

Section 3. History of Education

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Psychological and Pedagogical Researches in the Sphere of Primary Education in Ukraine (the 60s of the 20th century)

Social and political, socio-economic and cultural transformations which took place in Ukraine in the 50s of the 20th century caused the forming of new educational order: preparing of highly educated skilled specialists. An important role in solving this problem belonged to the primary education as a basis that lays down the foundations of knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for further successful studies. However the school practice of that time was behind the real demands of life; it did not answer the level of science, technique and culture development; it did not take into consideration the growing cognitive possibilities of primary school pupils. Specialists in the sphere of primary education ascertained that the peculiarities of primary school education did not differ greatly from those which had taken place thirty years before; educational content remained almost unchanged from pre-wartimes, the main features of which were narrow practicalness, absence of theoretical generalizations etc. Consequently an objective need in reformation of the primary school link caused the beginning of psychological and pedagogical researches in this sphere.

At the end of the 50s of the 20th century the Primary Education Department of General and Polytechnic Education Research Institute under APS of the RSFSR, the Studies and Development Laboratory of Theory and History of Pedagogics Research Institute under APS of the RSFSR under the leading direction of L. V. Zankov,

the Laboratory of Children of Junior School Age Psychology of Psychology Institute under APS of the RSFSR under the leading direction of D. B. Elkonin and others organized the researches directed to establish a connection between the psychical development of a child and the structure of education process and to find out whether the development of primary school pupils under the conditions of a traditional model of studies is the limit of their possibilities. In the course of theoretical generalizations and experimental researches it became obvious that educational content and methods in the primary schools did not provide primary school pupils with the necessary intellectual and psychic development¹. Consequently scientists decided it necessary to step aside from the traditional educational system which was oriented onto the pupils' acquirement of correct writing, reading and elementary counting skills; they decided to carry out junior pupils' general development, to use their inborn possibilities more effectively. In spite of different approaches to the solving of this problem the majority of researchers suggested to speed up the process of fulfilling the programmes, to introduce the studying of the elementary theoretical knowledge in the course of primary education, to apply general conclusions accessible for the pupils, to carry out more purposeful work for the development of their activity and independence. Using of such approaches had to increase the effectiveness of studies and to give the opportunity to shorten the primary education course to three years².

Those innovations were supported by teachers and gave a powerful impulse for the experimental researches concerning the questions of structural and content reorganization of the primary education. Thus, in the first half of the 60s of the 20th century nearly 15 variants of educational programmes concerning primary schools were experimented in the Soviet Union (by psychological and pedagogical laboratories under the direction of L. V. Zankov, D. B. Elkonin, M. A. Melnikov, S. M. Yazykov; by pedagogics and psychology departments of Leningrad Pedagogical Institute named after O. I. Hertsen etc.). In Ukraine such experimental researches were carried out by Pedagogics and Psychology Research Institutes. The educational system worked out by the Primary Education Department of General and Polytechnic Education Research Institute under APS of the RSFSR was assumed as a basis for the experiment organized by the research assistants of the Primary Education Department of Pedagogics Research Institute (PRI further) of the USSR under the direction of S. S. Kovalenko. However some changes were introduced into this system taking into account some points of L. V. Zankov's developing education theory (studies with high level of difficultness, leading role of theoretical knowledge, speed-up process of fulfill-

¹ Пироженко А. В. Реформування змісту загальної середньої освіти в Україні (середина 60-х – початок 80-хх рр. XX ст.): монографія/А. В. Пироженко. – К.: Пед. думка, 2013. – С. 178.

² Коваленко С. С. Педагогічно осмислити нове у змісті і системі початкової освіти /С. С. Коваленко//Радянська школа. – 1964. – № 12. – С. 33.

ing the programmes) and the peculiarities of schools' work in the USSR (simultaneous studies of the Ukrainian and Russian languages)¹. The experimental tasks included the following points: to study the possibilities of fulfilling the primary education programmes in three years; to define the educational extent and content in the 1st-3rd classes; to show the peculiarities of preparing of students for mastering the systematic course of sciences' bases starting from the 4th class².

For realization of the experiment the research assistants of the Primary Education Department of PRI of the USSR worked out the programmes for the Ukrainian and Russian languages and arithmetic. They contained points which concerned the enlarging of the theoretical knowledge and educational extent and higher level of its difficultness in comparison with the current programmes. Experimental research was carried out during 1963–1966 at Kyiv secondary schools № № 71 and 129 and at Volnovakha secondary school № 1 (Donetsk region). Its results showed that the renewed educational content allowed to provide primary school pupils with the higher level of general development, to speed up the educational process and to master the primary school programme in three years as a result³.

We should mention that the research in the sphere of primary education was also carried out by a group of research assistants of Psychology Research Institute of the USSR under the direction of O. V. Skrypchenko. The aims of their experimental work were the following: to find out whether junior school pupils were able to master the new programme material at higher theoretical level; to examine the correlation between studies and pupils' mental development; to investigate dynamics of this development⁴. Working out the programme and methodology of experiment the researchers based upon the ideas of the well-known Ukrainian psychologist G. S. Kostjuk about interconnection of studies, education and mental development; about the unity of content, operations and motives of pupils' cognitive activity⁵. Scientists took into

¹ Колегії Міністерства освіти УРСР. Доповідна записка «Про експериментальне дослідження системи і змісту навчання початкових класів» (1966 р.)//ЦДАВО України, ф. 5127, оп. 1, спр. 1045, арк. 63.

² Стенограма засідань Ученого Совету інститута по вопросу опыта проверки программ трехлетнего обучения в начальных классах и проблемах дальнейшего усовершенствования общего вечернего и заочного образования (9–25 апреля 1964 г.)//ЦДАВО України, ф. 5127, оп. 1, спр. 871, арк. 16.

³ Колегії Міністерства освіти УРСР. Доповідна записка «Про експериментальне дослідження системи і змісту навчання початкових класів» (1966 р.)//ЦДАВО України, ф. 5127, оп. 1, спр. 1045, арк. 64–65.

⁴ Скрипченко О. В. Експериментальне вивчення арифметики в другому класі/О. В. Скрипченко //Радянська школа. – 1966. – № 3. – С. 89.

⁵ Скрипченко О. В. Досвід експериментальної перебудови навчання в перших класах /О. В. Скрипченко, Н. Ф. Скрипченко//Радянська школа. – 1965. – № 9. – С. 48.

account also the results of psychological and pedagogical researches conducted by N. A. Mechynska, N. S. Rozhdestvenskij, A. A. Ljublinska, A. S. Pcholko, L. V. Zankov, D. B. Elkonin etc. However, reorganizing primary education content they did not aim to shorten the duration of primary education, as L. V. Zankov offered. “We did not agree with these Zankov’s conclusions, — marked O. V. Skrypchenko, — because they do not only solve the actual school problems, but vice versa — they create a lot of additional difficulties. Our aims are to adopt the educational material for 1st-4th classes to the pupils’ age-related possibilities at least partly; to raise junior school pupils’ general development”¹.

The organizers of the experiment worked out the programmes for the Ukrainian and Russian languages, arithmetic, natural science, hand work and music. Educational material, some training exercises in particular, that did not have a cognitive value, was taken out from educational content, and notions and concepts necessary for pupils’ general development were offered for studying. Thus, elements of arithmetic theory, algebra and geometrical preliminary instruction were introduced into the programme in arithmetic; notions about family words, unstressed vowels, noun, adjective, verb were introduced into the programme in language studies; elementary ideas about the Earth form, land, water, parts of the world, some biological phenomena etc. were introduced into the programme in natural science.

We should point out that junior school pupils of Kyiv secondary schools №№ 149 and 166 took part in the experiment that was carried out during 1964–1967. The results of that research confirmed that the increase of educational theoretical level speeded up the pupils’ mental development. The thing was that educational content and methods influenced greatly the pupils’ development of thinking, forming the general abilities to do educational tasks, and also the rate of changing from differentiation into integration of cognitive structures².

We should also mark that there were no changes actually in spite of numerous theoretical works, experimental researches as for primary education, in particular as for the current school plans and programmes. An academician O. Y. Savchenko asserts that “the primary school had mainly remained as a school of abilities and skills up to the end of the 1960s”³.

The ways of successive improvement of primary education were defined in the resolution of CC of CPSU and Council of Ministers of the USSR which was titled

¹ Скрипченко О.В. Експериментальне вивчення арифметики в другому класі/О. В. Скрипченко //Радянська школа. – 1966. – № 3. – С. 89.

² Скрипченко О.В. Вплив змісту і методів навчання на розумовий розвиток учнів I-III класів/О.В. Скрипченко//Радянська школа. – 1967. – № 3. – С. 63.

³ Савченко О.Я. Дидактика початкової освіти: підручник/О. Я. Савченко. – К.: Грамота, 2012. – С. 58.

“About the measures of further improvement of secondary school work” (in 1966). Those ways were the following: to teach systematically the bases of sciences starting from the fourth year of studies, i. e. to shorten the duration of primary education to three years; to adopt the educational content to the demands of science, technique and culture development; to provide order succession while studying of the bases of sciences, more rational division of educational material according to the years of studies; to manage with the overwork of pupils¹. According to the mentioned resolution the research assistants of PRI of the USSR prepared new programmes and textbooks for three-year primary school, where the results of previous theoretical and experimental works made by the Ukrainian and Russian researchers were taken into account. Experimental verification of them began on September 1, 1967/1968 school year. Researches were carried out at schools of Kalush district (Ivano-Frankivsk region) and at schools of Pavlohrad district (Dnipropetrovsk region). Soon the schools from other regions underwent those researches². Realization of the experiment had to prove the pedagogical expediency of new school plans, programmes and textbooks for three-year primary school; to check accordance of educational material content with the preparation level and pupils’ development etc³.

For realization of the experiment the following projects of new programmes for the 1st-3rd classes were prepared and sent to the schools: projects of new programmes for the Ukrainian and Russian languages, mathematics, natural science and labour studies; calendar plans for the Ukrainian and Russian languages, mathematics, natural science, labour studies, physical training, drawing, singing and music; notebooks with the printed basis for mathematics; the methodical instructions for teachers. 10 new textbooks and educational manuals concerning the Ukrainian and Russian languages and natural science were prepared for the pupils from classes under experiment. The research assistants of PRI of the USSR worked out methodical instructions, calendar and lesson plans and prepared film-strips for each textbook⁴.

Experimental verification of new primary education content was finished in 1970/71 school year. Its results testified that the majority of pupils from the classes under the experiment had mastered educational material according to the new pro-

¹ Про заходи дальшого поліпшення роботи середньої загальноосвітньої школи//Збірник наказів та інструкцій Міністерства освіти Української РСР. – 1966. - № 23. – С. 2.

² О подготовке школ Украинской ССР к переходу на новые учебные планы и программы//ЦДАВО України, ф. 5127, оп. 1, спр. 1186, арк. 20.

³ Богданович М. В. Трирічний експеримент завершено/М. В. Богданович, Н. Ф. Скрипченко//Початкова школа. – 1970. - № 11. – С. 4.

⁴ Отчет института об экспериментальном исследовании эффективного программного метода обучения в начальных классах средних школ за 1967–1968 уч. г. //ЦДАВО України, ф. 5127, оп. 1, спр. 1186, арк. 1–2.

grammes; “the children had acquired more perfect abilities to observe, to compare, to analyse, to systematize,.. necessary abilities and skills in every subject”¹. The actual knowledge level of the junior school pupils had increased greatly during three years of studies according to the new programmes than of those pupils who had been studying according to the old programmes for four years². Consequently all primary classes in Ukraine started to introduce the new educational content and duration of studies from 1971.

Thus, psychological and pedagogical researches in the sphere of primary education carried out in Ukraine in the 60s of the 20th century caused structural and content changes within this link of school: they resulted in shortening of its duration to three years and updating of educational content. As a result of the conducted researches such approaches were put into the basis of forming of new primary education content: studies at higher level of difficultness, speeding-up the process of mastering of educational material, enlarging of theoretical knowledge; it allowed to guarantee the maximum development of junior school pupils’ cognitive possibilities. On the whole the offered primary education content agreed with the social requirements and needs of pupils’ development provided their proper preparation for the mastering of sciences bases in the middle school classes etc. At the same time the introduction of the new programmes caused a lot of problems: the teachers were not prepared enough for the realization of such innovations; it was very difficult for the teachers of noncomplete schools to work; the pupils were overworked with their studies; the number of the pupils lagging behind increased³. This in turn induced specialists in the sphere of primary education to the next searches and experiments and this question will be touched in our further publications.

¹ Богданович М. В. Три роки за новими програмами/М. В. Богданович [та ін.]//Початкова школа. – 1972. – № 8. – С. 14.

² Ніколаєнко І. В. Проблеми і завдання початкової школи/І. В. Ніколаєнко//Початкова школа. – 1972. – № 8. – С. 5.

³ Богданович М. В. Трирічний експеримент завершено/М. В. Богданович, Н. Ф. Скрипченко//Початкова школа. – 1970. - № 11. – С. 10–11; Рік роботи по-новому//Початкова школа. – 1970. – № 8. – С. 3–4.