

# The Ukrainian educational journal *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola* (1917-1920): a source of the history of Ukrainian and foreign education

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*When the independence of Ukraine was proclaimed in 1991, the Ukrainian educational journal *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola* (Free Ukrainian School) (1917-1920), suppressed during the Soviet period, was re-introduced. This journal was created by famous Ukrainian pedagogues during the period of the Ukrainian revolution (1917-1921), the formation of the Ukrainian state, and the development of national education. It is argued that to consolidate society around the idea of the Ukrainian education system its formation was conceived in terms of the best European and world practices. To this end, the journal acquainted Ukrainian pedagogues with foreign educational practice and innovative pedagogical ideas suggested by foreign researchers. The journal is a unique historical source, a repository and carrier of historical information, presenting human activity and culture during a short period of change in the Ukraine. Based on analysis of the journal collection, this article considers the journal to be an important source for studying Ukrainian and foreign history of education, including, for example, education systems and organisations, education reforms, and biographical information about teachers.*

**Keywords:** Ukraine, *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola*, education journal historical source

## *Introduction*

The proclamation of Ukrainian independence (1991) resulted in the formation of the Ukrainian state and integration into the European and world area; many researchers started studying the history of Ukrainian and foreign education on the basis of new methodological principles, and unrestricted access to little-known or unknown sources. It is no coincidence that the Ukrainian educational journal *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola* (Free Ukrainian School, VUSh) (1917-1920) returned to the academic space and became a source for studying the history of education (e.g. activities of pedagogues, educationalists, education bodies and educational establishments) during the period of the Ukrainian revolution (1917-1921). At that time life in Ukrainian society changed dramatically: there were difficult socio-political and socio-economic conditions when the Ukrainian National Republic was proclaimed as a result of the demise of the Russian autocracy. Ukrainian teachers had a real opportunity to reform the imperial system of education and create a national one. The new government decided to develop Ukrainian schools taking into consideration European practices. The problem of the education system in Ukraine was discussed by educators on the pages of the journal.

The main aim of this article is to introduce the Ukrainian educational journal *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola* (1917-1920) as a source of the history of Ukrainian and foreign education in order to provide information for further historical and pedagogical studies. The main tasks are as follows: to highlight the history, structure and content of the journal; to show its role in acquainting Ukrainian pedagogues with foreign educational practice and innovative pedagogical ideas suggested by foreign researchers; and to argue for the value of the journal as a source for studying various aspects of the history of Ukrainian and foreign education.

### *Methodology*

In the course of studying collections of VUSh, various general research methods were employed (e.g. historical, biographical and systematic analysis of the contents). These enabled a setting out of the history of the journal, determining its main headings and analysing its contents, for example, in terms of the problems facing Ukrainian and foreign education. Personalistic and biographical methods provided an opportunity to analyse articles about those who made significant contributions to the development of Ukrainian and foreign pedagogical thought and education, thereby revealing the names of those foreign teachers whose ideas were studied by Ukrainian researchers. The historiographical search showed that the information published in VUSh was used by national researchers (including L. Berezivska, V. Bohuslavskva, O. Bunchuk, A. Zavalniuk, Y. Teliachyi and others), however, the journal was not systematically studied as a source for writing the history of education.

Undoubtedly, this approach to studying a periodical publication as a primary source is basic. In Ukraine, as well as elsewhere, historical 'source study' is an important component of historical science,<sup>1</sup> and a discipline studied by history students as they learn to search, discover, analyse and use sources. The Ukrainian researchers L. Berezivska, L. Vakhovskyy, L. Holubnycha, I. Zaichenko and O. Sukhomlynska, studied 'pedagogical source study' as a methodological issue<sup>2</sup> as part of a conference on 'Source and historiographical basis for modern historical and pedagogical research'. The results of this indicate the multi-perspectival nature of the views of Ukrainian historians of education.<sup>3</sup> In their opinion, pedagogical source study is an interdisciplinary sphere of science, closely connected with pedagogy, history, archival studies, library science, and bibliography studies.

Periodicals, newspapers and journals are considered to be important sources in studying the history of Ukrainian education. According to Ukrainian historians, they are marked by their complex and synthetic character since they combine various forms of information (documentary, chronological, personal, etc.). The press provides us with information about events quickly, and this increases their value as sources.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, it is reasonable to consult foreign methodological works by historians of education with regard to the problem of 'pedagogical source study'. Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon's article '*Sources in the Making of Histories of Education: Proofs, Arguments, and Other Forms of Reasoning from the Historian's Workplace*' is considered useful (2009).<sup>5</sup> In the chapter titled '*Pedagogical periodicals: the mother of all sources*' it is mentioned that, at the end of 1970s, Maurits De Vroede (1922-2001) commenced using 'pedagogical periodicals' in researching the history of education. Taking into consid-

erations his ideas, Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon describe pedagogical periodicals as 'a true goldmine for educational historiography'.<sup>6</sup>

Gary McCulloch in his *Documentary Research in Education, History and the Social Sciences* (2004) argues for the appropriateness of using periodicals as sources in writing the history of education: 'Magazines may also be of use. General periodicals with more considered and lengthy pieces of journalism may provide instructive examples of problems and the responses to them'.<sup>7</sup> His approaches deserve further consideration, specifically the ways in which documents can be used to bring together the past and the present, the public and the private, and the need to read between the lines of documentary sources, in order to help enhance our understanding of education, history and modern societies.<sup>8</sup>

In his chapter *The Inertia of Early German-American Comparisons: American Schooling in the German Educational Discourse 1860 – 1930*, Peter Drewek also endorses the study of periodicals as sources of the history of education. Periodicals are considered to be one of the most sensitive indicators of the development of discourse. It is possible to roughly differentiate between three categories or kinds of periodicals existing at the beginning of the twentieth century: general pedagogical periodicals, periodicals relating to school systems and teachers, and periodicals dealing with educational science (in particular, educational psychology).<sup>9</sup>

I shall try to characterise VUSH (1917-1920) taking into consideration approaches of Ukrainian and foreign researchers. It was discovered that historians of education could not use VUSH during the Soviet period because of ideological prohibition. Only when the independence of Ukraine was proclaimed did Ukrainian researchers introduce this journal into the academic space in the context of studying various problems of education that arose during the short-term period of Ukrainian independence during the Ukrainian revolution (1917-1921). However, Ukrainian researchers did not systematically study the journal as a source of the history of education, thereby demonstrating the originality of the present research. It should be noted that a collection of VUSH published during 1917-1920 is kept in V.O. Sukhomlynskyi State Scientific and Pedagogical Library of Ukraine and available on the Library website (<http://dnpb.gov.ua>).

### *History of the journal*

Let us briefly revisit the history of the journal, although the current author has written about it in previous papers.<sup>10</sup> VUSH was established in 1917 by the professional public *All-Ukrainian Teachers' Society* (ATS) which was headed by the famous Ukrainian teacher and public figure S. Rusova (her father was a Swede and her mother was a Frenchwoman). Such prominent Ukrainian educationalists as O. Doroshkevych (the head), K. Lebedyntsev, O. Muzychenko, V. Pidhayetskyi, S. Rusova and Y. Chepiha were members of the drafting committee, whilst O. Astriab, N. Mirza-Avekiant, O. Hrushevskyi, V. Durdukiivskyi, I. Ohiyenko, V. Prokopovych, V. Rodnykov, I. Stehenko, S. Siropolko, S. Cherkasenko and other famous pedagogues wrote for the journal. The editorial staff considered the journal to be a successor of the Ukrainian educational *Svitlo* (Light) journal (1910-1914) as it had the same aim – Ukrainisation of primary, secondary and higher education in Ukraine.<sup>11</sup> The publication was very popular among teachers; its circulation was 5,000 copies. But when Denikin occupied

Ukraine (April-December 1919) the journal was issued illegally.<sup>12</sup> In 1920 it ceased to exist, and ATS was reorganised into the *All-Ukrainian Union of school and social culture workers* during the constituting of Bolshevik authority on Ukrainian lands.<sup>13</sup> Due to the difficult socio-political situation and lack of finance the journal was published irregularly, sometimes several issues were presented in one and the same edition.

#### *Structure and content of the journal*

The journal has regular headings (*Address to the Pedagogical World, About Lower School in Ukraine, Survey of Secondary School, About Higher School in Ukraine, School in Western Europe and America or New Trends in European Pedagogy as a Base for a New School*, etc.), although new headings appeared, and the titles of the regular headings were occasionally changed.

Every issue of VUSh started with an editorial – an address to the pedagogical world. Nowadays the following words are still relevant in the course of creating a new Ukrainian school in the context of European integration: ‘First of all, we must reconstruct our school, starting from the primary level and up to the higher one on the basis of new principles in European pedagogy’.<sup>14</sup> Another editorial contained the following idea: ‘School for the Ukrainian people must be a Ukrainian one’.<sup>15</sup>

I. Yushchyshyn was in charge of the *Primary School in Ukraine* section, O. Doroshkevych for *Life of Secondary School*, and F. Sushytskyi for *Higher School in Ukraine*. O. Muzychenko’s *School in Western Europe and America* section was devoted to the development of education abroad. *News Items or School News* and *Trivial News* considered the activities of ATS and its affiliated branches, School Education Society, secondary and higher education establishments, research institutions, Ukrainian and Soviet government bodies, and provided information regarding regulatory and legal documents (or their projects) for the educational sphere and regional documents. *Life of Teachers’ Societies* described the activity carried out by ATS. *Criticism* contained the analyses of new textbooks, literature for children, pedagogical journals reviews, and thoughts about various teachers or educators (L. Biletskyi, S. Hayevskyi, B. Doha, O. Doroshkevych, V. Rodnikov, S. Rusova, Y. Chepiha, S. Cherkasenko, I. Yushchyshyn and others). Letters received from teachers and parents were published in *Scenes from Life*. The regular *Bibliography* presented literature on a specific pedagogical topic. Anniversary dates concerning birthdays of famous Ukrainian writers were indicated in *Anniversaries of Ukrainian Writers* (V. Doroshkevych was in charge of it). *New Books Sent to the Editorial Office* informed readers about new publications such as journals, textbooks, manuals, literature for children, etc.

The regular headings considered events taking place in the sphere of education. For instance, in *Primary School in Ukraine*, I. Yushchyshyn covered the state of primary education in Ukraine in 1917, the strategy of *Prosvita* public organisation, the 2nd All-Ukrainian Teachers’ Conference, and the content of the General Secretariat Circular (the name of the state governing body) No. 1317 issued on 12 October 1917, which declared the right of all people to study in their native language.<sup>16</sup> In one of the journal issues, O. Doroshkevych presented the main content of a speech made by I. Steshenko, the Secretary General of education; it was delivered for the leaders of primary and secondary schools and parent committees in Kyiv. The following principles of education reform were mentioned: the Ukrainian people are a nation with a territory, and national minorities should be fairly treated; all the nations

living on the territory of Ukraine must know the language, literature, geography and history of Ukraine; Ukrainian studies as a subject should be obligatory in all types of Ukrainian schools. The author dwelt upon the problems which, in his opinion, required immediate solutions: reformation of the education management system and introduction of Ukrainian studies in schools.<sup>17</sup>

In *Higher School in Ukraine*, F. Sushytskyi presented a history of the National University at Pedagogical Museum (Kyiv) which had three faculties (History and Philology, Law, and Physics and Mathematics) and Pedagogical Academy for training teachers for Ukrainian schools (1917).<sup>18</sup> As one can see, the information presented makes it possible to reconstruct the state of education in general and its components in particular (primary, secondary, higher education) during the Ukrainian revolution.

The authors of *School in Western Europe and America* covered the peculiarities of educational establishments of Western Europe and America. Thus, while analysing teaching practice of A. Faria school at Bierges (Belgium), the famous Ukrainian teacher and psychologist Y. Chepiha pointed out positive aspects of school activities (the individual approach to each child, moving classes, active training methods, grading, etc.). Based on this analysis, he pointed out ideas relevant for school education of that time: the connection between school and environment, coeducation, free and creative training of children at school without force, creative activities of teachers, the primary importance of a child's interests in educational processes, and differentiation in training.<sup>19</sup>

The famous Ukrainian teacher, O. Muzychenko, presented a note titled 'The Weekly English Teachers' Conference' published under the same heading; he revealed the content of reports delivered at the English Teachers' Conference' (1919) and summarised the following problems of education of that time: unified school and vocational training, ensuring study was open to everybody, the status of teachers, reform of primary school, and moral education.<sup>20</sup>

The authors of the journal published their articles on various aspects of foreign education. For instance, one can read I. Yushchyshyn's *Organisation of Ukrainian Teachers in Austria before the European War* (1918) about cultural and educational development in Austria in the late 19th century, and the educational movement on Ukrainian lands that were a part of it.<sup>21</sup> The deputy Secretary General of Education, P. Kholodnyi, wrote *Unified school* (1917) in which he presented the structure of secondary education in different countries of the early 20th century (Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Germany, America).<sup>22</sup> In his *School Reform or Reformation?* (1918) O. Muzychenko demonstrated the necessity to reform Ukrainian schools taking into consideration German and French practices.<sup>23</sup> Thinking about the prospects of Ukrainian schools, in *Unified School in Ukraine* (1919), the same author presented the education systems of foreign countries (France, Germany, England, America, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway). This article was based on a speech made at the 2nd Conference of Delegates of the All-Ukrainian Teachers' Society.<sup>24</sup>

It was determined, that the Ukrainian pedagogues studied and popularised the ideas of foreign researchers including: German educator Wilhelm August Lay; American psychologist and educator Granville Stanley Hall; English philosopher Herbert Spencer; English educator and philosopher John Locke; French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau; German educator Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel; German educator Georg Michael Anton Kerschensteiner; Czech educator John Amos Comenius; Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi; German educator and psy-

chologist Ernst Friedrich Wilhelm Meumann; American philosopher, psychologist and educator John Dewey; and Swedish educator Ellen Karolina Sofia Key. Their ideas were followed, and their works cited. In this way the Ukrainian pedagogues consolidated around new pedagogical ideas, European values of democracy and humanism in order to develop the Ukrainian school. It is worthwhile mentioning that translations of foreign researchers' articles into Ukrainian were presented on the pages of the journal, including Wilhelm Ratey's *Labour School and its Development* (Die neue Bahnen, 1916, translated by M. Ishunyn).<sup>25</sup>

Special attention should be paid to material that honoured the memory of famous writers, educators and public figures (O. Yefymenko, F. Matushevskiy, V. Naumenko, I. Steshenko, M. Sumtsov and others), birthday anniversaries (P. Kulish, I. Kotliarevskiy and others) or their life and work in general (H. Skovoroda, I. Franko and others). Under the *New Appointments* heading, information about changes in the professional activity of teachers and leaders of educational establishments was reported.<sup>26</sup> Biographical articles covered the life and activity milestones of outstanding figures, their research achievements, and contribution to the development of Ukrainian education and culture.

As already mentioned, the journal published normative documents, among them *The Plan of education management in Ukraine* (1917).<sup>27</sup> *The Circular for secondary school directors and inspectors of higher primary, commercial and other schools of Ukraine* (1918) covered a speech made by I. Steshenko, the Secretary General of Education, addressed to secondary school teachers in Ukraine, in which he promoted the discussion of national education.<sup>28</sup> The members of the School Education Society developed the *Unified School Plan* in 1917; they analysed school systems in different countries and prepared their own variant.<sup>29</sup> Without a doubt, the journal is a valuable source for studying the history of various educational documents (national, regional, etc.) that reflect the activities performed by governments in the sphere of education and education bodies of different levels.

Under the different headings, information was given about educational establishments of the time, and it is important for regional (local) historical and pedagogical research. *Trivial News* covered different aspects (statistics, establishment and shutdown of educational institutions, strategies, teaching staff, financial and material support, textbooks, etc.) of Ukrainian schools in Poltava, Katerynoslav, Kyiv, Odesa and other cities, as well as information about Kamianets-Podilskiy University, Kyiv State Ukrainian University and other universities.<sup>30</sup> *News Items* provided information about establishment of Ukrainian gymnasiums in Kyiv, Jewish gymnasium in Poltava (though schoolchildren were taught in Ukrainian), entrance rules to teacher training institutes, etc.<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly, the analysis of such facts will positively influence the reconstruction of regional history and/or history of everyday life.

The letters sent by teachers and parents to the journal editorial staff and published in *School Life* are an essential source for studying the microhistory of education. For instance, the teacher, P. Hereha, wrote a letter about the revival of the Ukrainian school in Podillia. In particular he dwelt on the school in Knyzhkivtsi village (recording the number of pupils, language, teaching methods, textbooks, peculiarities of educational process, the role of Proskurivska *Prosvita* organisation in providing textbooks, school events, games, clubs, etc.).<sup>32</sup> Such correspondence indicates the uniqueness of the phenomena under study.

The journal provides information for the study of the well-known educational societies in Kyiv (Money for Native School, Prosvita, School Education Society), Galicia (Ukrainian Pedagogical Society, Regional *Native School* Union), and Poltava region (Ukrainian Culture Society).<sup>33</sup> It is clear that the majority of information is about the All-Ukrainian Teachers Society (AUTS), covering conferences, adopted resolutions, regional teachers' organisations, etc.<sup>34</sup>

Almost every issue ended with a *Bibliography* which presented information about textbooks and books for school libraries (that had been released or were soon to be published), thematic bibliographical lists (such as Ukrainian textbooks for Galician schools),<sup>35</sup> and a Literature Review on Labour School.<sup>36</sup> After 1919, this heading changed to *Teacher's Bibliography*. Its main aim was to acquaint the teaching world with new publications concerning the problems of pedagogical theory and educational practice. The literature was structured according to the following sections: general editions on education and pedagogy (journals, collections, periodicals); school education (general publications); Ukrainian studies (Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, history of Ukraine, geography of Ukraine); textbooks and studies on different spheres of science and activity at school (the humanities, mathematics, natural history, extra subjects at special schools, aesthetics); and literature for children.<sup>37</sup> It is important that the editorial staff acquainted readers with abstracts or reviews of foreign publications for children translated into Ukrainian, including *Czech stories for children*. Translated from Czech by O. and M. Kryvniuk, 1918; Ernest Thompson Seton *Our friends. Stories about dogs*, 1918;<sup>38</sup> and Charles Perrault's *Little Red Riding Hood*. Translated by S. Rusova, 1911.<sup>39</sup> Such material can be used as a source base for studying various problems of the history of education in Ukraine while carrying out macro- and micro-historical research.

### Conclusion

The analysis of the Ukrainian educational journal *Vilna Ukrainska Shkola* (1917-1920) has shown that this publication reflects the state of education and pedagogical science during the little-investigated period of the Ukrainian revolution and the formation of the Ukrainian state. The journal is logically structured, with every heading containing useful information for pedagogues. It played a significant role in acquainting Ukrainian pedagogues with foreign experience and innovative ideas suggested by foreign researchers regarding the development of education (e.g. such headings as *School in Western Europe and America* or *New Trends in European Pedagogy as a Base for a New School*). The purpose of this was to consolidate society around the idea of the Ukrainian education system being formed on the basis of the best European and world practices.

Indisputably, the journal made by pedagogues for pedagogues is an important source for studying various problems of the history of Ukrainian and foreign education, such as biographical information about teachers (biographical facts, activities of the famous, little-known or unknown teachers and educators), public organisations (origin, founders, participants, statistics, activity, its results); different types of educational establishments in Ukraine and other countries (origin, development, statistics, content of education and teaching methods, famous persons); academic books (titles and number of them, authors, content); and regulatory and legal documents as a reflection of the activity performed by the education governing bodies and government (history, content, authors, implementation).

We should emphasise that the journal is a unique historical source, a repository and carrier of historical information, and a presentation of human activity and culture during a short period of historical change in Ukraine. Unfortunately, the majority of the mentioned pedagogues who wrote for the journal were victims of the Bolshevik system: they suffered persecution, emigrated abroad or were subjected to repression, and their names were removed from Soviet history. Whilst the ideas of the Ukrainian pedagogues presented in VUSh (1917-1920) were not realised, they have not lost their relevance and are interpreted in the present through the development of a new Ukrainian school. We consider that a prognostic assumption published in the last issue of the journal in 1920 has come true now: 'The research journal being a subdepartment of Ukrainian educators and their valuable cultural heritage will never die. It will exist and do a great job'.<sup>40</sup>

In our opinion, the history of this journal should be significant to an international audience. It is an example of the unfair removal from the academic space of a publication because of ideological prohibitions under the conditions of a totalitarian regime. It also however represents a publication that was re-introduced to the academic space under democratic social conditions, thereby creating an opportunity to present it to the European and world community. The development of a new Ukrainian school is an irreversible process with deep roots; we believe in the appropriateness of the chosen European educational vector for the sake of developing the Ukraine as a strong European state.

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