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SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF PRE-SCHOOL
AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION:
UKRAINIAN AND EUROPEAN CONTEXTS

Today, education is defined as the most important condition of spiritual, intellectual, cultural and physical development of the individual, the basis for the economic welfare of a separate person and the whole community, a pledge of social development, a necessary determinant of social progress.

Variability and mobility of society have become relevant attributes of the modern world. The quantity and quality of information have increased in geometric progression, therefore, the use of old educational technologies, methods and means for its mastering is a process not only ineffective, but also impossible. Creating new forms and means to cope with ever increasing information challenges demands rethinking of a person's own intellectual resources as well as the search and development of personal potential for solving new problems in life.

Ensuring successful functioning of the intellectual and psycho-physiological spheres of the individual actualizes the need to intensify the processes of education, upbringing and development from an early age, when the plasticity of mental activity makes it possible to adapt to new realities and implement complex tasks

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of social adaptation of the child. This matter is also of interdisciplinary kind because it requires comprehensive scientific research and practical recommendations in the field of psychology, medicine, physiology, hygiene, ergonomics, sociology, philosophy, social pedagogy, demography, economics, social science and pedagogy itself. Its positive solution depends, first of all, on the efficiency and applied nature of scientific research in the field of various sciences, as well as on the ability of parents, educators and pre-school teachers to implement theoretical stances into scientific and practical activities.

Education in the modern world has an adaptive character and is intended to promote people's awareness of the rapidly changing world, which requires special mental, spiritual and physical resources and preparation for the future. Acknowledging the responsibility of education for human life and health, scientists remind us that: "... we must teach the younger generation to survive in extreme socio-economic conditions, but also to bring them a kind of culture of existence in the world, in a society not only included in the 'earthly' global, but also cosmic, universal processes."¹

At the same time, education is determined by the most conservative component of living in contemporary society: "At the same time, national educational systems, despite individual initiatives and projects, remain isolated and most rigid elements of modern civilization Reforms in this area transform only real components, that is, the form of education (its content, methods, means, goals, programs, algorithms, etc.), without affecting, in essence, its 'human dimension' – people involved in educational processes. Educational systems ignore the problems and challenges of a globalized world."² In this way, the personal component should become the central and top-priority idea of constructing educational systems.

In the process of development and way towards excellence in the modern system of pre-school and elementary education it seems important to take into account the "civilization" determinant as a prerequisite for improving this process on the basis of the principles of child-centeredness and environmental compatibility. Scholars define the underlying foundations of early childhood education and account for the need for pedagogical innovations proceeding from the individuality and uniqueness of the person: "We believe that in today's conditions it is the child that must become the dominant with unique and age-specific characteristics. The most advanced paradigms, concepts, and innovative techniques will

¹ Frankl (1990, p.160).

² Rogers (2002, p. 6).

not be meaningful and will not achieve if they are focused on social, state, global or other factors without taking into account the needs, opportunities, interests, circumstances of the life and health of an individual child.”³

Ukrainian researchers of integration processes (V. Andrushchenko, V. Zhuravsky, K. Korsak, O. Lokshina, O. Sukhomlynskaya)⁴ believe that the integration of the higher education system of Ukraine into the European educational space will promote reaching higher quality of university education and strengthening the competitiveness of a specialist in the world labour market; the mobility of students, lecturers, researchers to implement a variety of scientific projects; ensuring equitable access to higher education for all students; essential strengthening of positions of Ukrainian higher educational institutions of different levels of accreditation in the national, European and world labour market and the market of educational services.

We believe that alignment of Ukrainian education with European standards will require transforming education into a lifelong learning process; expansion of opportunities and facilities for inclusive education; a radical change in the paradigm of Ukrainian education from authoritarianism to humanism and democracy; careful attention to the formation and development of each individual, taking into account own life trajectory of development.⁵

Important for today is the implementation of an individual approach to personality in the process of education and preparation of children to school. Thus, the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017) provides the definition of “individual educational trajectory” as a “personal way of realizing personal potential of the applicant of education, which is formed with consideration of his abilities, interests, needs, motivation, opportunities and experience, is based on the choice of the education of the species, forms and pace of education, subjects of educational activity and their proposed educational programs, educational disciplines and their complexity, methods and means of learning.”⁶

Particularly valuable in scientific positions of researchers (N. Havrysh) is the integrity of the approach to the child, its interpretation of the subject of the educational process: “The process of comprehension and appropriation by the child of intellectual, cultural, spiritual values of humanity does not occur mechanically according to the standard formula: educator gives – a child takes. In order not to avoid impoverishment of the soul when enriched with information, it is necessary

³ Pantiuk (2018, p.118).

⁴ Andrushchenko (2004), Zhuravsky (2003), Korsak (2003), Lokshyna (2015), Sukhomlynskaya (2003).

⁵ Pantiuk (2018).

⁶ Cf. Law of Ukraine “On Education”, <http://en.osvita.ua/legislation/law/2231/> (01.09.2017).

for the child to be an active subject of the cognition process, in particular.” The issue of individual and nature-related development of the children in the process of their pre-school and elementary education remains an imperative for pedagogy.

The development of man is interpreted by scientists as an expanded process of quantitative and qualitative changes in the body and mind, thinking, feelings and behavior, which is the outcome of biological processes in the organism and environmental influences.⁷ O. Vishnevsky defines development as the improvement of the functions and qualities of a person concerning the spiritual, mental, social and physical spheres of life. The scholar believes that “the main precondition for developmental learning is that each child should work on the brink of opportunities and set more complex, higher goals, which is achieved through the wide use of educational tasks. Development begins where knowledge, abilities and skills end.”⁸

It should be emphasized that all directions of development (spiritual, physical, mental, social, intellectual) equally affect the formation of the individual. This is especially noticeable at the early childhood stage: children can count well and read, but can not focus and keep focus for a long time, get tired, can not remember figures or facts. In this case, it is about adequate intellectual and insufficient physiological and mental development. Only the balanced development provides the child with a comfortable transition to systematic schooling. G.Newfeld, a Canadian psychologist, having written “Do Not Lose Your Children”, states that “development begins with a resting spot”. It’s about the fact that a child can and wants to perceive peacefully the world only when he feels safe and does not experience violence over himself.

The task of adults – parents, educators, teachers – to create optimal conditions for the development, education, upbringing and socialization of the child implies:⁹

- construction of the educational space on the basis of the principle of nature and culture conformity;
- awareness of the need to take into account the individual vector of development of each child as special and unique;
- selection of the most effective forms, methods and means of training;
- adaptation of the content and form to the individual and age characteristics of a 5-6 year-old child;
- taking into account previous educational and cultural experience;

⁷ *Great explanatory dictionary of modern Ukrainian language. Development* (2005).

⁸ Vishnevsky (2006, p.103).

⁹ Pantiuk (2018).

- creation of a developing educational space;
- widespread use of health-saving techniques and technologies;
- development of the child's motivating sphere, taking into account existing social and cultural-educational determinants, etc.

Consequently, we consider the following educational dominants at the present stage of development of society:

- subject-subjective model of the child and the teacher;
- harmonious combination and realization of tasks of physiological, physical, social, motivational, didactic and intellectual readiness of the child to school education;
- mandatory implementation of the principles of nature compliance, taking into account the individual characteristics;
- construction of the educational space by means of health protection technologies;
- creation of a developing educational space by means of traditional and innovative technologies;
- balanced and controlled use of modern information technologies in schools during school preparation and various means for their implementation (gadgets);
- close interaction of all educational institutions (schools, families, preschool institutions, elementary schools, etc.) and the use of the model of educational unity of educational influences;
- construction of educational space on the basis of systematicity and continuity of preschool and elementary education;
- development of conceptual continuity of educational programs in the sense of their content paradigm;
- broad education of parents and the implementation of joint educational projects with their participation;
- taking into account globalization challenges and risks and developing advanced educational practices for opposition.

All contemporary educators, both representatives of the European Union, and Ukrainian scholars and pedagogues-practitioners, speak in favour and importance of an appropriate design of early education – preschool and elementary levels. This position is based on the results of many studies proving that children who have access to high-quality pre-school education achieve far greater success, evidenced in high-quality results in different fields of knowledge and generally become more successful in life than those not having attended pre-school institutions.

Numerous reports and studies within the European Union indicate the need for high-quality pre-school education in different types of institutions and emphasize the need for a child to stay in them: “Strengthening continuity between pre-school and elementary education in Ukraine is correlated with pan-European tendencies of accentuation of pre-school and pre-school in EU countries.”¹⁰ This position of the Member States is underpinned by the results of numerous scientific studies, which confirm the direct link between the involvement of children in pre-school education and the country’s economic and social progress.

The participation of children in high-quality pre-school education has meaningful positive effects in the future, according to the report of the European Commission at the European Council and the European Parliament “Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems” (2006): pupils who have been enrolled in pre-school education are demonstrating higher academic achievements and socialization gains during secondary school education than their peers, as well as rapid career growth in adulthood. It is proved that the intensified orientation of pre-school education for children from the problem population (low income, migrants) and children with special needs provides additional social and economic benefits in the future;¹¹

– high-quality pre-school education intensifies the formation of language skills, reading, mathematical, natural and social competences and the ability to study at junior level, as shown by the results of the study “Pre-school education and care in Europe: overcoming social and cultural inequality”,¹²

– children who have been enrolled in pre-school education show better results shown in international comparative studies of pupils’ quality of knowledge compared to their peers who did not attend pre-school institutions. The European Commission’s Key Data on Pre-School Education and Care in Europe (2014) has shown a significant progress in this category of schoolchildren in PIRLS 2011.¹³

The EU Member States are actively implementing the idea of intensifying children’s involvement in pre-school education into practice. According to statis-

¹⁰ Lokshyna (2015, p. 69).

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament. Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems. 8.9.2006 COM (2006) 481 final. {SEC (2006) 1096}. Brussels: Commission of the European Union. European Union (2006, p. 8).

¹² Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice (2009).

¹³ Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice (2009, p.13).

tics, in the 28 countries of the EU, at the present stage, 93% of children of pre-school age visit pre-school establishments (starting from the age of four).¹⁴

The priority focus on pre-school education in the present situation has become the subject of close attention of almost all the countries of the European Union. Data on the state of pre-school education and the issue of preparing children for school are monitored by the relevant authorities in all countries of the European Union and published in special reports of Eurostat.¹⁵ They indicate some progress in the organization of pre-school education in member countries. The task of pre-school education in European countries is the development of a new strategy for pre-school education, means for its implementation, and a qualitative training for pre-school institutions, which are represented by both state and private initiatives.

The main objective of the Europe 2020 Education Strategy is to provide all European children with a sound early educational background. Thus, at the forum of ministers of education of European countries (2014) the task was defined: to cover with pre-school education 95% of children from with the purpose of their qualitative preparation for school education.¹⁶ The European Union actively promotes and extends opportunities for pre-school education aimed at equalizing the rights of women and men to work, providing them with adequate opportunities for success in the market. Similar tendencies were observed in the Soviet period under study.

The current concern of the European Union is the issue of access to high-quality pre-school education for all children. These issues remain relevant for Ukraine as well. Since the system of pre-school education, taking into account socio-economic determinants, has undergone striking destruction since 1990's. Only in the last decade there is a tendency for the development of Ukrainian pre-school education.

Under special care of the government are also pre-school children from a disadvantaged environment. These categories include children with a low income context; migrant children; children who are looked after by dysfunctional parents.¹⁷ Researchers emphasize that 25% of children from EU countries are at risk of poverty. The children from Romania and Bulgaria are at special risk.

¹⁴ Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Eurydice (2009, p. 61).

¹⁵ M. Gyrowska-Fells. Wczesna edukacja i opieka nad dziećmi w Europie – nowy raport Eurydice, http://jows.pl/sites/default/files/fells_0.pdf

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

The main educational objectives of early education in the European Union are:

- improvement of the material life of preschool children;
- caring for personal, emotional and social development of the individual;
- development of linguistic and communicative skills;
- physical development and a healthy lifestyle culture;
- formation of artistic skills and the development of knowledge about the surrounding world;
- realization of linguistic and elementary-mathematical preparation for school.¹⁸

Each country develops its own goals and forms of preparing a child for school. American scholars G. Dryden and J. Vos have identified the main positions on the organization of education of children taking into account both socio-pedagogical and personal determinants. Among the most important provisions are:

- everyone today is both a student and a teacher. And for the first time in the history, they consider children an important factor in the revolution in the means of communication;
- for most people, learning becomes more effective when it brings joy;
- it is worth creating an environment where even children from poor families would be willing to study independently;
- the most effective time for the development of educational abilities is for the pre-school age – when the basic nervous connections of the brain are formed;
- people learn most effectively when they want to study, not at any predetermined time;
- brain research proves that the level of intellect can be increased in the appropriate environment;
- each of us has a different mindset, own learning style, it is as individual as the fingerprints;
- the world around should be used as a classroom with the emphasis on practical learning;
- computer games can change many aspects of the learning process.¹⁹

The analysis of foreign experience in the field of children's preparation for the school shows a significant similarity with modern Ukrainian realities in this area. It is echoed with the principles of the new Ukrainian school, which focuses on the values of each individual person, his free and natural development; promotes

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ Dryden (2011, p. 21-27).

partner interaction among children, teachers and parents; provides material support to educational institutions considering contemporary social conditions.

A separate issue in the system of pre-school education of the European Union is the qualification of pedagogical and guardian staff. Bachelor's degree is the minimum required qualification level. For the pre-school institutions, higher educational establishments prepare specialists of the three types: teachers, guardians, support staff. Portugal, Italy, Iceland and France have the highest educational requirements for pedagogical staff – master's degree, other European countries – bachelor's degree.²⁰

Thus, the issues of pre-school and elementary education of children in the countries of the European Union and in Ukraine are consonant with each other, because they focus on the personality of the child which implies taking into consideration his originality and identity; contribution to his physical, moral, spiritual, mental, emotional and aesthetic development; creation of the optimal educational field to facilitate personality formation and satisfaction of his cognitive interests; expansion of a wide range of activities among all educational institutions – family, pre-school establishments, secondary school, public organizations, etc.

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²⁰ M. Gyrowska-Fells. *Wczesna edukacja i opieka nad dziećmi w Europie – nowy raport Eurydice*, http://jows.pl/sites/default/files/fells_0.pdf

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SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF PRE-SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: UKRAINIAN AND EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

S u m m a r y

In the article it has been mentioned the social determinants of preschool and elementary education in the light of through the Ukrainian and European endeavours. The attention was paid to the questions considering the assonance of preschool and elementary education of children in the countries of the European Union and Ukraine. It has been synthesised the requirements stated to parents and tutors of the primary school considering the creation of favourable conditions for the development, teaching, upbringing and socialization of the child both at preschool age and at the elementary school age.

Key words: determinants; social determinants; pre-school education; elementary education; Ukrainian and European context.

SPOŁECZNE UWARUNKOWANIA EDUKACJI PRZEDSZKOLNEJ I WCZESNOSZKOLNEJ. DOŚWIADCZENIA UKRAIŃSKIE I EUROPEJSKIE

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule zostały przedstawione społeczne determinanty edukacji przedszkolnej i podstawowej poprzez pryzmat ukraińskiego i europejskiego doświadczenia. Uwagę skupiono na pytaniach dotyczących przedszkolnej i podstawowej edukacji dzieci w krajach Unii Europejskiej i na Ukrainie. Badano zadania rodziców, wychowawców przedszkolnych placówek edukacyjnych oraz nauczycieli szkoły podstawowej dotyczących tworzenia optymalnych warunków rozwoju, nauczania, wychowania, socjalizacji przedszkolaka i ucznia klas podstawowych.

Słowa kluczowe: determinanty; determinanty społeczne; edukacja przedszkolna; edukacja podstawowa; ukraińskie doświadczenie; europejskie doświadczenie.