

REFORM OF THE UKRAINIAN SYSTEM OF GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION: TRENDS, CONSEQUENCES, CONCLUSIONS

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Summary

Three stages of implementation of the “New Ukrainian School” Concept are analyzed, namely: stage one (2018-2019), stage two (2019–2022) and stage three (2023–2029). It is determined that the educational environment of the New Ukrainian School is a multidimensional individualized self-organized integrity, saturated with all necessary components, which allows the individual within it to function properly and to develop his/her abilities, including gradual possibility of self-realization and personal growth.

The positive aspects of the education system reform have been identified, including the following: school autonomy; in-service training and certification of teachers; reform of the programs related to changing the forms and methods of teacher-student interaction and work; cooperation of central and local education entities with teachers and parents of students; improving the quality of education, which is identified as an “integrated educational process”.

The key tasks and objectives of a modern teacher, including the basic principles of traditional and modern education, are highlighted.

Keywords: reform, New Ukrainian School, elementary education, general secondary education, branches of education, competence, educational environment.

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1. Introduction

Modern strategies of Ukraine are aimed at further development of the national system of education, its adjustment to the conditions of socially-oriented economy, transformation and integration into the European and world-wide educational and scientific society.

Reform of the pedagogy of general secondary education involves the transition to the pedagogy of partnership between student, teacher and students’ parents, which requires thorough training of teachers in new methods and technologies of teaching, including information and communication technologies (ICTs).

V. Okon notes that education reform is a change in the content and organization of the system of education as a whole or some of its parts, associated with the transformation of socio-economic life of the country and the need to adapt it to the needs of educational activities (Okon, 1992: 174).

The analysis of pedagogical sources testifies to emergence of studies connected with research of development of competences during training of pupils (O. Lokshyna, O. Pometun, O. Savchenko and other) and designing the competencies of future specialists of higher educational institutions (HEIs) (O. Antonova, N. Hupan, O. Dubaseniuk, I. Ziazun, etc.).

2. Reform “New Ukrainian School”

In September 2017, the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017*) was adopted, which defines the principles of the new Ukrainian education system, and in February 2018 the Cabinet of Ministers approved a new State Standard of Primary School (*The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2018*) and taken into account the competencies necessary for successful self-realization of an individual.

The State Standard of Primary School specifies the cycles of primary education: the first cycle (grades 1–2) using an activity approach on an integrated basis with a predominance of game-based methods and integrated subject cycle (grades 3–4) with clearly identified key competencies.

For each educational field (linguistic-literary, mathematical, natural, technological-informative, social and health-preserving, civil and historical, artistic and physical education) the obligatory results and competencies of students are defined.

The new Law of Ukraine “On Complete General Secondary Education” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020*) was adopted, which reveals in more detail the changes introduced by the reform.

The new State Standard of Primary Education from the 2017/2018 academic year has been successfully tested in 100 pilot schools all over Ukraine. First-graders across Ukraine have begun studying according to the new standard since 2018/2019 academic year.

The new Standard of Primary Education provides for new approaches in the pedagogical activities of educators, thus during 2018–2019 a.y. there was a large-scale retraining of primary school teachers, for all of them received both distance and full-time training. Distance learning was conducted on the EdEra educational platform (*Onlain-kurs dlia vchyteliv pochatkovoï shkoly, 2018*). During the procedure new approaches and technologies were presented by qualified coaches.

Voluntary certification of teachers, which aims to identify teachers with a high level of professionalism, began in 2019 in order to promote their advanced educational methods and technologies, as well as conduct their dissemination among other educators.

The main principles of school education reform and the approximate schedule for its implementation are set out in the Concept of the New Ukrainian School (NUS). The paper provides information on the values of reform that a NUS graduate should possess. The implementation of the “New Ukrainian School” Concept is realized in three stages (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017*).

Stage one (2018–2019 y.). At the first stage a new Law of Ukraine “On Education” was adopted, which included a new State Standard of Primary Education. Curricula and programs have been finalized in order to unload and introduce a competency-based and personality-oriented approach in primary school.

Training of potential textbook authors and corresponding editorial experts was introduced in order to inlay foundations of future new generation of educational literature. A national educational electronic platform for providing access to electronic textbooks has been created as a critical part of ongoing educational digitalization. The in-service training of primary school teachers is carried out annually. A national educational e-platform for e-courses, distance learning courses in curricula and a distance learning system for teacher training has been designed and tested, namely (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017*):

– Ukrainian educational online portal for teachers “**Na Urok**” (advanced training takes place in the following areas: foreign language, critical thinking, creative thinking, integrated

learning, media literacy, inclusive education, psychology, cross-cutting skills, NUS, subject learning, project-based learning, educational institution work (*Ukrainskyi osvithnii onlain-portal dlia vchyteliv "Na Urok", 2021*);

– educational platform **"Osvitoria"** (areas of professional development: inclusion, innovation in education, distance learning, NUS, etc.; online courses, such as a creative course for teachers, which contained 5 "Take and do" classes) (*Osvitnia platforma "Osvitoria", 2021*);

– platform **PR "PROMETHEUS"** (presented a number of courses to improve the skills of teachers, namely: "Critical thinking for educators", "Educational tools for critical thinking", "Media literacy for educators", "Countering and preventing bullying") in educational institutions, "Design thinking at school", "Science of everyday thinking", "Implementation of innovations in schools", "New physical culture", "Ukrainian literature. Meaningful and rethought", "Starting to a successful school", "Science of teaching: what should every teacher know?") (*Platforma HO "PROMETEUS", 2021*);

– all-Ukrainian electronic platform **"AtomsHub"**. Advanced training is provided by participating in conferences on relevant topics (eg, "Effective interaction in education. Tools and techniques", "Ways to improve the professional competencies of professionals in today's conditions", "Pedagogical innovations and tools. Techniques for personal and psychological development" and etc.) (*Vseukrainska elektronna platforma Atoms, 2021*);

– remote platform of institutes of postgraduate pedagogical education **IPPO**, which is aimed at increasing the overall level of quality of pedagogical techniques, improving professional knowledge, skills and abilities. The advanced training is conducted through courses in the following areas: "School Director", "Deputy Director for Educational Work", "Methodist", "Practical Psychologist and Social Educator", "Teacher of Natural Sciences and mathematical disciplines", "Teacher of social sciences and humanities", "Master of industrial training", "Educator", "Head of the selectives", etc. (*IPPO Distance Learning Platform, 2021*).

Thus, training should include 150 hours and be conducted on an annual basis in five years. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has developed a procedure according to which budget funds allocated for teacher training are sent to public and private organizations that host in-service training courses. In order to motivate teachers financially the government has introduced voluntary certification with a free choice of service provider, which potentially gives the corresponding teachers 20% increase in salary.

Stage two (2019–2022 y.).

In September 2020, the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education was approved (*State Standard of Basic Secondary Education, 2020*). The Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union "On Core Competences for Lifelong Learning" (2006) set out the key competences to be followed by the common standards (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2006*).

The European Council declared the need to identify the new skills acquired during the lifelong learning process within the European framework in Lisbon (2000). Therefore, on Europe's path to globalization the main value is determined – the people, thereafter these conclusions were endorsed at the European Council meeting in Brussels (2005). The EU Lisbon Strategy, which was correspondingly adopted in 2000, has responded to the challenges of globalization and the demands for further development of society.

The State Standard of Basic Secondary Education indicates the cycles of secondary education: adaptive (grades 5–6); the basic cycle of subject-based education (grades 7–9); identified

key competencies (Table 1). According to each branch (linguistic-literary, mathematical, natural, technological; informative, social and health-preserving, civil and historical, artistic, PE) the learning outcomes are determined.

3. Competencies of lifelong learning

Table 1

Main competencies of lifelong learning

| Main competencies of lifelong learning (European Union) | Key competencies of elementary education (Ukraine) | Key competencies of general secondary education (Ukraine) |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ability to communicate in the native language; – ability to communicate in foreign language(s); – knowledge of mathematics and general knowledge in the field of science and technology; – digital media interaction skills; – training for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge (keeping the present knowledge up-to-date); – social and civic skills; – initiative and practicality; – awareness and self-expression in the field of culture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – fluency in the state language; – ability to communicate in native (in case of difference from the state) and foreign languages; – mathematical competence; – competencies in the field of natural sciences, engineering and technology; – environmental competence; – information and communication competence; – lifelong learning; – civic and social competencies; – cultural competence; – entrepreneurship and financial literacy; – innovativeness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – fluency in the state language; – ability to communicate in native (in case of difference from the state) and foreign languages; – mathematical competence; – competencies in the field of natural sciences, engineering and technology; – environmental competence; – information and communication competence; – lifelong learning; – civic and social competencies; – cultural competence; – entrepreneurship and financial literacy; – innovativeness. |

The identified key competencies that Ukrainian school graduates need to master almost coincide with the key competencies established by the European Lifelong Learning Reference System (2006) (*Lokshyna, 2019: 21*); “innovativeness” key competence promotes the development of students’ creativity, which provides the ability to respond to change and overcome difficulties, as well as encourages openness to new ideas and initiative in the classroom, educational institution, family, community, etc.

The key competence “initiative and practicality” is the ability of an individual to put ideas into practice. It includes an innovative approach, creativity, the ability to plan and organize projects. These skills greatly improve not only everyday life, but also enhance the workplace and determine the work environment, as well as allow an individual use the available opportunities (*Pavlenko, 2020: 7*).

The modern teacher modernizes the content component, changes the forms and methods of interaction with students, he/she uses a set of personality developing tools: methods aimed at improving the creative and analytical thinking, problem-solving and idea-generating, etc. (*Pavlenko, 2015: 148*).

Required knowledge regarding initiative and practicality are the following:

- ability to identify available opportunities for personal life and professional activities;

- ability to assess the overall condition of the environment in which people live and work;
- ability to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity;
- ability to plan, organize, manage, analyze, evaluate, interview, communicate;
- ability to effectively represent and negotiate;
- ability to work alone and as a part of a team;
- ability to assess and identify the strong and weak points of oneself and the coworkers;
- ability to assess the situation and take necessary risks.

The practical approach is characterized by innovation, creativity, independence in both personal and social life (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2006*). The principles of the innovation strategy of the European Union (“Europe 2020» Strategy) are set out in numerous documents of the European Commission.

There have been changes in the assessment system at the New Ukrainian School: in the first and second graders do not receive assessment marks, thus scoring system is introduced since the third grade and is exploited up to the last one. Therefore, the Student Achievement Certificate (SAC), which represents a descriptive model for assessing students according to the 51 indicators, has replaced primary school certificates.

SAC is filled in by the teacher in accordance to four levels of assessment: “has significant success” (the highest grade), “demonstrates significant progress” (major higher grade), “achieves results with the help of the teacher” (medium grade), “requires significant attention and assistance” (the lowest grade). In the first part of the certificate, the teacher assesses the student's social and work competencies. For example, whether the child was active in class, asked questions about something new and incomprehensible, showed independence in work, and/or resolved conflicts peacefully. The second part contains grades on various subjects. However, academic achievements are formulated in a non-standard way, namely: e.g. to what extent the student “is interested in the topics studied, shows curiosity about the world around him” (subject I explore the world), or “follows the rules of communication: greetings, farewells, thanks, requests, questions” (subject Ukrainian language), or “focuses on space, explains the location of objects” (Mathematics), or “adheres to the established conditions and rules of the game” (Physical Education).

The Concept of the New Ukrainian School bans grades announcement in front of the class, for this information remains available only to the student and his/her parents and is treated as personal details. The teacher does not have the right to announce the exact number of points the pupil obtained, only substantial achievements can be described. There have also been changes for admission to the NUS institutions, namely: admission interviews have been canceled. First graders of the New Ukrainian School are required to register with one of the schools they chose. Schools do not have the authority to arrange interviews, competitions, tests, exams or any other forms of public evaluation. Corresponding legal paperwork has been in effect since 2018 and caused a lot of controversy, as the opportunity to choose a primary school has narrowed significantly. However, the Ministry of Education and Science hopes that in this way all students will be guaranteed equal rights, regardless of the social status of the family (*The Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine, 2016*).

First-graders of the New Ukrainian School are not given homework, all tasks must be done during academic hours. Nevertheless, second-graders should spend no more than 45 minutes on homework, third-graders have a maximum of 70 minutes dedicated to performing home tasks, and fourth-graders' total limit extends to 90 minutes.

A teacher is a person on whom reform is based. Without a teacher, any changes will be impossible, because one of the core principles of the New Ukrainian School is a motivated teacher. Thus, the purpose of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine is to promote the professional and personal development of teachers, as well as gradual improvements in his/her social status.

In order to use new teaching methods and educational technologies the teacher must have freedom of action, namely the right to choose corresponding teaching materials, improvise and experiment. This perk is provided by the new law of Ukraine “On Education” (*The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017*).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine offers standard curricula, but any teacher or group of authors will be able to supplement or create their own, as well as apply necessary changes to the material given. Today, the teacher is limited only by the state standard. This legal paperwork indicates the final results of the educational process, such as: what students should know and be able to do after completing a certain stage of education. Nevertheless, the teacher determines the ways and means of achieving the expected outcome. As a tool of providing educational services of a higher quality, the teacher is also given the freedom to learn and improve his/her qualification, which is supported by the reform. The teacher has a possibility to spend half of the obligatory hours of advanced training not in the Institutes of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education, but where he/she chooses on his/her own.

Within the second stage, an assessment of corresponding resources of schools and vocational education institutions is carried out in order to create a network of specialized educational institutions on the basis of essential tools, equipment and expendables availability. In 2022 it is planned to create a system of internal quality assurance of education in schools; creation of a system of independent evaluation of learning outcomes for the course of basic secondary education.

Stage three (2023–2029 y.).

Within the third stage of NUS concept implementation, it is planned to develop, approve (2023) and introduce (2027–2029) a new State standard of specialized education, as well as to form a network of specialized schools (2025) and create a system of independent evaluation of graduates of specialized schools.

4. Conclusions

The following educational tendencies can be singled out within the given framework:

- compulsory nature of preschool and secondary education;
- extension of the period of study in secondary school, which will lead to an increase in educational cycles;
- increase in the age limit, reaching which graduates will be able to consciously choose further specialization;
- introduction of the integrated approach to teaching training courses;
- unification of curricula for secondary and vocational education.

The positive aspects of the reform of the education system of Ukraine, according to the researchers, include:

- autonomy of schools;
- professional development and certification of teachers;
- program reform related to changing the forms and methods of teacher-student interaction;

- cooperation of central and local education authorities with teachers and parents of students;
- improving the quality of education, which is understood as an “integrated educational process”.

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