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Trends in the Development of Primary Education in Ukraine at the Present Stage

Introduction

The implementation of the concepts of the New Ukrainian School (hereinafter referred to as NUS) in the current conditions increases attention to the actual problems of modern primary education. Today, the need to form a new type of person, the person who is Ukrainian-centered, spiritual, nationally conscious, creative, capable of self-development, self-realization, and mobility, is quite acute.

Priority is the need for lifelong learning, the focus of education on the development of a child's cognitive activity, the assimilation of the latest intellectual technologies, and the focus of the educational process on acquiring key competencies. In other words, the NUS should not only equip schoolchildren with quality knowledge, but also form those competencies that will help a child in its successful self-realization and the formation of sustainable value orientations.

This becomes especially relevant under the present conditions of Russian aggression. Ukrainian education has faced many challenges since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of its northern neighbour: safety in educational institutions – teaching children in between air raid alerts; destroyed schools; blackouts; lack of an adequate number of bomb shelters, un-equipped hidings; psychological state of participants in the educational process, constant stress, exhaustion; the difference between domestic and foreign curricula, their lack of synchronization (this applies to students re-

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turning home from abroad); the impossibility of studying in the territories temporarily occupied by racists or studying in the conditions of the genocide of Ukrainians – lack of specialists, violence against teachers and school-children, threats, humiliation, coercion to study according to other people's educational programs, etc.

In the context of the above, there is an objective need to systematize and analyze these and other problems from different perspectives and ways of solving them – understanding the latest approaches to the content of education, methodological support, self-government; the peculiarities of pedagogical interaction between teacher and student; the value paradigm of education; prevention of threats that have a destructive impact on the quality of providing educational services under martial law.

Presentation of the main material

The primary level of education is the basis of schooling; it is primary school that properly ensure the successful formation and development of the child's personality in the future, so timely solution to urgent problems of education, upbringing and development of younger school children becomes particularly relevant. The implementation of the NUS concept involves the application of a competence approach, the education of a person capable of self-education and self-development, able to think critically, striving for creativity and changes for the better; the creation of a new educational space – an educational environment where students are its active subjects.

The notion of a competency-based approach to learning is based on the competencies that primary school children should acquire. The list and content are defined in the new State Standard of Primary General Education. According to the key provisions of the NUS concept, those competencies that can ensure personal fulfillment, life success, and define a civic position are now of particular importance. This is “fluency in the state language; ability to communicate in native (if different from the state language) and foreign languages; mathematical literacy; competence in the field of natural sciences, engineering and technology, information and communication competence; innovation; lifelong learning; social and civic competences;

entrepreneurship and financial literacy; cultural competence; environmental literacy”.¹

Academician Oleksandra Savchenko,² commenting on the main provisions of the new Law of Ukraine “On Education” emphasizes the new educational priorities, the need for new goals of education, which should become active and effective.

The finalities emphasize the following categories: “freedom”, “trust”, “respect”, “cooperation”, “creativity”, and so on. The Former Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine Lilia Hrynevych has also repeatedly drawn the attention of the public, scientific and pedagogical community to the fact that the new school should have new goals: to form in schoolchildren the competencies that meet the challenges of the 21st century. L. Hrynevych’s definition of competence includes not only knowledge, but also “the ability to apply it to solve personal and professional problems, and also provides an opportunity to develop an attitude to different situations based on values. There is too much information nowadays, and school is no longer the only place where people go to gain knowledge. So the question is to teach children how to search for the necessary knowledge, how to critically evaluate information, how to use it”.³

It should be noted that the concept of competence is currently at the epicenter of research in pedagogical theory and practice, as it is related to the quality of education, the effectiveness of educational activities and reveals the prospects for the development of education. The concept of competence is based on the idea of educating a person who, possessing certain knowledge, skills, and abilities, can successfully implement them in practice. The Law of Ukraine “On Education” (new version) defines the concept of “competence” as a dynamic combination of “knowledge, skills, abilities, ways of thinking, attitudes, values, and other personal qualities that determine

¹ *State standard of primary education: approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, February 21, 2018, No. 87, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-derzhavnogo-standartu-pochatkovoyi-osvity> (access: 18.11.2022).*

² O.Ya. Savchenko, *Primary education in the context of the ideas of the new Ukrainian school. Primary education: Methodical recommendations for the use of a typical educational program for the 1st grades of general secondary education institutions in the educational process*, Kyiv 2018, p. 4–8.

³ L. Hrynevych, *School should form a holistic worldview*, „Day” 2017, no. 13–14, p. 18–19.

a person's ability to successfully socialize, conduct professional and/or further educational activities".⁴

In the conditions of the modernization of Ukraine's education system, the role of the teacher as an active subject of the educational process is strengthened: competitiveness, developed intelligence, stable value orientation, erudition, ability to apply various innovative technologies, ability to engage in cultural dialogue, self-realization, self-development, etc. Especially important is the teacher's readiness to work in a constantly updated educational space. Pedagogical interaction in the NUS requires a teacher to have high skill in organizing fruitful interaction and cooperation between the subjects of the pedagogical process. This interaction implies a high level of motivation for learning, the cognitive activity of students, mutual understanding between them, and satisfaction of the teacher and students with the results of their work. It should be noted that due to the factors caused by the war, motivation suffers, so new requirements impose new responsibilities on teachers, complicating their work, and making it more stressful, with the additional use of the time allotted for rest, causing exhaustion, stress, and professional burnout.

An innovation of the State Standard of Primary Education is structuring the content of primary education on the basis of an integrated approach to education. Not only natural science knowledge but also knowledge about the student's social environment is integrated into a single course, and subjects are united around interesting topics or problems. Primary school teachers also face certain organizational and methodological difficulties in the process of integrated learning, as the organization and conduct of integrated lessons require additional work. For example, it is proposed to integrate seven educational fields into the course "I Explore the World"; Ukrainian language and mathematics are integrated (of the 4 hours per week of studying mathematics, one lesson is taught as a part of the integrated course, and the other three are taught as separate subjects; 2 hours of the course are taught as part of the course "I Explore the World", and the remaining 5 hours are taught as a separate subject).⁵ We agree with the opinion of some teachers, both theorists and practitioners, that integrated

⁴ On education: Law of Ukraine no. 2145-VIII, September 5, 2017, https://urst.com.ua/act/pro_osvitu (access: 18.11.2022).

⁵ *Typical educational programs for general secondary education institutions: grades 1–2 and 3–4*, Kyiv 2019.

education in elementary school requires a clearer definition of the levels of integration: goals, leading ideas (concepts), content, activities.

In addition, there is a great need for appropriate integrated curricula and textbooks, which, unfortunately, are not sufficient yet. High-quality integrated lessons are possible only if there is a well-designed program with appropriate methodological support, the use of proven textbooks and methods, proper professional training, material and technical equipment for each lesson, the teacher's freedom to choose forms and methods of work, and integration in extracurricular activities.

Teacher training courses and the certification process also need to be improved, and they should be as convenient as possible for working teachers, with a sufficient number of hours to study the latest methods needed to teach children in the New Ukrainian School. Economic problems influence the process of implementing educational reforms in life. They mainly affect elementary schools: underfunding of education; the existence of old schemes in obtaining tenders; lack of transparency in the receipt of extra-budgetary funds. There is an ambiguous situation when the state pays special attention to the development of individual entrepreneurship and the education system is being updated for this purpose. On the other hand, schools lack modern furniture, have outdated equipment, as new equipment is extremely expensive. Not all educational institutions have high-speed Internet, toilets with partitions, and school buses "Bogdan" do not stand up to any criticism at all, and there are many such situations.

A special highlight of the NUS is the organization of a new educational space that is an environment that promotes the comprehensive, free development of a creative personality. Therefore, it is extremely important to have appropriate premises, mobile desks, taking into account the size of classrooms, availability of technical devices, special educational needs of schoolchildren, number of students in the class, etc. The availability of laptops, interactive whiteboards, multimedia systems, printers, laminators, TVs, microscopes, etc. greatly facilitates the work of the teacher. LEGO is an effective tool for developing the memory, attention, and thinking of first-graders, organizing group work, and modelling various life and practical situations. This colourful toy diversifies the learning process, makes it more interesting, and thus more effective.

In the classrooms of the first grade, there should be specific educational hubs (or centres):

- news center (helps to manage the didactic calendar, planned tasks and projects, school-wide events, holidays, and various celebrations);
- research hub or discovery center (it should contain things that arouse the imagination, spark imagination, encourage creativity: various art and craft products; camera, recorder, tape recorder, board games, puzzles, books and magazines, etc.);
- a communication center (a place for discussing the studied material, answering questions, reflecting, acquaintances; there should be materials that help to study a particular topic – ready-made or self-made reading games, additional writing materials, etc.);
- mathematical center (designed to develop mathematical and logical thinking; it contains materials for counting, puzzles, dominoes, rulers, scales, tangrams, a mathematical tablet and other measuring tools, mathematical games);
- materials center (pencils, pens, markers, sharpeners, staplers, scissors, paper, glue, paper clips, ribbons, paper towels, cloth, hand sanitizer, etc.);
- center of silence (a place where a child can rest, relax; there should be a spare table and chairs, a grooved mat, ottomans for rest, an easel, etc.);
- teacher’s center (a professional space where teachers plan, analyze, and evaluate).

Without adequate funding and appropriate material support, the creation of these educational centers turns into a profanation. Therefore, there should be an effective and creative partnership between different branches of government, between the Ministry and local authorities.

New goals of primary education have led to changes in the choice of educational content. In scientific discourse, the content of education is seen as a pedagogically adapted social experience of mankind, which is identical in structure to human culture. Through mastering the content of education, as one of the components of the learning process, “personality prepares for the preservation and development of culture (in the broadest sense). Therefore, the content of school education, even in primary school, cannot be narrow. It should be full of various sources, among which the most important are nature, science, production technologies, local history, humanities, pedagogical and psychological knowledge, etc.”⁶ Current priorities in the content of education emphasize the need to form a child’s value orienta-

⁶ O.Ya. Savchenko, *Didactics of Primary Education: Textbook*, Kyiv 2012.

tions, creative abilities, self-awareness of schoolchildren, development of the spiritual and emotional sphere, etc. However, in our opinion, the NUS educational programs do not pay enough attention to the development of Ukrainian studies competencies. “The activation of the Ukrainian studies factor in the conditions of independent Ukraine will eventually allow us to get rid of ideological relics of the Soviet heritage, to strengthen the public appeal of the Ukrainian idea, [...] to create a school of a new generation, based on democracy, a humanistic orientation, and national priorities”.⁷

In grades 1–4, it is advisable to integrate Ukrainian studies into the content of all educational areas, which will contribute to better socialization of the young schoolchild, adherence to ethical norms of behavior accepted in society, development of national consciousness, and acquisition of civic qualities, which corresponds to the main task of the latest reform – the formation of Ukrainian identity. It should be noted that the lack of unanimity on the issue of identity creates the basis for certain manipulations; informational and military attacks by Russia. The theses about the “cradle of three fraternal nations”, the Soviet citizen, and the “Russian world” have long been aimed at blurring the borders of our Ukrainian identity. And the theories about “brotherhood and linguistic unity” have become open armed aggression of the Russian Federation in practice.

People start talking about national consciousness and national identity when it is crucial for a society to realize its unity, its internal connection, its historical character, and its traditions. These are the components that define the essence of the national idea, which is to defend the status of Ukrainians as a nation, not only with materialized features but above all with its spiritual world, its spiritual type. Academician Heorhii Filipchuk emphasizes this point: “The conceptual, substantive, structural, and organizational influences of the philosophy of Ukrainian studies as a system of knowledge and values of the Ukrainian people will contribute to the development of a qualitatively new model of civil society that will combine national, state, and universal values. After all, ensuring civil rights, the comfortable socio-political, cultural, and spiritual well-being of national minorities will be solved when the Ukrainian ethnic group in the ethno-political niche occu-

⁷ L.V. Maftyn, *Elements of Ukrainian Studies in the Educational Space of Ukraine. European vector of contemporary psychology, pedagogy and social sciences: the experience of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland*, comp. M. Kiedrowska, A. Erechemla, T. Branekci, vol. 2, Sandomierz 2018, p. 201–219.

pies its proper place in all spheres in accordance with its status as a subject of state and political self-determination. And the idea of the Ukrainian Motherland and patriotism should become the main and socially unifying idea for everyone”.⁸

The Ukrainian studies content of education should form a nationally conscious personality that needs a system of knowledge based on the values of the Ukrainian world: archetypes, symbols, universals, mentality; spiritual and material culture. That is Ukrainian studies, according to Professor Tamara Usatenko, should be taught at school “not only with the calendar and ritual circle of the mythopoetic world of our ancestors filled with folk poetry, but first of all with the intellectual achievements of many scientists and educators, the national idea, and state-building problems”.⁹ Thus, the quality of the process of educating a growing personality today depends on rethinking many things, overcoming stereotypes of the Soviet past in approaches to the content of modern education, choosing teaching and up-bringing technologies – the Ukrainian-centric education, because the priority of national consciousness is formed through the education system.

Changes in the primary education system require the development and implementation of innovative technologies in the educational process. For example, the use of information technology can improve the quality of the learning process and deepen the cognitive activity of primary school students. However, it is worth remembering that excessive enthusiasm for the computer game environment leads to negative consequences. In the informatization of education, teachers’ readiness to use the latest teaching technologies, which requires constant self-education and professional development, is also of great importance.

The quality of education depends on the individual abilities of the child, so an individualized and differentiated approach is needed to increase the impact of educational activities on student development. According to the new version of the Law “On Education” (Section I, Article 1), learning outcomes are “knowledge, skills, abilities, ways of thinking, attitudes, values, and other personal qualities acquired in the process of learning, education, and development that can be identified, planned, evaluated, and measured

⁸ H.G. Filipchuk, *Civil society: education, ethnoculture, ethnopolitics*, Chernivtsi 2002, p. 7.

⁹ T.P. Usatenko, *Ukrainian national school: past and future. Ukrainian studies dimension*, Kyiv 2003, p. 16–17.

and which a person can demonstrate after completing an educational program or individual educational components”.¹⁰ Educational achievements in grades 1–2 are subject to verbal assessment and in grades 3–4 – to formative and point (final) assessment. The formative assessment of learning outcomes is based on cooperation between the teacher and the student, who is an equal participant, i.e., a subject of the educational process. Such assessment is based not on quantitative (how many mistakes were made) but on qualitative indicators (how the student worked, whether he or she was interested in learning, whether he or she cooperated with others, etc.). It allows you to achieve several goals: “to build an individual trajectory of pupils’ development; to assess or determine the achievements of children at each stage of the educational process; to identify problems in time and prevent their accumulation; to motivate pupils to strive to achieve the best possible results; to cultivate personal values, desire to learn, lack of fear of making mistakes, and confidence in their capabilities and abilities”.¹¹ The new assessment format also involves students in the assessment process, i.e., the development of self-assessment skills in younger students.

As you can see, the requirements for student assessment in accordance with the NUS also take up a lot of teacher time, especially when there are more than thirty students in a class. Thus, in addition to the grade, the newly introduced certificate of student achievement provides for the characterization of the child’s learning process by about fifty other parameters, such as showing interest in learning, actively working in class; asking questions about new, incomprehensible things; shows diligence in learning; works in a focused manner; shows independence in work; is friendly to others; cooperates with other children; resolves conflicts in a different way; finds successful ways to solve problems; follows the rules of behavior during class, play, recreation; takes responsibility for his/her actions, etc.

In today’s crisis conditions, the problem of health care for participants in the educational process has also become more acute. Distance learning, power outages, constant alarms, shelling, etc. increase stress, require optimization of teaching methods and regimes, psycho-emotional support, and the creation of a proper psychological microclimate and safe educational environment. To this end, Ukraine has launched the National Program of Mental Health and Psychosocial Assistance, developed a cross-cutting cur-

¹⁰ On education: Law of Ukraine..., op. cit.

¹¹ *New Ukrainian School: a teacher’s guide*, ed. N. Bibik, Kyiv 2018.

riculum “Fundamentals of Safety in Combat Conditions”¹² with methodological recommendations for it, as well as best practices for psychological and pedagogical support and support for participants in the educational process: “Peculiarities of organizing distance learning during martial law”, “First psychological aid to participants of the educational process during and after the end of hostilities”, “Psychological support and accompaniment of adults and children in crisis situations: «a workshop»”, “Self-help under stress”, etc.

Conclusions

The procedure of transition of primary schools to a new paradigm of education, in accordance with the new State Education Standard, is legally completed. However, this process has also revealed new potential opportunities for deepening the reform, intensified the search for its modernization, and in the conditions of war, new challenges – their constructive solution, search for new approaches to education, innovative forms of its organization, security, and the use of effective pedagogical and information technologies.

First of all, this concerns the organization of the educational process; the combination of efforts of educational institutions, students and their families, when everyone supports each other and is aware of their responsibility for the opportunity to learn and teach.

Taking into consideration the factors of the war, the problem of accessing to quality and safe education is of particular importance, among others ability to use uninterrupted Internet, graphic tablets, a well-protected and controlled cloud learning environment, compliance with cybersecurity rules, psychological support; flexibility of curricula, the orientation of their content to national values; and Ukrainian-centricity of education.

¹² *Fundamentals of life safety in the conditions of hostilities: Methodological recommendations for extracurricular activities*, https://nenc.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/navchalna_programa.pdf (access: 18.11.2022).

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of the current problems of primary education pedagogy in Ukraine. The implementation of the concept of the New Ukrainian School involves the realization of a competence approach, the education of a personality capable of self-education and self-development, able to think critically, striving for creativity and changes for

the better; the creation of a new educational space – such an educational environment where students are as its active subjects.

However, the declared goals cannot always be fully realized. This is due to various factors, including: critical attitude to changes in a certain part of society; problems of methodological support, testing, and propagation of new methods and methodological materials; problems with textbooks: their availability, teacher's competence in terms of choice, content, printing, quality, educational tasks; non-compliance with the requirements for the number of school children in the class, etc. In the conditions of Russian aggression, the issues of creating a safe educational environment, psychological support, and proper organization of the educational process are also becoming a priority.

The author emphasizes that the peculiarity of the functioning of the Ukrainian education system at the present stage is also overcoming the challenges caused by the Russian invasion; finding ways to solve problems in the organization of education, its quality, health protection of students, application of effective innovative technologies, etc.

keywords: education, New Ukrainian School, educational environment, problems of primary education, development of education under martial law

Streszczenie

Trendy w rozwoju szkolnictwa podstawowego na Ukrainie, na obecnym etapie

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie aktualnych problemów pedagogiki szkolnictwa podstawowego na Ukrainie. Wdrożenie koncepcji Nowej Ukrainkiej Szkoły obejmuje: realizację podejścia kompetencyjnego, kształcenie osobowości zdolnej do samokształcenia i samorozwoju, zdolnej do krytycznego myślenia, dążenia do kreatywności i zmian na lepsze; stworzenie nowej przestrzeni edukacyjnej – takiego środowiska edukacyjnego, w którym uczniowie są aktywnymi podmiotami.

Jednak deklarowane cele nie zawsze mogą być w pełni zrealizowane. Wynika to z różnych czynników, w tym: krytycznego stosunku do zmian pewnej części społeczeństwa; problemów wsparcia metodycznego, testowa-

nia i propagowania nowych metod i materiałów metodycznych; problemów z dostępnością podręczników; kompetencjami nauczyciela w zakresie wyboru, treści, druku, jakości, zadań edukacyjnych; niezgodności z wymaganiami dotyczącymi liczby uczniów w klasie itp. W warunkach rosyjskiej agresji priorytetowe stają się również kwestie tworzenia bezpiecznego środowiska edukacyjnego, wsparcia psychologicznego i właściwej organizacji procesu edukacyjnego.

Autorka podkreśla, że specyfiką funkcjonowania ukraińskiego systemu edukacji na obecnym etapie jest również przewyciężanie wyzwań spowodowanych rosyjską inwazją; znajdowanie sposobów rozwiązywania problemów w zakresie organizacji edukacji, jej jakości, ochrony zdrowia uczniów, stosowania skutecznych innowacyjnych technologii itp.

słowa kluczowe: edukacja, Nowa Ukraińska Szkoła, środowisko edukacyjne, problemy edukacji podstawowej, rozwój edukacji w stanie wojennym