarga sodiq qolgan holda zamonaviy qiyinchiliklarga dosh berishga tayyor avlodni taqdim etadi. Uning qarashlari ta'lim islohoti va fuqarolik javobgarligi haqidagi zamonaviy munozaralar uchun juda dolzarb bo'lib qolmoqda.

**Kalit so'zlar:** yoshlarni tarbiyalash, milliy qurilish, axloqiy qadriyatlar, fuqarolik javobgarligi, Safohat, turk o'ziga xosligi, axloqiy rivojlanish.

A national poet and key player in Turkish literature, Mehmet Akif Ersoy has a unique place in the pantheon of authors who have profoundly affected the idea of education, in particular with relation to young people. Apart from reflecting his own opinions, his literary and lyrical corpus provides a means for him to express a vision of the education of young people, which is closely related to the building of the country, moral values, and personal growth. Ersoy's points of view especially speak to us in light of Türkiye's sociopolitical setting during the start of the 20th century, a time when ideas of citizenship and identity underwent significant change (Gülşen, 2021).

Ersoy fervently felt that education had transforming potential and presented it as a basic component for national regeneration and personal development. His writings stress the idea that the foundation of a rich and harmonious society is an educated youth. Ersoy often emphasizes in his poems the point that education gives young people not only information but also the ethical tools they need to keep moral integrity and civic obligations. This twofold attention on intellectual and ethical growth represents his belief that the person is not just a passive recipient of education but a participant active in the national creation process, a viewpoint that has consequences all around his work (Ufuk, 2019).

Ersoy's poetry, "İstiklal Marşı" in particular, captures his ideas on the value of young people in the search for national goals. Here he calls for a compelling picture of young people as messengers of the future, assigned to the moral and civic obligations required for the survival of the country. Emphasizing their vital part in the building of the moral and social fabric of society, the poet begs young people to see their potential as change agents. Thanks to such depictions, Ersoy properly sees

education as a potent weapon to inculcate not just knowledge but also a strong feeling of national identity and belonging.

Ersoy's comments on schooling also reflect simple intellectual development; they interact with the basic ideals that provide young people's moral compass. Throughout his writings, he clearly advocates a full education, including the ethical and spiritual aspects. Ersoy's support of moral values like honesty, integrity, and patriotism clarifies the need for that education in equipping young people for moral citizenship. By means of its persuasive language, this moral framework seeks to instill a feeling of responsibility among the younger generation, therefore anchoring their desires in social well-being rather than in an individual benefit.

Ersoy creates a narrative that puts the education of young people at the junction of personal growth and national identity by means of its literary contributions. While still anchored to their cultural and ethical foundations, the principles he marries act as a clarion to a generation eager to traverse the difficulties of modernity. Its concentration on the vital role of young educated people helps to defend a kind of education that goes beyond the boundaries of academic learning, therefore underlining its ability to produce a generation ready to make major contributions to society and the nation-state. Thus, the literary exploration of Mehmet Akif Ersoy of the education of young people provides a rich tapestry on which the interaction of knowledge, morality, and national identity can be analyzed more, inviting an in-depth investigation into the lasting relevance of its vision in contemporary educational discourse. In Mehmet Akif Ersoy's literary corpus, education emerges as an essential theme, closely linked with the concept of nation construction. His comment that a strong and coherent society depends on a well-educated young man displays his great awareness of the sociopolitical scene of Türkiye in the early twentieth century. Ersoy has considered education as an essential tool to develop the moral and ethical roots required for successful citizenship and leadership as well as a means of information gain. Emphasizing his vital part in the building of the future of the country, his poetry calls the attention of the young.

Through the prism of its socio-historical setting, a time of major political upheavals and national uncertainty after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Ersoy's viewpoint on education is clear-cut. In this regard, he presents a picture of young people assuming charge for revitalizing their country. For Ersoy, the moral and intellectual growth of the younger generation – which he thinks will be able to lead the nation toward progress and unity – defines the core of building the nation. His paintings clearly show education as a two-edged knife: it is a tool for enhancing group identification and a vessel for personal emancipation.

One of Safahat's major works, its poetry shows the contrast between ignorance and enlightenment, a recurring topic. Ersoy skillfully writes in his songs a compelling story stressing the obligation of young people directed to go beyond their own aspirations in favor of national interest. For instance, their compelling portrayal of educated people emphasizes that the intellect should not be detached from ethical issues and frequently contains a moral duty to apply their knowledge for society's good (Erdal, 2009). This moral component exposes a more general desire for a generation that is not just socially conscious and culturally knowledgeable but also intellectually strong.

Ersoy's focus on the function of education in the building of the country also connects with the Republican period values, which aimed to redefine the Turkish identity via enlightenment and development. Shapes of modern youth were greatly shaped by the development of a new educational paradigm supporting secular and modern education. Ersoy's poetry channels these revolutionary ideals, turning an exclusive privilege's education into a universal right and a patriotic obligation. He constantly emphasizes that the intellectual awakening of his young people is necessary for the resuscitation of the old grandeur of Türkiye, therefore connecting the individual accomplishment to the group achievement.

Ersoy's writings also show a strong conviction in the changing potential of education as a pillar of society. It expresses the view that societal cohesiveness is based on moral principles developed by education. By combining ideas of spirituality and intellectual growth, he supports an educational

system loaded with ethical rigor, therefore fostering the concept that the character of the next generation is fundamental to national integrity (AKDAĞ, 2022). This point of view captures the larger sociopolitical milieu of the period, in which the quest for national rebirth needed a rebuilding of personal identities depending on culture and Turkish values.

Ersoy's writings, all things considered, eloquently show education as a basic component for building the country. Their attention to the moral obligations of young people reflects a worldview in which human growth is closely tied with societal progress. From this perspective, its poetry goes beyond personal expression to become a motivating framework for generational responsibility. Mehmet Akif Ersoy's literary works thus reflect a great dedication to the issue of moral education, in which he amplifies the idea that education transcends the mere acquisition of knowledge to cover the cultivation of virtuous nature. This helps to clarify a thorough knowledge of how education serves not only as a personal elevation tool but also as a necessary mechanism for national integrity and progress. Ersoy suggests in his poetry and prose that, in the quest for a coherent and resistant society, an individual's ethical framework is as important as intellectual development. Ersoy, a profoundly conscious poet of the sociopolitical milieu of his day, confirms that young people, as bearers of national identity and future leaders, have to be taught not only in intellectual matters but also in the moral principles that support a harmonic society.

In his foundational book *Safahat*, Ersoy presents a picture of education that combines moral purity with intellectual advancement. It implies that education has to be a ship helping to inculcate moral values such as empathy, bravery, and honesty. This comment is caught in his poems, where he underlines the vital requirement of honesty in civic and personal life. "Knowledge without virtue is a lifeless shell" (Ersoy, 1928), says a notable sentence reflecting this attitude. This metaphor emphasizes, in line with Ersoy's view of a relationship between knowledge and moral character, the uselessness of erudition bereft of ethical grounding.

Ersoy also addresses the concept of bravery, a virtue he believes is most important for young people confronting socioeconomic inequalities. Viewed through the prism of education, ask young people who possess bravery to speak the truth and fight for justice, as shown in another chapter in which he says, "It is courage that allows a man to face their fears, and education must strengthen this value." In this regard, Ersoy sees the educational framework as not only a formative process but also as a necessary field to support the ethical spine of society. Such exhortations stress the need of instilling bravery as a component of personal identity and group resilience.

Apart from bravery, Ersoy emphasizes the need for empathy, as it is very necessary to produce morally strong people. Based on his observations of the sociocultural fabric of his day, he supports a kind of education that promotes understanding across many groups. In a section he says poignantly, "True strength is in the heart that is felt by others; only then can we build a nation that is united" (Ersoy, 1928). Here Ersoy outlines an educational perspective that goes beyond traditional approaches and exhorts empathy to be a basic component of the syllabus. Ersoy hopes that by encouraging empathy, a generation of young people who are not just highly educated but also dedicated to tackling the subtleties and complexity of human experience will emerge.

Ersoy's literary corpus's articulation of his educational philosophy highlights in general that a good educational system needs to develop moral values in addition to academic knowledge. Its literary expressions suggest that the development of characters is directly related to the function of education, which is thus absolutely important for the building of the country. Ersoy promotes contemplation on the obligations of teachers and society to create a morally capable person who can help contribute to the greater good by framing education as a whole (Demir, 2022; Şimşek, 2024). Mehmet Akif Ersoy's viewpoint on the ethics of education transcends simple academic education; it captures a wider objective of individual development, which he considers essential for young people to properly fulfill their roles in society. This resonance of these issues invites a critical analysis and underlines the lasting relevance of Ersoy's perspective on the ethics of education in the modern context. Ersoy expresses in his literary and creative works a concept of education closely entwined

with human development and self-awareness. It underlined that education is a necessary road to develop moral integrity and personal character, not merely a means to gather information.

Ersoy's philosophy revolves around the concept that introspection is a turning point in human development. His poems encourage young people to closely review their ideas, beliefs, and goals, thus helping them to dedicate themselves to self-reflection. In its well-known poem "İstiklal Marşı," which inspires strong feelings of national identification and pride, this introspective approach takes center stage. Ersoy exhorts young people to absorb the hardships and sacrifices ingrained in their national setting, therefore guiding them toward a contemplation that advances not only a feeling of belonging but also a duty toward the destiny of their country. The lesson below is really clear: personal development is intrinsically tied with its dedication to group advancement.

Furthermore underlined by its focus on moral principles is the link between personal growth and society's demands. Ersoy, the ideal young man, is shown in his works as embodying virtue like honesty, tenacity, and perseverance. It promotes a complete education that feeds these moral aspects and motivates young people to become responsible citizens. In its poetry, for instance, it often recalls the ideas of nobility and self-sacrifice, which inspire a feeling of obligation towards society at large and oneself. Beginning the guiding, this moral vision positions young people not only as passive consumers of information but also as active players to model their cultural and social landscape.

Ersoy's philosophy also emphasizes personal responsibility, which he deftly combines in his works. According to him, education should provide the means young people need to negotiate the complexity of life. In this view, the development of self-awareness becomes fundamental; knowledge of oneself is necessary to make wise judgments that align with moral principles and help to improve society. Ersoy's works often stress the need for personal responsibility and inspire young people to see their own capacity for change. His writings, in which he seeks for a generation that is not only educated in a conventional sense but also enlightened in their obligations towards themselves, the larger family, and society, thus show this.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy sees education as a complex process that transcends straightforward knowledge acquisition. Its artistic and literary expressions encourage a kind of education that advances human responsibility, moral growth, and reflection, thereby fostering individual development. Emphasizing these components, Ersoy's works act as a clarion call for young people to participate in ongoing self-improvement as well as competent people equipped to meet the societal difficulties of their day. By means of this, Mehmet Akif Ersoy generates a vision of youth education that is still relevant, underlining the transforming power of personal development in the framework of the building of the country and cultural preservation (Erdal, 2022; Yarım, 2022). The roles of teachers and educational institutions emerge as fundamental elements that greatly help to shape youth and, hence, the nation. Emphasizing the requirement of teachers including moral integrity and academic rigor, Ersoy imbues his poems with a great awareness of the teacher-student interaction. For Ersoy, a teacher goes beyond simple information transmission; they are the designers of conscience and character, in charge of the great task of forming moral citizens and future leaders. As Ersoy's writings depict, the teacher is a wisdom headlight – a person who motivates pupils to realize their best possibilities as they underpin society's basic principles.

According to Ersoy's poetry, the dynamics of the ideal student teacher are marked by mutual respect, appreciation, and a dedication shared with the development of moral and intellectual values. Ersoy suggests that teachers should not only be subject-matter experts but also examples of moral behavior, therefore guiding young people. He often stresses the need to produce a generation of students who are not only intelligent but also morally strong if we are to build a strong country. In this regard, teachers are custodians of the moral and cultural fabric of society, entrusted with the formative task of nourishing people capable of positively contributing to the community and the nation in general; they are not only information carriers (Güngör, 2025; Miright & Sönmez, 2025).

Furthermore, the representation of Ersoy educational institutions goes beyond the classroom and implies that these venues need to be havens of intellectual awakening and moral growth. Schools,

according to it, are settings where ethical responsibility and patriotism are cultivated. This point of view calls on teachers to interact with their pupils actively, therefore fostering critical thinking and helping them to challenge and consider society's values. Ersoy presents a story via his poetic lens in which the teacher is absolutely essential in directing young brains away from nihilism and encouraging a feeling of purpose and belonging to national discourse.

Ersoy supports the idea that education should be comprehensive by putting instructors in front of fundamental importance in the debate of young education. According to his writings, the perfect learning environment combines ethical, emotional, and cognitive aspects to produce people who can navigate the complexity of life with integrity and resilience. Ersoy clarifies the responsibilities of teachers by using this framework, which presents them not only as information providers but also as basic agents of social-individual change that equip young people with the moral compass required for the building of the country. Therefore, under the prism of Ersoy's poetic view, the symbiotic relationship between teachers and students becomes a basic pillar on which the future of the country rests, stressing the inextricable connection between education, moral values, and the advancement of society. Mehmet Akif Ersoy's perspective on youth education captures a great knowledge of the interaction between individual growth, social development, and moral integrity in the framework of the construction of the nation. Ersoy expresses in his literary and artistic works the perspective that education is a milestone to develop not only the brains but also the hearts of young people. This simultaneous commitment to intellectual and moral education reinforces its conviction that the creation of a strong national identity depends on a strong educational background.

Especially important is Ersoy's focus on moral principles in the classroom. In its poetry, it often expresses shared principles that go beyond personal goals and shows how the character and values taught in childhood may inspire national duty. Young people are seen by it as the avant-garde of the future, whose moral character will change the ethical fabric of society. Works like "Safahat" show its emphasis on the need for the fact that moral integrity and patriotism have to be whole elements of the teaching program. This suggests that the integrity of a society is strongly related to the ethical education of its young, as it reflects its larger vision in which the moral growth of people becomes identical with the fortification of the country.

Furthermore, Ersoy's poetry expresses a vision of education that answers to the pressing requirements of society and fits the landscape in continuous change of the country. It emphasizes a progressive educational approach confronting the emotional, moral, and social aspects of youth that is not just intellectual but also holistic. This strategy is especially relevant now as teachers have to modify their strategies to include a generation that must deal with different issues like technological development and sociopolitical upheavals. Ersoy provides a foundation for critical thinking, civic commitment, and a complex knowledge of national identity by supporting an education that reacts to the cultural and historical setting of young people.

Ersoy's view also spans the transformative ability of education in developing young people's leadership abilities. According to him, educated individuals will be able to encourage and mentor others, therefore enabling active participation in the development of the country. This is consistent with the modern talks on young people's leadership and empowerment, in which educational paintings are progressively created to foster the competencies required for good citizenship. Ersoy's works really connect with the present desires to create a generation not only highly informed but also socially conscious and devoted. Young people educated as administrators of the country have great potential.

When one considers the lifetime relevance of Ersoy's educational philosophy, one finds that its intuitions have great significance in overcoming modern educational obstacles. The focus on moral principles, the growth of the character, and the flexible teaching style point to the continuous debates within the educational reform. Ersoy's demand for an educational system that accords moral integrity and civil responsibility top importance even as businesses negotiate difficult challenges like inclusion, ethical conundrums, and national identity crises. The difficulties experienced by today's young

highlight the vital need for pedagogical paintings that reflect the values of Ersoy, so enhancing the concept that education not only prepares people for personal success but is essentially closely linked with the aspirations and stability of the national state. Ersoy therefore leaves a legacy that serves as a beacon for politicians and teachers striving to match modern educational methods with holistic approaches and led by the fundamental value for the development of a vibrant and coherent national identity.

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