

Primary Education in Ukraine. History and European Priorities

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Abstract: The article briefly discusses the main models of providing primary education in the leading countries of Europe, in particular, the organization of the educational process. Against their background and as a result of historical consideration (the long experience of the totalitarian regime), it is shown how post-Soviet Ukraine reached its transitional system of primary education. The international value of the article lies in the demonstration of the historical totalitarian influence on primary education in comparison with the countries of ancient democracies. The article may be of interest to educational historians, specialists in comparative pedagogy, etc. Goals as a determining component in the system of primary education were formed under the influence of state educational policy, the needs of society, school practice, research in the field of primary education. The invariant goals of primary education in the chosen chronological framework remained the all-round development of children of primary school age; upbringing of high moral qualities in them, the development of their mental and physical abilities, in accordance with the prevailing social and political system, acquired a communist or national connotation. It is proved that Ukrainian primary education is still at the initial stage of borrowing pan-European value and methodological systems.

Keywords: *Ukrainian society, education reform, educational policy, school practice, all-round development of children, restructuring processes.*

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Introduction

In the context of modern civilizational challenges, transformations in the political, economic and cultural life of Ukrainian society, the aggravation of competition in all spheres of activity, an important vector of state policy is the reform of education, taking into account European priorities. Currently, one of the reforms is the creation of the New Ukrainian School, designed to form a holistic, fully developed personality with an active life position, able to change the world around us, compete in the labor market, learn throughout life. A special role in this process belongs to primary education, which has both direct and indirect impact on previous and subsequent levels of education is the ground for the child's entry into the socio-cultural and educational space, focused on the formation of key and subject competencies necessary for further successful learning and self-realization of the individual. In view of the above, primary education should adopt and implement new ideas earlier and more actively than other levels of general secondary education.

Current educational transformations actualize thorough study, comprehension and creative use of domestic historical and pedagogical experience. Especially important in this context is the appeal to the events of the second half of the XX - early XXI century, which caused positive changes in modern primary education, stimulated the search and development of new approaches to the education of primary school children.

Historical and pedagogical science has significant achievements in the development of general secondary education in the Soviet era and the era of state independence of Ukraine. Undoubtedly, along with other levels of general secondary education, the researchers' attention was focused on primary education as the foundation of further education and development of the child's personality. From different methodological approaches, Ukrainian scholars (Havrylenko, & Kuzyomko, 2018; Hrytsenko, 1966; Onishchuk et al., 2020) and modernity (Havrylenko, 2019; Ivanyuk, 2014; Komogorova et al., 2021; Melnyk et al., 2021; Vetokhina, 1991) considered certain issues of primary education within certain chronological limits to a greater or lesser extent through the prism of general school issues.

In recent decades, researchers have been interested in various problems of primary education in historical and pedagogical retrospect, which has often been destructive and contains classical and outdated approaches to the implementation of primary education.

In a number of dissertation studies, the chronological framework of which mainly covers the second half of the 20th - early 21st centuries, the following aspects were the subject of historical and pedagogical analysis: the development of the ideas of humanistic pedagogy in primary education (Zemlyanska, 2005); developmental and problem-based education of primary schoolchildren (Nechyporenko, 2015; Zamashkina, 2005) individualization and differentiation of primary education (Vozhehova, 2008); development of textbooks in primary education (Kodlyuk, 2006; Vysochan, 2008); assessment of educational achievements of primary schoolchildren (Chupakhina, 2007; Predyk, 2009); the evolution of primary school in Transcarpathia (Fizeshi, 2016).

Despite the wide range of issues analyzed by scientists, there is still no comprehensive study of the development of primary education in Ukraine within certain chronological limits. In this regard, the relevance of the proposed article is due to the scientific and theoretical aspect of the need to overcome the superficiality and fragmentation of historical and pedagogical knowledge about the development of primary education as a link of general secondary education in Ukraine in the second half of the 20th - early 21st centuries in order to form a holistic understanding of the significant contrast with the common European educational space.

The purpose is a comprehensive disclosure of the organizational and pedagogical foundations of the development of primary education as a link of general secondary education in Ukraine and the comparison of the totalitarian and post-totalitarian experience of its formation with the countries of ancient democracies, the identification of contradictions in the development of Ukrainian and Western European primary schools.

The main ways of organizing primary education in Western Europe

Let us briefly consider the history of the school of Western European countries from the middle of the twentieth century to the present (similarly as we will do with the main subject of research). In addition, there are four periods:

1. Postwar reconstruction and modernization of general education (1945 -50's).
2. The period of intensive reforms in the conditions of scientific and technical progress and economic crisis (60th-70th).
3. Economic reorganization of general education (mid 70's-90's).
4. Modernization in the framework of globalization (2000s - and today) (Cooper, 2014).

The history of primary school in the countries of the former social camp is somewhat different (Alexander, 2013). Thus, the history of the school of Eastern European countries can be represented by five periods:

1. Postwar reconstruction / restructuring (1945-50's).
2. Reforms of a single socialist school on the model of the Soviet educational system (late 50's -60's).
3. Improving the quality of national systems of the socialist school in accordance with the socio-cultural specifics of the states (70s-mid 80's).
4. Reorganization of the school, caused by changes in political and socio-economic systems (mid 80's-90's);
5. Modernization of the school in the context of globalization (2000s) (Cooper, 2014).

Let's consider the main practical aspects of the provision of primary education in Western Europe.

Germany is considered the leader of education. German students go to school at the age of 6, with schooling lasting 4 years (in most German states) or 6 years, as in Berlin and Brandenburg. One of the features of German primary education is the lack of clear start dates for the school year and holidays. In every state (and in every private school) they are different. Holidays are more frequent, but shorter, for example, summer vacations last only 6 weeks. The general teaching load in elementary school is 20-30 hours per week. From the second half of the first grade, children learn a foreign language - most often English.

The education system in Germany is structured in such a way that adaptation to learning in children is smooth and flexible (Porsch, & Wilden, 2017). There are no grades in the first grade, as well as now in the Ukrainian school. In many regions, they appear from the third grade in general in the case of parental consent, and only from the fourth they become mandatory. In order to reduce the study load, many subjects in elementary school are taught in large blocks, for example, they combine history, geography and scientific research necessary to study the world around them. All schoolchildren spend their breaks outside, playing outdoor games or just relaxing. In German schools there is no uniform, because children should be as comfortable as possible. Studying in elementary school in Germany is not forced, but rather motivated. Training often takes place in a playful way. Despite this, it is in the elementary school that the further educational route of the child is determined. By the end of the fourth grade, a special commission determines from the results of its academic success which school he will go to: a prestigious high school, a secondary school at the Realschule or Hauptschule, where only basic education can be obtained.

In the UK, there is a free education system that any child can receive (Yarovaya, 2015). There are also private educational institutions. There are boarding schools where neither students nor their parents have the right to challenge the conditions of study and living. There are more than two thousand such schools in Britain. In Britain, children study from the age of 4 by attending a school for toddlers. Communication between parents and teachers in British schools is a short individual conversation, and the report card with the results of the semester is sent by e-mail. Much attention is paid to charity in British schools, and various events involving students are constantly organized in educational institutions. Often they are obliged to engage in social work.

Practical aspects of British education can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Practical system of primary education in Great Britain

Source: systematized by the authors

Years of education	Academic year	School week	Stages of education	Rating system	Exams	Diary and homework
From 4 to 18-19 years old	Three semesters from early September to July 31, vacation 6 times	Five days, lessons from 9 to 16. There is an hour break for lunch. Afternoon for clubs and sports.	Toddler school, primary school, secondary school, high school, 11 or 13 grades.	The most common letter scale, where "A" is the maximum and "G" is unsatisfactory. Some schools give a second grade for academic excellence, it is expressed in numbers from 1 to 5, where 5 is the minimum.	From primary school	There are no diaries. Homework from primary school.

In France, most children attend public schools (Montalbo, 2021). They are free for everyone, but at the beginning of the school year, parents often give money for leisure for children - sightseeing trips, movie tickets, etc. Class numbering begins in reverse order: for example, in high school children go to the sixth grade, and finish the third, after which they take an exam and receive a certificate. In college, a child whose performance is much better can be transferred to a higher grade, and an unsuccessful child

can be transferred to a lower grade. In French schools, children are not allowed to use the phones, and on long breaks, be sure to go outside.

Practical aspects of French education can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Practical system of primary education in France

Source: systematized by the authors

Years of education	Academic year	School week	Stages of education	Rating system	Exams	Diary and homework
From 6 to 15-17 years old	From September to July, divided into three semesters. 5 vacations. The country is divided into zones - A, B and C - by regions, with different dates of vacations.	Five days, in college from 8.30 to 17, on Wednesdays to 12. There is a break of 2 hours for lunch and rest.	Preschool, primary school, college + lyceum, for those who want to go to university. 12 classes.	20 points, where 19 is excellent and 8 is unsatisfactory	From the primary school, when moving from one stage to another, as well as graduation. French test from the beginning of the studies.	A diary is required, it is also a pass to school. Homework is given regularly.

In Spain, there are public schools with free education for all children, semi-public schools funded by the Catholic Church or local authorities, and private schools (colegios privados), which provide the opportunity to obtain an international bachelor's degree (Cabrales, & Brindusa, 2014). In schools in Spain, instruction is conducted not only in Spanish, but also, depending on the region of the country, in the second official language (Catalan, Valencian, etc.), its study is mandatory. After the second or third lesson, schoolchildren have a break for an afternoon snack, and parents are given recommendations on what food should be given to children. This is called the "afternoon tea calendar".

During the big half-hour break, children play in the school yard. Staying in school for the second year is a common situation.

Practical aspects of Spanish education can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Practical system of primary education in Spain

Source: systematized by the authors

Years of education	Academic year	School week	Stages of education	Rating system	Exams	Diary and homework
From 5-6 to 16-18 years old	From September 12 to June 20, it is divided into three semesters. The last weeks of study are held in the format of children's camps. Holidays 3 times.	Five days, lessons from 9 to 14. There is a big break - 30 minutes. Siesta break from 13 to 15.30, then extended day group until 17.30-18.30, if desired.	Primary school, basic school, bachierato, 11 grades in total.	There are no grades, but there is a weekly test, the maximum score is 10.	From the primary school	The diary is optional, there are practically no homework assignments. Parental signature is required on forms with control tests.

Against the background of the above systems, verified by history, traditions and innovative approaches, it is worth considering the shortcomings and advantages of the historical reform of primary education in Soviet Ukraine.

Shortcomings of the historical reform of primary education in Soviet Ukraine

The study found that the development of primary education in the Ukrainian SSR in 1954-1964. It was caused by a set of factors: pedagogical (loss of functional independence by primary education, the creation in 1955 at the Research Institute of Pedagogy of the Ukrainian SSR of an primary school department, the formation of a new educational order; initiation and implementation of the reform of school education by the party and state leadership; involvement of the pedagogical community in the discussion of organizational and pedagogical principles of primary education) in close connection with socio-political (de-Stalinization, democratization and humanization of public life) and socio-economic (economic development, industrial and rural development) economy, scientific and technological

progress, population growth, improving its living standards). These aspects concerned more social, ideological, demographic and administrative reform.

Most of the children of primary school age studied in primary, seven / eight and secondary schools in rural areas of the Ukrainian language. At the same time, the number of schools with Russian as the language of instruction and the number of students receiving primary education in this language grew. Children of national minorities, with the exception of Moldovans, Hungarians and Poles, who lived in Chernivtsi, Odesa, Zakarpattia and Lviv oblasts, were deprived of the opportunity to study in their native language.

Although the priority task of the state educational policy of the period under study was to provide schools with teachers with higher education, improve the professional level of class teachers, improve their social protection (wages, living conditions), for students the reforms concerned not educational and personal development, but more social security. For the purpose of social protection of junior schoolchildren, foundations for general education and boarding schools functioned; transportation to educational institutions was organized; food was provided, free milk distribution was established in extended day groups.

It was found that the *content of primary education* was formed at the all-Union level, with the exception of the Ukrainian and Russian languages. With these subjects, it was developed mainly by research workers of the Research Institute of Pedagogy of the Ukrainian SSR, approved by the Ministry of Education of the Ukrainian SSR in agreement with the "Moscow Center". The content of primary education was based on *the theory of didactic materialism* and the following *principles*: methodological - politicization, Russification, unification; didactic - the unity of teaching and upbringing, systematicity and consistency, compliance with the age characteristics of students, the linear-concentric method of constructing educational subjects, the combination of general education training with a polytechnic orientation and labor education, the connection of educational material with life. Carrying out educational reform, integrating primary education into the system of general secondary education, active participation of researchers of the primary school department of the Research Institute of Pedagogy of the Ukrainian SSR in developing the content of education, involving teachers in its discussion total review of curricula: reduction of study load, restoration of manual labor, withdrawal of learning a foreign language; inclusion of calligraphy in the course of the Ukrainian language, introduction since 1960. instead of natural science and geography of the integrated subject "Natural Science". At the same time, curricula remained multidisciplinary. Subjects

were divided into "basic" (languages, arithmetic, science, history) and "secondary" (drawing, singing, hand-labour, physical culture).

At the same time, the personally centric differentiated approach was completely ignored, and the educational goal remained clearly defined (Havrylenko, 2019).

The desire to educate a comprehensively developed personality contributed to the formation of basic moral (honesty, responsibility, respect for elders and parents, politeness, sociability), labor (hard work, respect for working people, organization, helping the sick and disabled), health-improving (physical education, hardening, adherence to the daily routine), aesthetic (neatness, perception of beauty) *values*. At the same time, the values of a totalitarian state prevailed in primary education. Thus, due to the content of education (especially the subjects of language and social science cycles), the involvement of younger students in the children's communist movement, compliance with the Rules for students, they cultivated conformism, dominance of state, collective, individual over individual. The outlined system of values did not actually change until the end of the 80's of the twentieth century.

Structural and substantive transformations of primary education in Soviet Ukraine in 1964-1984. They took place in the context of pedagogical (the influence of pedagogical and psychological sciences on educational development, deployment of experimental research in primary education professional training of teachers and at the same time stagnant nature of the education system, deprivation of the pedagogical community of the opportunity to participate in discussions of transformations in education), as well as socio-political (CPSU monopoly, ideological dictate, outright Russification) and socio-economic (economic lag behind scientific and technological progress), acceleration of urbanization, rural degradation) factors (Havrylenko, 2019).

Relatively positive changes in the transformation of primary education in Soviet Ukraine

The integration of primary education into the system of general secondary education in the context of the reform to strengthen the connection between school and life made changes in its *goals* - the formation of the basis of subject knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for obtaining further levels of education in primary schoolchildren; preparation for work and socially useful activities; *principles* - the introduction of the principles of linking education with life, poly technical (along with the principles of

compulsion, accessibility, free of charge, external differentiation, Sovietization, Russification, unification, atheization, defined and implemented in previous decades); restoration of the principle of joint education of children of both sexes; actualization of the principle of continuity of primary education by the pedagogical community; revival and implementation of the principle of humanization thanks to creative teachers (Havrylenko, 2020).

It was found out that the following transformations took place in the *organization of primary education*: introduction of new types of educational institutions (boarding school, extended day school), opening of extended day groups, visual protection classes, self-paying groups in foreign languages in primary classes; rapid growth in the number of junior schoolchildren (by 40.8%); revival of class teacher training in the system of higher pedagogical education; improving the educational and logistical support of primary education.

Despite the active discussion by the pedagogical community on the optimal *duration of primary education* (increase to five or six years) and the *beginning of systematic schooling* (lowering the age limit to six years, returning to school from eight years), they have not changed. The period of primary education was four years with the beginning of education at seven years.

It is proved that in the USSR conditions were created for primary education by different categories of children (healthy children; children with minor disabilities; children with disabilities; orphans; children from low-income families; children whose parents could not provide education and supervision during the day, gifted children in the field of art and foreign language, overgrown children) in the relevant *types of educational institutions* (primary, seven-year (since 1959 - eight-year), secondary schools, forest schools, special schools for children with disabilities in physical and mental development, boarding schools, extended day schools, schools with a number of subjects taught in a foreign language, schools for overgrowth, etc.).

The changes also affected the *curricula*, in particular, complex secondary educational material and outdated information were removed, excessive concentricity was eliminated, the amount of theoretical information was reduced, practical orientation was strengthened, knowledge, skills and abilities were adapted to students' age characteristics; continuity in the content of primary and secondary school is partially ensured.

During the period under study, *new educational literature* appeared, compiled by Ukrainian authors, namely: literacy, reading, Ukrainian and Russian languages. This literature met the curricula requirements, contained

information consonant with the time, partially took into account the national characteristics of the Ukrainian child, was tested in schools and discussed by teachers. In 1961, textbooks on singing were published for the first time in the Ukrainian SSR. From other subjects (mathematics, natural science, geography, history), educational books were prepared at the all-union level and translated into Ukrainian (Kodlyuk, 2006).

A partial change in the goals and content of primary education affected: *the organization of the educational process* - the search for the optimal structure and duration of the school year, the organization of the school day of primary school students; reducing the duration of the lesson in the first grade to 35 minutes; actualization of issues concerning the optimal organization of teaching in IV grades, transfer of teaching in primary classes of singing, drawing and physical education to specialists; *forms and methods of teaching* - raising the role of excursions, practical and research work in the education of primary school children; introduction of new extracurricular forms of education (study groups, meetings with interesting people); improving the didactic structure of existing and finding new teaching methods aimed at activating students' mental activity, independent acquisition of knowledge, development of creativity, interest in research; *control and evaluation* of students' learning outcomes - increasing attention to the current control of knowledge; cancellation of exams in IV grades; development of uniform requirements for the assessment of knowledge in science, hand-labour, drawing and music (Havrylenko, 2019).

The transformations that took place in the development of primary education in 1954–1964 (in terms of goals, principles, organization, content of education, and the educational process) influenced its further progress in 1964–1984.

Conclusions

It is established that the *goals* as a determining component in the system of primary education were formed under the influence of state educational policy, the needs of society, school practice, research in the field of primary education. The invariant goals of primary education in the chosen chronological framework remained the all-round development of children of primary school age; upbringing in them high moral qualities, the development of their mental and physical abilities, in accordance with the prevailing socio-political system, acquired a communist or national connotation. Primary education, integrated into the system of general secondary education in the early 50's of the twentieth century, provided for

the formation of the basis of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to master the basics of science in the next grades of school. Since the second half of the 1970s, primary education has been considered not only as a training stage in the structure of general secondary education, but also as one that determines further success in education and personal life. At this time, the formation of an integrated ability to learn was introduced to the goals of primary education. Against the background of restructuring processes in the education sector in the late 80's of the twentieth century. Along with these goals, priority was given to the formation of the child's personality, the creation of conditions for its self-expression, the development of its interests and abilities, which were realized in practice in independent Ukraine.

At the same time, it can be concluded that there are contradictions between the primary school of post-Soviet Ukraine and the corresponding institutions of Western Europe, in particular, there were a number of contradictions. At the same time, theoretical generalizations of scientific were used (Sharp et al., 2017):

1. Between the trend of aligning domestic modernization processes in education with the European experience of school reform and the lack of fundamental work.

2. Factors, motives, goals, principles and difficulties of reforming general education in Europe in the XX-XXI centuries are implemented in Europe, and in Ukraine they are still scientifically substantiated.

3. Between the accumulated knowledge of school reforms in Ukraine and abroad and the lack of a scientifically sound concept of education reform that integrates this knowledge into a single whole

4. Between the objective need of the state and society in the effectiveness of education reform and the lack of basic research on scientific patterns, principles, difficulties and conditions for the effectiveness of this process

5. Between the need for scientifically sound management of the organization of school reform and the weak study of the complex structure of the organization of this process.

In accordance with the general goal, the *tasks* of primary education were specified. The educational tasks that in the 50's - 70's of the twentieth century were the formation of subject knowledge, skills and abilities in the second half of the 80's of the twentieth century. general educational skills and abilities were added, which in the 1990s gained priority over subject ones and contributed to the mastery of extensive educational activities - the ability to learn. The determination of the educational results of primary

education became fundamentally important in the conditions of the diversity of educational institutions in the 1990s.

In conjunction with education, primary education provided a solution

educational tasks, which sometimes prevailed over the first. The main focus in the 50's - 80's of the twentieth century. aimed at the communist education of primary school children, the organic components of which were international, atheistic, mental, moral, physical, aesthetic and labor education. With the revival of Ukrainian statehood, special importance was attached to national education, environmental education was actualized, and moral, physical, aesthetic, and labor education acquired a new meaning. Under the influence of the theory of developmental learning and the results of experimental research by Russian and Ukrainian scientists, developmental tasks were introduced into the tasks of primary education in the early 1970's. In independent Ukraine, primary school children began to form the *values* of a democratic society - universal in combination with national, civic, environmental and personal. With the change of the educational paradigm, the humanization of the social life of the child became the main value of the educational process.

It is proved that primary education was based on a system of *principles* that determined the features of its organization, the content of education, the implementation of the educational process, namely:

- compulsory, accessible, free, joint education of children of both sexes, external differentiation, implemented in Soviet times and in independent Ukraine, their essence has not changed over time;

- Sovietization, unification, Russification, atheization, polytechnics, proclaimed and implemented during the Soviet era;

- depoliticization, democratization, national orientation, humanization, child-centeredness, diversity of education, continuity, secularism, actualized in part during the "Khrushchev" reform and especially during the emergence of democratic changes in education in the late 80's of the twentieth century became the basis for development of a national primary school and implemented in independent Ukraine.

Understanding the general trends in the development of primary education in Ukraine and Western Europe in the selected chronological framework, the mechanisms of their implementation allows us to deeply analyze the modern reform processes in primary school. Priority directions for the development of primary education should be: focus on improving the quality of educational results; principles of democracy, humanism, child-centrism, national orientation, obligation, accessibility and free of charge;

involving the educational and parental community in the discussion of the organizational and pedagogical foundations of reforming primary education; ensuring the continuity of primary education with preschool and general secondary education; coverage of children with preschool education in order to equalize their starting opportunities when entering school; social protection of primary school children and teachers; early preparation of teachers for the introduction of innovations, increasing their status and authority in society; involvement of specialists in the development of the content of primary education, in particular, in the creation of curricula and textbooks; taking into account in the content of primary education modern requirements of society; precedence of experimental research to the introduction of innovations in the primary education system with subsequent monitoring of the quality of changes.

The conducted study does not cover all aspects of the outlined problem, opening space for thorough research on the development of primary education in Ukraine. We see prospects for further research in the study of the development of primary education for children of national minorities, organizational and pedagogical principles of small schools, in the comparative analysis of the evolution of primary education in Ukraine and abroad.

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