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Reality of Primary Education Development in the Conditions of the New School

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Abstract: Under analysis in the following article there is the postmodern conception of primary education development in the New Ukrainian School given the relevant pedagogical principles of child-centrism, given the age and individual mental peculiarities of the pupil's personality, child's creative subjectivity actualization, social partnership in the inclusive environment and competence-oriented education. The postmodern orientation of the primary education rebuilding as a start for the New Ukrainian School innovative development has been enlightened. The competence approach to the vocational pedagogical activity in the conditions of the New Ukrainian School and the perspectives of the primary education development in Ukraine according to the state quality assessment standards have been taken into account. The teaching techniques and priorities in young pupils' education in the New Ukrainian School and elementary school in the European Union states have been studied. There has been observed a significant advantage of the new postmodern reality model, being formed on the ground of childcentrism (interest to the child's unique inner world rather than to the degree of his/her knowledge), techniques of «non-linear», critical, flexible and creative thinking of the partners in the inclusive educational process, vocational thinking, summarizing pedagogical knowledge as subjective fundamental construction – unique response to the postmodern education variability. There has been outlined that the elementary school system rebuilding and modernization in Ukraine is based upon the experience of the primary education in the European Union states.

Keywords: *educational needs, educational reforms, social partnership, pupils' needs, child-centrism, competence approach, teaching and educational process, innovative technology.*

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1. Introduction

The primary education is the first level of the complete general secondary education according to the National framework of qualifications. Therefore, the issue of its development in the postmodern field is studied with great scrutiny. The basis for building the postmodern model of the primary education development in the New Ukrainian School (NUS) has been laid by the reforms of the educational preparation of the children from the Ukrainian society in accordance with the laws on education and conceptual grounds for rebuilding secondary school in the directions of partnership inclusion, child-centrism and children's educational needs satisfaction. The primary education postmodern values have centered educational reforms around particular pupils, by providing sufficient educational conditions. The reality of the postmodern educational environment oriented at the up-to-date and urgent rebuilding of primary school is a factor of efficiency of this social institution in introducing the New Ukrainian Schools's innovations in the context of the current educational-applied challenges. The New Ukrainian School's postmodern principles require the search for new pedagogical approaches, especially in the context of the conceptual ideas of child-centrism principle realization in all its dimensions, taking into account age and individual mental peculiarities of the pupil's personality (Komogorova et al., 2021; Nerubasska et al., 2020; Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Sheremet et al., 2019).

The movement of active teaching, parents, scholars in the primary education field was launched in 2016, when the content of the actual educational curricula, textbooks, the state of monitoring and assessing the pupils' academic achievements, as well as suggestions to change the procedure of pupils' admission to school, make their stay more comfortable etc. The new stage of the legislative and conceptual school education development, recent researches by Ukrainian and foreign scholars have resulted in reasonable changes in the primary education status, its objective, its derived constituents of functioning under new conditions. In this connection the algorithm of primary education content designing has been grounded: the objective – to predict mandatory findings of this education level in the state standard – to predict the expected findings in the typical educational curricula according to the cycles of education (1 – 2 forms; 3 – 4 forms) – means of their achievement (content, techniques, environment). To successfully introduce the above mentioned algorithm, future primary schools teachers training requires more distinct and serial binding to the

chief customer's needs – schools where teachers are head teachers, subject teachers, psychologists, child's social defenders and parents' social partners (Savtchenko, 2020).

2. The theoretical analysis of the New Ukrainian School's variability in the context of postmodern education: primary education rebuilding and perspectives

The Conception of the New Ukrainian School (CNUS) became the methodological framework for the postmodern primary education model. Pupils who were educated according to the curricula before the primary school rebuilding, often proved to be unprepared to educational activity with informational overload and mental health deterioration, which required search for new approaches to primary school rebuilding. The methodological and prescriptive framework for primary education rebuilding in accordance with CNUS was formed by «The Education Act» and «The Sovereign Standard» (new Sovereign Primary Education Standard, elaborated in 2016 – 2017 years) (Hrynevytch et al., 2016a). The first version of «The Conceptual Fundamentals of Secondary Education Rebuilding» was publicized by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine on 17 August, 2016, for public discussion. According to the above-mentioned acts the New School's primary education was divided into two cycles: adaptive-entertaining (1-2 forms), basic (3-4 forms). The first cycle of the primary education will contribute to the pupil's adaptation to school life: assignments and the time for their fulfillment will be determined considering the pupils' individual peculiarities; the educational material will be easily integrated in the content of the related subjects or introduced into subjects like modules; the scope of home assignments will be limited; education will be arranged through activity, with entertaining techniques both indoors and outdoors; the teacher will be free to choose (work out) curricula in the boundaries of the educational standard; the descriptive formulating assessment will be introduced, there will be no traditional marks; the teacher's most important task will be to support confidence and motivation for learning in each pupil (Hrynevytch et al, 2016b, p. 21).

Since September 1, 2018 the education reform was officially launched – the New Ukrainian School (NUS). According to it, the most competitive in the labor market in the foreseen future there will be specialists capable of critical thinking, goal setting and reaching, team working, socializing in multicultural environment. The Ukrainian school before the reform wasn't prepared to put into life such educational perspectives. The New Ukrainian School, relying on the experience of the

primary school in foreign education has defined the following perspective trends in its Concept: the child's subjectivity factors actualization, child-centrism, partnership, competence-oriented education, focus on poly-functional preparation consistent with vital needs, education without pressure, systematic inclusion of parents as social partners into the educational activity with children, respect to the pupil's personality with a positive and friendly attitude.

In this connection the New Ukrainian School has launched educational process on the basis of the personality-oriented education model. In the framework of this model the school considers to the utmost the child's rights, capabilities, needs and likings, practically realizing the child-centrism principle. Children are taught to overcome stress and tension. The teacher's key task is to support confidence and cognition motivation in every pupil.

The international foundation «Vidrodzhennia» («Renaissance»), the Ukrainian education quality assessment centre supported by the Ministry of education and science of Ukraine (2019) and American councils on international education have realized the project of preparing an analytical paper – to put into life educational assessment on different stages of full secondary education, in particular, assessment on the stage of the end of primary school. The objective of the analytical paper suggestion is to establish educational assessment, which should be focused on the encouragement of the higher quality primary education, teachers' support, increasing confidence in teachers. The implementation of the fundamentals of the above-mentioned paper suggestion will make it possible to form the full-fledged system of educational assessment as an integral constituent of the New Ukrainian School on the key stages of secondary education by 2027. The final assessment of the educational outcome of the applicants for primary education on the stage of secondary school finals is state final examination, which is implemented according to the current legislation only to monitor the quality of education in the secondary education institutions (Verkhovna Rada, 2017). In this context, primary school graduates have just started taking the State Final Examination in several subjects (Ukrainian and Mathematics), the decision consistent with the inclusion of the third subject was supported by the School Teachers' Council.

The goals of the final assessment should be the following: 1) to establish the correspondence of the educational outcomes of the primary education students with the requirements, formulated in the State standard of primary education and/or typical curricula; 2) to obtain data about the state of primary education for the further analysis of this information and

approval of the corresponding decisions on the different levels of education management to support primary school teachers and optimize the activity of the institutions of the full secondary education, provide information for parents and society.

The dynamic transformations in the Ukrainian primary education are due to the influence of the common European priorities – competence-oriented approach to school and European values reflected in its content: actualization of the continuity principle in curricula; multiplication of goals and their integration for primary education, development of the child and the society, the adaptation of the national goals to the requirements of the international labor market; the formation of the values of the European educational space; the molding of practical skills and acquired habits in pupils; pupils' academic achievement assessment in compliance with the goals and state standards; employment in primary education information technology, Internet-platforms; polycultural upbringing. There have been studied the educational-value tendencies of primary education development in Europe on the grounds of the numerous overseas works: Le Métais (1997), James & Pollard (2008), Sawyer (2008), Sundberg & Wahlström N. (2012), Chapman & Sammons (2013).

CfBT in the countries of the European Union is an international authority in curricula optimization and their realization. CfBT works directly with schools and governmental authorities, optimizing educational outcomes by assessment, learning and vocational activity according to the development program. The relevant criterion of school functioning efficiency is the teaching staff's vocational self-assessment. School self-assessment (the assessment of teachers' vocational activity outcomes and the level of school development by the school team) - is a process, which helps school staff to think over their activity and determine the perspective trends for stimulating improvement in the field of education and vocational training. In particular, researchers on school improvement set the following objective: to suggest the monitoring of school efficiency, existing strategies of school improvement and investigate school self-assessment; to highlight key debates, connected with self-assessment at school; to outline the determining principles and processes, related to school assessment in the aspects of its improvement; to analyze the consequences of the school improvement strategies (Chapman & Sammons, 2013).

The main idea of the New Ukrainian school Concept is the realization of the educational principles in the postmodern outlook in correspondence with the following tasks: competence-oriented teaching pupils to employ the acquired knowledge in practical activity, impetus to

independent thinking over the variants of the outcome with their successive motivational encouragement; team work as mutual projects of adults with pupils, challenges facing and collective fulfillment of creative tasks with the distribution of the play roles and social roles, learning in the game form, emotional intelligence development, integrated learning, motivational assessment, right for mistake. NUS anticipates that the pupil's parents, teachers and school authorities have one common goal - a happy and successful child. Therefore, the relationship between these social groups are first and foremost based upon the cooperation, mutual understanding and willing to go to the goal together. The postmodern aspect of NUS is built on the following principles of partnership between pupils, teachers and parents aimed at the child's psychological support: respect for the child's personality; goodwill and friendliness; trust in relationship; dialogue - interaction - mutual respect; divided leadership; social partnership (equality of parties, obligations and so on) (Bibik, 2018, pp. 7-17).

Thus, the grounding for postmodern reality of the primary school system in the New Ukrainian School and the outcome of education rebuilding is a new educational paradigm. According to L. Vakhovskyi (2015), in its centre instead of the question «What do pupils know?» there is the question «Who are they?» Postmodernism doesn't recognize integrity, universality of knowledge, but foregrounds parts, discrepancies, differences, pluralism, in other words it denies the so called «knowledgeable» educational model and treads knowledge as subjective construction. It is this approach to knowledge in educational activity that contributes to the formation of a self-sufficient, autonomous person. Postmodernism creates a more varied pedagogical landscape, places in the centre of the educational process a person with its individual life goals, values, experience and relies upon its creative activity and on the whole transforms modern education into a dynamic and polyphonic phenomenon.

Postmodern method of constructing makes it possible to change priorities in the process of learning, foregrounding equality in the relationship of the pupil and the teacher as a new educational value in the aspect of information exchange and its verification. The formation of a new postmodern type of person – «person endlessly individualized», became a factor which greatly affected a change in value system in the pedagogical theory, which resulted in the changes in the pedagogical practice. It goes without saying that pedagogy and education system couldn't escape the influence of postmodern values, and the latter spurred the changes in value system and rethinking of their own standards and norms (Milova, 2007).

The methodological and regulatory framework of primary education rebuilding (The Education Act, The Concept of the NUS, The Fundamentals of the State Standard) and the corresponding principles and technology of the arrangement of young pupils' academic-educational activity have been described in the works by O. Ya. Savchenko (2020), L. Hrynevych, O. Yelkin, S. Kalashnikova, I. Kobernyk, V. Kovtunets', S. Makarenko, M. Hryshchenko (2016b), L. Hrynevych, V. Bryndza, N. Dementiyevska, R. Shyian (2016a), N. Bibik (2018). For successful arrangement of the educational process in correspondence with the determined by the mandatory documents didactic principles in the conditions of the NUS there are required well-qualified specialists capable of vocational mobility in facing challenges (Husak, 2016; Savchenko, 2020; Shanskova, 2019) and development of alternative teaching models with the introduction of the complex of tasks of creative orientation (Husak, 2016).

Rebuilding education system in accordance with the Concept of the New Ukrainian School requires reorientation of the future primary school teachers' vocational training. The active implantation of the ideas of the Concept of the New Ukrainian School into primary education contributed to the further concretization of the main vocational competences of the primary school teacher. Thus, the Ministry of Education of Ukraine determined the basic competences for primary school teachers, required for teaching first grade pupils in 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years (vocational pedagogical, social, cultural, linguistic communicative, psychological-facilitative, entrepreneur, informational-digital). According to the provisions of the Concept of the New Ukrainian School the primary school should have the knowledge of the modern tendencies of the education development in general, primary education in particular; social and legal foundations, laws in the field of primary education; peculiarities of the processes of teaching younger pupils; ways of implementing integrative approach in teaching younger pupils; the concepts of inclusive education.

At the same time the reformation of the Ukrainian school goes on and this requires further improvement of the system of future primary school teachers vocational, as school nowadays needs a motivated competent teachers, capable of constant development and self-improvement. Thus, for the self-improvement of primary school teachers and acquisition of the competence in the activity in the conditions of the New Ukrainian School there has been established the online-education studio «Educational Era»[1] the service of interactive educational literature

[1] https://www.ed-era.com

(EdEraBooks); All-Ukrainian school educational network «Shchodennyk» («The Diary»)[2]. All this makes education management more operational and convenient, provides pupils with various materials, teachers and parents – timetable, digital register, digital diary, home assignments, school site, announcements, library, media library etc. Digital education Mozaik[3] offers teaching with digital textbooks with interactive 3D models, educational videos and interesting tasks, there are also many other web-resources (Shanskova, 2019, pp. 84-105).

The implementation of the new sense presupposes the formation in the teachers and methodologists of the readiness to work in the situation of the selection of new curricula, educational and methodological support; reinforcement of psychological training to introduce new ways of educational interaction with pupils, the employment of the partnership idea. The crucial in the innovative pedagogical activity is the competence approach, aimed at easing the load of the knowledge component of the sense scope. Moreover, the acquisition of the advantages of the competence approach presupposes the employment of the various kinds of integration, for example, the new course «I investigate the world», comprises five educational fields and is used throughout 1-4 grades. It was confirmed in the new proceedings of the European Committee on Education (Brussels), as far as key competences are concerned, (November, 2017 year) that the employment of the competence approach in the education of different countries was successful (Savtchenko, 2020).

The New State primary education standard is based upon the following principles: recognition of the fact that each child is gifted (provision of equal educational facilities, prohibition of any forms of discrimination); the value of childhood (the compliance of the educational requirements with the child's age peculiarities, the recognition of the child's rights to education through activity, game in particular); the joy of cognition (the arrangement of the process of cognition, which may give pleasure to pupils, the limited scope of home assignments to save more time for physical activity and creativity); the wide employment of the research activity in the educational process; the development of the independent personality (instead of «educated helplessness» - fostering autonomy and independent thinking, developing self-esteem and confidence); health (the formation of the healthy lifestyle and facilitation of the physical and psycho-emotional development, which is vital for the children of the younger school age);

[2] http://shodennik.ua
[3] https://www.mozaweb.com/uk

safety (the creation of the atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, the transformation of school into a safe place without violence and bulling (Bibik, 2018, pp. 22-23). Thus, the conceptual ideas of the New Ukrainian School have been introduced mainly in the efficient paradigm of the postmodern education in compliance with the principles of child-centrism, creative activity, freedom of choice of values, inclusive partnership.

The methodological basis for the primary education development in the conditions of the NUS is similar to the development of the education system in European countries. Thus, primary education in Sweden is built upon educational standards – teaching curricula. Since 2011, the government of Sweden has considerably transformed the teaching curricula on the grounds of the reforms, which resulted in the establishment of the denationalized and instrumental concept of education in the two contexts: technical and instrumental discourse of a teaching curriculum, which emphasizes the form, structure and functions of a teaching curriculum; and neoconservative discourse of a teaching curriculum with a focus on the content of a teaching curriculum as the given and undeniable complex of knowledge. The following competences have been singled out: creativity, initiative, adaptability and flexibility, the capability of solving problems, the ability to plan and assess the work, cognitive skills, focus on the results, estimated in the framework of the standardized assessment system according to three sections: «The Objective», «The Contents» та «Knowledge Requirements», related to gift (competences) development in pupils (Sundberg & Wahlström, 2012).

Values and goals in primary education, in particular in curriculum and the assessment of the success of the pupils from European countries are the core of school system in compliance with teachers' qualification (subject teacher or universal teacher, one teacher in class or a few), the duration of pupils' learning, school type, age, complexity and choice of teaching curricula, academic time distribution. Subject-based or interdisciplinary curriculum must first and foremost comply with the teaching objectives to the such degree as to enable pupils to reach and acquire national values. Educational goals are agreed with the values if approved by those who are mostly involved, that is teachers, parents and school authorities. Moreover, teachers in Germany are entitled to teach children national and social values in compliance with the legislation – this is as important as knowledge acquisition. According to the main law on the freedom of education, teachers are free to choose their own techniques (LeMétais, 1997). Lehrer R. and L. Schauble (2006) suggest the technology of successful motivation of the younger generation, to let them be involved in science, inventing and

studying the models of the environment. This requires cooperation with teachers aimed at creating ecologies in class and encouraging children to think independently

3. Pedagogical technology and the priorities in younger pupils teaching in the New Ukrainian School and primary school in the countries of the European Union

Although the regulations, in particular the State standard of primary and secondary education presupposes the all-round development of the personality through the formation in pupils the willing and ability to study, there is actually shortage of alternative teaching techniques, based on methodological foundations of creative abilities formation. The formation of creative abilities results in the employment of creative techniques of problems solutions, implementation of the educational creative tasks, as well as the application of the new alternative methodology of younger pupils' creative development assessment. The objective of such educational activity is the formation of independent thinking and mastering of the operational mechanisms of creative activity. For that purpose, the teacher engages pupils into the activity in which they arrange their work, exchange thoughts, ideas; while using the suggested by the teacher strategy, scheme-frame, determine which operations and in what succession to perform; by asking efficient questions the teacher guides pupils to conscious employment of the skills appropriate for the fulfillment of certain tasks; pupils work at tasks collectively, in small groups or individually (Husak, 2016, pp. 102-107).

In priority of the British primary education the support of high motivation in education and manifestation of independence in the educative and cognitive activity, the development of critical and creative thinking in pupils, the employment of information computer technology (there exists the bilateral knowledge exchange between the employment of ICT at home and at school) in compliance with the age peculiarities, pupils' educational needs. To develop critical and creative thinking teachers can creatively work out and run lessons to formed the skills of autonomous thinking (project ACTS II); children, participating in ACTS, reported about positive changes in their education, especially in employing meta-cognitive strategies. The main objective of learning in primary school should be contribution to the independence manifestation and autonomy of pupils. It's important to assist pupils in building relationship in communicating with others to achieve educational goals and add up to the mutual knowledge exchange. Non-formal learning, such as learning outside, should also be recognized the

relevant constituent of the educative and cognitive pupils' activity. Education system should accept the fundamental importance of primary school learning and in this connection implement efficient strategies of teaching pupils (James & Pollard, 2008). Learning contributes to personality development, enables identity formation, under the influence of education and culture, and due to this fact the child acquires social experience. The didactic teaching technique with the innovative technology and focus on humanistic personality theories in upbringing children are the most widely spread in the European education system (Matheson, 2014).

Erja Vitikka, Leena Krokfors & Elisa Hurmerinta (2012) point out that Finnish curriculum as the guiding educational document is a structural component of the national education system and teachers' vocational instrument, which reflects culturally relevant knowledge, reveals modern concepts and ideas, establishes principles of teaching and learning, provides with methodological recommendations. The basic national teaching curriculum comprises the goals and the content of all school subjects, as well as the description of the mission, values and structure of education. In Finland the development of a teaching curriculum through the cooperation with national and local authorities is a highly developed practice. Finland is famous for the high level of teachers qualification, which plays key role in teaching curricula development and the quality of education provision. In Finland the accent is made upon the pedagogy of assessment. The standards were first implemented into the recent national basic teaching curriculum (POPS, 2004).

In the framework of the European educational paradigm a teaching curriculum may be viewed as a means of the provision of the content and compliance of educational policy. This mechanism may also contribute to strengthening linkages between educational policy and teaching curricula reforming, as well as provide a more efficient response to the expectations and requirements of the youth and society (Tedesco et al., 2013). Svenja Vieluf, David Kaplan, Eckhard Klieme, Sonja Bayer (2012) state that learning practice affects the cognitive experience formation and boosts motivation for success achievement in pupils. It has been detected that in case of fruitful cooperation teachers aspire to better interaction with pupils in compliance with the two related fields of teacher's vocational practice: the practice of teaching in class and participating in vocational academic societies on the national and international levels.

According to R. Keith Sawyer (2008) the concept of optimising learning was formed under the influence of the social transformational processes in Western countries. The following principles have become educational priorities: the employment of individual approach in teaching

every child and reliance upon their individual experience; the integrated approach to educational process arrangement, teaching curricula development; conceptual thinking development, instead of superficial facts scanning; the provision of various knowledge sources (textbooks, libraries, web-sites, experts' consultations; arrangement of group learning; acquisition of authentic knowledge in the context of its employment; the combination of the forms of class and home work. The researcher stipulates that the existing schools should co-work with non-school educational environment – libraries, museums, out-of-class clubs, on-line virtual schools and home – to work out a new model of teaching for the future as scientific understanding of educational processes is still improving the last step to school reformation should be taken by all the society: by parents and teachers, educational administrators and politicians.

4. Conclusion

The postmodern approach to the study of the primary education development problem is first and foremost the integration of the competence, axiological and personally focused approaches in their submission to the principle of child-centrism in teacher's activity, while pupils' needs should be in priority as pupils are the most important participants of the educational process. The complex and ambitious task of the modern primary Ukrainian school is to prepare applicants for successful life and self-realization in the conditions of dynamic modern society with flexible behavior, critical thinking and creative potential regulated by the Concept of the New Ukrainian school. The prominent goals of the concept of the New Ukrainian school are the creation of such educational atmosphere in which there is formed positive attitude to school and learning in pupils which is realized in partnership as a social value. Social partnership will provide harmonious and all-round formation of pupil's personality, creation of life space contributing to the satisfaction of pupils' individual and social needs in compliance with the requirements of the New Ukrainian school.

In the conditions of rebuilding the New Ukrainian school there appeared the demand for primary school teachers with a high level of competence in creative modeling of the educational process in the conditions of the variability of primary education, flexibility in the employment of the innovative technology of vocational activity, innovation in pedagogical planning and arrangement of individual or group lessons, capability of vocational mobility in facing challenges, psychological maturity

in accepting their own personal and vocational qualities and what is important – values of the unique younger pupils and objective reality of the inclusive educational environment.

The new model of postmodern reality is built on the ground of the techniques of «non-linear»,critical, flexible and creative thinking of the partners of inclusive edu cational process, vocational thinking which comprises pedagogical knowledge as the subjective construction - universe – the unique response to the variability of postmodern education. In this connection postmodern reality of primary school education development in the conditions of NUS is connected with the freedom of creative choice by teacher of the innovative technology, provided by the Concept of the New Ukrainian school, the strategies of younger pupils' individual development in compliance with their psychological personal qualities as the resource provision of welfare of all the pupils in class, teacher's reflexive attitude and creative approach to successful arrangement of subject – subject interaction of younger pupils during their teamwork.

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