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EUROPEAN DIRECTION OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE

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Rezumat. *Articolul abordează analiza integrării europene a învățământului secundar din Ucraina. În baza analizei documentelor strategice ale UE în domeniul educației și a legislației învățământului secundar din Ucraina, autorul remarcă faptul că dezvoltarea acestuia este sincronizată cu orientările europene. Se argumentează că integrarea europeană a învățământului secundar din Ucraina este fundamentată prin lege. Sarcina la etapa actuală este de a dezvolta algoritmi și instrumente pentru implementarea reformelor inovative, precum și monitorizarea succeselor și provocărilor.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *învățământ secundar, Ucraina, legislație, integrare europeană, reforme.*

DIRECȚIA EUROPEANĂ A DEZVOLTĂRII ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI SECUNDAR ÎN UCRAINA

Abstract. *The article is devoted to the analysis of the European integration of secondary education in Ukraine. Based on the analysis of the EU education strategic documents and the secondary education legislation of Ukraine, the author concludes that its development is synchronized with the European benchmarks. The author emphasizes that the European integration of the secondary education in Ukraine is enshrined in law. The task at the present stage is to develop algorithms and tools for implementation of the reform innovations and as well as monitoring the successes and challenges.*

Keywords: *secondary education, Ukraine, legislation, European integration, reforms.*

The European integration of Ukraine is enshrined by the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union and its Member States (2014). The Chapter 23 "Education, Training and Youth" of the Agreement proclaims promoting cooperation between the parties at the levels of secondary, vocational and technical education and training, higher education, distance learning and lifelong learning in order to deepen the reforms and improve quality [11].

The Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) [10], The European Pillar of Social Rights [3], European reference framework on key competencies for lifelong learning [9], European Education Area till 2025 [2], other European documents serve as strategic benchmarks for secondary education reform in Ukraine. Such EU priorities as quality and efficiency of education and training, equity at all levels, competence transformation of education, lifelong learn-

ing, creativity and innovation form the reform conceptual basis.

The research problem of integration of the Ukrainian education into the European and world educational areas is relevant for the Ukrainian scholars. In particular, they explore the priorities of the secondary education reform in Ukraine in comparison with the EU countries, countries of the world [8]; synchronization of the duration and structure of the Ukrainian general secondary education with the standards of other European countries [7]; structural transformations of the education systems in the EU countries, USA and China in comparison with Ukraine [1].

This paper is aimed at exploring the provisions of the current Ukrainian legislation from the standpoint of the secondary education integration into the European education area. In order to obtain the valid findings, an analysis of the authentic documents has been conducted. These are the EU stra-

tegic documents on education and training, the laws of Ukraine "On Education" [12], "On Complete General Secondary Education" [13], the State Standard of Primary [5] and the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education [6], the Concept of reforming general secondary education "New Ukrainian School" for the period up to 2029 [4].

The formula of the new Ukrainian school, defined by the Concept, contains the following nine components:

- 1) New content of education, based on the formation of competencies that are necessary for successful self-realization in the society;
- 2) Motivated teacher who has freedom of creativity and develops professionally; pedagogy based on partnership between student, teacher and parents;
- 3) The cross-cutting process of education, which forms values;
- 4) Decentralization and effective management, which will give the school real autonomy;
- 5) Pedagogy based on partnership between student, teacher and parents;
- 6) Focus on the needs of a student in the educational process, child centrism;
- 7) A new school structure, which allows mastering the new content and acquiring competencies for life;
- 8) Fair distribution of public funds, which ensures equal access of all children to quality education;
- 9) A modern educational environment that will provide the necessary conditions, tools and technologies for the education of students, educators, parents, not only in the premises of the educational institution.

The introduction of this formula is intended to ensure the preparation of a secondary school graduate who is: 1) a holistic developed personality capable of critical thinking; 2) a patriot with an active position who acts in accordance with moral and ethical principles and is able to make responsible decisions, respects dignity and human rights; 3) an innovator who can change the world around him, develop the economy on the principles of sustainable development, compete in the labour market, learn throughout life [4].

The analysis of the Concept demonstrates the Ukrainian government's focus on cardinal transformation of the traditional model of secondary education. It includes the transformation of the duration and structure of secondary education, content of instruction. Innovative ideas designed to synchronize

the Ukrainian school with the European standards comprise partnership pedagogy, child centrism, school autonomy, motivated teacher, equal access to education and equitable funding.

The laws of Ukraine "On Education" and "On Complete General Secondary Education" form the legislative basis for the implementation of the secondary education reform "New Ukrainian School". The key innovations of the legislation that orient secondary education in Ukraine to integration into the European education area are:

- Introduction of the 12-year secondary school. The legislation defines three levels of complete general secondary education: primary education lasting four years; basic secondary education lasting five years; specialized secondary education lasting three years (4+5+3);

- Introduction of cycles in the structure of secondary school. The legislation introduces the following cycles: the first cycle of primary education: adaptive-play-based (1-2 years of study), the second cycle of primary education: basic (3-4 years of study); the first cycle of basic secondary education: adaptive (5-6 years of study); the second cycle of basic secondary education: basic subject education (7-9 years of study); the first cycle of specialized secondary education: specialized-adaptation (10 years of study); the second cycle of specialized secondary education: specialized (11-12 years of study);

- Transformation of high school into the specialized one, which can be of academic and vocational directions. Academic orientation is defined as specialized training based on a combination of educational content defined by the Standard of specialized secondary education and in-depth study of individual subjects taking into account the abilities and educational needs of students with a focus on continuing education at higher levels of education. Vocational orientation is a specialized training that is focused on the labor market based on a combination of the content of education, defined by the standard of specialized secondary education, and a professionally oriented approach to training, taking into account the abilities and needs of students;

- Transformation of secondary school into the competence-based one model. The following key competencies needed by every modern person for a successful life are identified as a result of secondary education: fluency in the state language; ability to communicate in mother tongue (in case of difference from the state) and foreign languages; mathematical competence; competencies in the field of natural sciences, engineering and technology; in-

novation competence; environmental competence; information and communication technology competence; learning to learn; civic and social competences related to the ideas of democracy, justice, equality, human rights, well-being and a healthy lifestyle, with an awareness of equal rights and opportunities; cultural competence; entrepreneurship and financial literacy;

- Transfer of part of the functions relating secondary education governance to the to the local level, i.e. amalgamated territorial communities formed as a result of the implementation of the decentralization of power reform in Ukraine;

- Introduction of a guarantee of equal access to complete general secondary education, which is provided by enrolment in primary school and gymnasium without a competition; financing of educational institutions at the expense of state and local budgets in the amount sufficient to meet state standards and licensing conditions; compliance with the requirements of the legislation on the accessibility of educational institutions for persons with special educational needs; teaching subjects (integrated courses) in ways that are most acceptable for people of the appropriate age, including by adapting / modifying the content of subjects (integrated courses) for people with special educational needs.

The proclamation of territorial accessibility, which is seen as a set of conditions conducive to ensuring the child's right to quality general secondary education at the expense of state and local budgets in the most accessible and close to its place of residence is an important innovation of the new legislation in the context of accessibility.

As part of the guarantees of respect for the rights of the child, the legislation introduces:

- the right to a fair assessment and integrity requirements. The Law of Ukraine "On Complete General Secondary Education" [13] establishes the right of students to a fair, impartial, objective, independent, non-discriminatory and fair assessment of learning outcomes, regardless of their type and form of education, and establishes specific types of liability for academic integrity violations;

- a guarantee of ensuring the individual educational trajectory of a student by defining their own educational goals, for which they will develop an individual curriculum, which will be written together by teachers, parents and students, approved by a school teachers' council and approved by the principal;

- the right to choose subjects by students. The Law of Ukraine "On Complete General Secondary

Education" [13] introduces the right of students to choose courses, subjects (integrated courses).

Thus, Ukraine, realizing its European identity, is carrying out education reforms in order to integrate national education into the European educational area. Characterizing the secondary education reform it is necessary to emphasize its complex nature. The reform covers the transformation of structure (introduction of 12-year school), the content of education (introduction of key competencies as a result of the instruction), and governance model (decentralisation of education governance).

The introduction of cardinal innovations had been preceded by active discussions of scholars, educators, parents, society in order to adapt them to the national demands. The idea of competence education has been discussed since the early 2000s in terms of the essence of competencies and the list of key competencies needed by the Ukrainian citizens. The introduction of a 12-year school is the second attempt in Ukraine. Firstly, the transition to a 12-year term of study was defined by the previous Law of Ukraine "On General Secondary Education" (1999) and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 16, 2000, No. 1717 "On the transition of secondary schools to a new content, structure and 12-year term of study", which was suspended for political reasons in 2010.

The systemic character is another characteristic of the reform. Adoption of new laws launched the process of the development and approval of the State Standard of Primary Education (2019) and the State Standard of Basic Secondary Education (2020), model educational programs and curricula, textbooks united by conceptual ideas of the New Ukrainian School based on humanistic ideas of Europe.

The standards do not contain a division into subjects, but are structured into the following educational areas: language and literature (Ukrainian language, languages of relevant indigenous peoples and national minorities; foreign language); mathematical; natural; technological; computer science; social and health; civil and historical; artistic; physical education. The standards describe the key competencies defined in the laws, the required learning outcomes and the benchmarks for their assessment.

The child-centred nature of the reform is also realized through the introduction of a formative model for assessing student achievements. The adopted concept of the formative assessment weakens its traditional control function and prioritizes the developmental one, which enables teachers and par-

ents to draw conclusions about the student's progress in learning. To this end, instead of the usual report cards the first-graders receive a Certificate of Achievements at the end of the school year. In the Certificate instead of grades a teacher assesses students' personal achievements under the rubrics "Significant progress", "Demonstrates limited progress", "Achieves results with the help of teachers", and "Needs considerable attention and assistance".

Monitoring the achievement of the established indicators is a constant EU practice in the area of education and training. The Education and Training Monitor is an efficient tool for collecting and presenting a wide range of evidence to indicate the EU countries' progress towards the benchmarks of the Education and Training strategic framework for European cooperation (ET 2020).

The 4-stage monitoring under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (conducted in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020) on the implementation of the State Standard of the Primary General Secondary Education by pilot schools has provided information on teachers' readiness to develop curricula and teaching materials, approaches used to assess student learning outcomes, the level of involvement of parents into the educational process, aspects of school work that have the greatest impact on the implementation of the new State Standard of Primary Education, etc.

It is obvious that the implementation of the reform is accompanied by challenges. The format of the high school, which is to be introduced by law in 2027, is still being actively discussed. The mass specialised school with the varied, specialised and in-depth instruction in specific subjects/areas is completely new for Ukraine. Therefore, such issues as number of profiles, the network of the specialised schools in the rural areas, approaches to structuring the content, changes in training programmes of the

teachers, etc. need to be agreed before the approval of the State Standard of the Specialized Secondary Education.

The need to introduce the competence-oriented content of the school education was confirmed by the PISA 2018 results, which have demonstrated that the Ukrainian students scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science. At the same time, the process of such transformation is complex; it involves not only updating standards, programs, textbooks, but also retraining of teachers. Conceptual issues also remain open. This is, for example, the formation and assessment of key competences, especially of such transversal ones as innovation competence; learning to learn; civic and social competences cultural competence.

Education decentralization reform is no less difficult. The newly formed amalgamated territorial communities have no institutional experience in organising the transfer of educational institutions (preschool, school, out-of-school) to the ownership of the communities, creating their own education governance body, using the educational subvention, opening centres of professional development of pedagogical workers in the condition of liquidation of district methodological services, etc.

Summing up, it should be emphasized that the European direction of the secondary education development in Ukraine is enshrined in a reality, which is confirmed by the adoption of the European-oriented legislation. Obviously, the adoption of the innovative legislation is an achievement, but does not guarantee the success of the reform. As the experience gained shows, it is no less important thing is to unite all educators (teachers, school heads, scholars, education authorities, education policy developers) at the stage of developing and implementing the reform algorithms and tools as well as regular monitoring the achievement of the planned.

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