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*Diversification of Preschool Institutions as the Way
to Integration of Ukraine's Contemporary System
of Preschool Education into the International
Educational Space*

Urozmaicenie typów placówek przedszkolnych drogą do integracji
współczesnego systemu oświaty przedszkolnej Ukrainy w międzynarodowej
przestrzeni edukacyjnej

ABSTRACT

In this article it is analyzed the experience of different types of preschool educational institutions of foreign countries, as well as the new approaches to the organization of the preschool link as an integral component of the national education system. A special attention is paid to the experience of the American educationalists in the organization of a preschool education, for whom basic priorities are directed to an active participation of a child in the teaching and educational process, to the unification of the personal and working approaches to the organization of the aforementioned process in preschool educational institutions.

Key words: preschool education; private kindergarten; confessional preschool centre; innovative technologies

INTRODUCTION

Integration processes in the international educational space define a strategic direction of the development of Ukraine's preschool education and, eventually, provide studying of the advanced pedagogical experience of foreign countries

which is the basis for a transition to a qualitatively new, competitive level of the preschool stage of education.

Among the priority directions of the vernacular education the State National Program "Education: Ukraine of the 21st century" defines the elaboration of theoretical-methodological aspects of the educational system with close touching upon national and foreign experience (1994, p. 2).

It predetermines the necessity of studying the modern newest concepts of the training and education of preschool age children on the grounds not only of the domestic experience, but also of the foreign one, which helps to define new approaches to the proper organization of a preschool link as an integral component of Ukrainian Domestic System of Education.

In this context the basic ideas for the aforementioned organization of the preschool education can be borrowed from the American educationalists, for whom basic priorities are directed to an active participation of a child in the teaching and educational process, to the balanced association of an individual and functional approaches to the organization of the teaching and educational process in preschool educational institutions.

The pedagogical experience and integration of the Ukrainian preschool education into the international educational space and problems of development tendencies and features of the organization of preschool education in the USA are elucidated in not many Ukrainian investigations by such researches as Z. Plokhyy, K. Remezova, O. Tsvetkova, Z. Mal'kova, H. Dmytriyeva, O. Zheliuk, A. Mykhailova, M. Krasovets'kyi, and others. The questions of a development of the American education and its concepts undergo close analysis in the works of L. Dovhan' and H. Kinchyk. The dissertation works of I. Rohal'ska, L. Dovhan' and V. Kravets' deal mostly with the research of the problem of socialization of preschool age children; this problem is partially considered in the researches by O. Zabolotna, O. Lytvynova, and I. Taranenko too (Bilets'ka 2008; Kalyuzhna 2008; Podol'ska 2003).

The preschool education system in the USA considerably differs from that in Ukraine in firm definiteness of its methodological and methodical bases, variability of concepts, models, the newest worldwide educational-entertaining programs, functioning of effective pedagogical systems, innovative techniques and development strategies. Separate aspects of the American experience in the organization of a quality education for preschool age children, although in part illuminated in the works of both domestic and foreign scientists, nevertheless, lack a complete and systematized characteristic.

The main aim of this article is the study of development prospects of modern system of preschool education in Ukraine, which implies the analysis of positive experience of the work of foreign educationalists with children of preschool age

and aims at the adaptation of the national system of preschool education for its integration into the international educational space.

AMERICAN PATTERNS AND EXPERIENCE AS AN INSPIRATION
FOR UKRAINIAN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Whereas in the earlier history the preschool education in the USA was considered a separated institution, at the present-day stage of development of the country it is completely integrated into its education system. The upper and lower border of the period of the preschool childhood is defined in each separate state by its legislature. As a matter of fact, this is the age from two or three to five or six years (*Enrollment in Early Childhood Education Programs*. National Center for Education Statistics 2002, pp. 1175–1210).

The purpose of preschool education of the USA consists in supplying children with the elementary knowledge about their environment and preparing them for the primary school, developing each child's personality by means of gaining by him or her certain social experience, which includes personal, social and emotional development, development of communicative habits (abilities to communicate and listen to other people), the knowledge and understanding by a child of the surrounding world, creative and aesthetic development of a child, mental development, studying of elementary mathematical representations and their development.

Unlike the American teachers, the purpose of the Ukrainian preschool education consists, first of all, in acquiring by a child the knowledge for his or her further training at school. Such a situation was characteristic for the American preschool education in the eighties of the past century, as the aspiration to leadership in all spheres of life, and it was an inherent feature of the American society of that time. This abovementioned had been caused by the educational reforms and tendencies of the development of education which were accurately regulated by the bill "America 2000: Educational Strategy" and the preschool education program "Head Start" (*Enrollment in Early Childhood Education Programs... 2002*, p. 7).

The core tasks of the American preschool education is preservation and strengthening of children's health, timely detection and development of a child's gifts and creative abilities, formation of a universal, harmonious personality of a child, a personality well integrated into a society and very tolerant, brought up on the multi-cultural bases, and the formation of an active vital position of every child. In this aspect the tasks of Ukrainian domestic preschool education should be considered identical with the aforementioned ends of the American teachers.

Sticking to a variety of principles which make up the basement for the development of the curriculum and the content of education with the choice of forms and selection of methods of work with preschool age children is an important

condition for optimum successful organization of teaching and educational process in the system of preschool education of the USA. It should be noticed that within the American preschool pedagogy does not exist any accurately regulated and strengthened system of such principles. This can be concluded proceeding from the analysis of numerous researches in the field of US preschool education (Kalyuzhna 2008, p. 57).

American educationalists enumerate the following main principles of the preschool education:

- availability principle (consists in equal access to educational services of each citizen of the USA);
- principle of the unity of development, training, education and invigoration of children;
- the continuity principle (it is realized through the creation of teaching and educational complexes: a preschool institution – a secondary school – a higher educational institution);
- principle of the unity of educational influences of a child's family and a preschool centre (the corresponding sections of "Head Start" programs, "Not a child without attention");
- principle of a democratic character and humaneness of pedagogical process, an activity principle (Hogan and Pressley 1997, pp. 138–185);
- principle of the personality-oriented approach to a child's development;
- principle of the conformity of the content of a curriculum (a teaching and educational plan) to the age features of pupils of preschool educational institution (Genishi et al. 2011);
- principle of the connection with life which provides independent practical application by children of the knowledge acquired by them in a preschool centre;
- principle of bearing in mind the age and personality peculiarities, individualization and differentiation principle (Pearson and Duke 2002, p. 79).

American preschool education content is elucidated in numerous programs of development of a preschool child, the main of which are known to be "Head Start", "HIPPIY Model" – a model or instruction for parents in home preschool education of children, "Montessori program" – one, based on the Montessori method, which encourages a child to develop at his or her own pace and to learn through playing, "Waldorf approach program", "High Scope", "The Bank Street program" (Genishi et al. 2011).

In the preschool education of the USA there are several types of programs: the programs oriented to the intellectual development of children, the programs of social development of a child's individuality, the all-around harmonious devel-

opment programs, the programs of training of children from needy families, the programs of vocational education, and others.

The effective programs are marked, first of all, by the high quality and the scientific approach, plus the most effective of them are, as a rule, inaccessible to a typical American family. Efficiency of the programs is defined by the highly skilled personnel, corresponding educational environment, methodical curriculum and schedule, appropriate organization of the group working with children, and familiar environment (Seifert 2010).

According to the definition of the National Department of Education, the modern system of the preschool education of the USA consists of: preschool educational institutions of various subordination, types and forms of ownership, preschool education programs, scientific and methodical institutions, and educational authorities on the nationwide and state levels.

By the definition of the American scientists K. Rayan, E. Rose, B. Spodek, and E. Zilger, a preschool educational establishment, or nursery school, is an establishment in which children of preschool age learn in the form of play (*Enrollment in Early Childhood Education Programs...* 2002, p. 215). To the preschool types belongs any establishment which works in accordance with certain programs of the preschool education outside a family. These are the children's centres (child centres), the family centres for the care of children (family child care), the "Head Start" kindergartens, the preschool centers (preschools), and the day nurseries (pre-kindergartens). The system of preschool educational institutions of education in the USA consists of: the preschool play groups, the child care centers, the nursery schools, the kindergartens, the forest or open-air kindergartens with a short, a day-time or a round-the-clock stay of children.

A pre-school play group (playgroup) is a group of children which is organized under the supervision of parents for the general play activity.

A family child care center (day care, family childcare) takes care of a child of an early and younger preschool age in the absence of parents during a day. They distinguish the state, or non-profit, noncommercial, centres for child care and commercial, or for-profit, centres founded by the separate religious, sponsor or private organizations.

Nursery schools are the schools for children aged three to four–five years whose training is provided by the qualified experts and the professional structure of management of a comprehensive school. They purpose to stimulate children to the development-educational activity in the form of a play providing a constant pedagogical attendance at various kinds of children's activity throughout a day.

A kindergarten, or a common preschool educational institution, is a school of full time work for children aged four to five–six years, where the teaching and educational process is organized according to the program of training children of preschool age on the content of which the curriculum is designed. Kindergartens,

in which children aged 5–6 years start their training, are included into the system of obligatory secondary education and form its important part.

Forest kindergartens (also referred to as wood kindergartens, open-air kindergartens, nature kindergartens, outdoor nurseries, or nature preschools) are preschool centres of the camp type, where teaching and educational activity occurs exclusively outside the limits of the preschool centres. Most often these are summer and winter camps for little girls and boys, which are located in wood districts. In American preschool centres, children with special needs study in the common preschool centers – as a rule, there are one or two such children per a group of 10 to 15 children.

In the modern preschool educational institutions of the USA, the material maintenance implies, first of all, a quality study and didactic material and the organization of the development environment. The premise of group rooms, as a rule, is divided into three zones (corners) for the organization of different kinds of activity: a sociogram centre (role-playing games), a puppet theatre, an art centre, a cookery centre, a scientific-mathematical centre, a building and designing corner, a corner of open nature, and so on. These centers promote independent creative activity of the children. A principle of providing equal preschool possibilities for all children requires the creation in the course of training and education of conditions for balancing of freedom and order, insistence and indulgence concerning each child.

The primary goal of the teacher depends on his or her ability to organize correctly the training process during which he or she should take into consideration all, without any exception, statements and ideas of the children that concern the fulfillment of a task in view, even those erroneous or those that sound absurdly. The teacher's task generally consists in his or her pupils' substantiation of the correct and true statement, which he or she should explain to the children thoroughly and in details. Such an approach to the organization of the training of the children is up-to-date and allows the American teachers to better realize many problems and principles of the preschool education.

Thus, during our examination of the system of preschool education of the USA we have disclosed its two basic features of the organization. First: though the modern American system of the preschool education is decentralized in the management, yet in setting its main goals, problems, principles and contents its each state is guided by the regulations stated in the nationwide documents and programs, such as the Constitution of the USA, directives of the Federal Government, basic instructions of the programs "Head Start", "America 2000: Educational Strategy", "Not a child without attention". Second: the American preschool education system is provided with a wide range of the preschool educational institutions, as well as with teaching and educational programs, which allows the

teachers to carry out the program requirements of “Not a child without attention” whose principal objective is a quality preschool education of the children according to their needs.

At the same time, there is a disagreement in the system of the preschool education of the USA, which consists in the fact, that there is a characteristic divergence in the nationwide purpose of the preschool education: in preparation of the children to school there predominates the formation of a cognitive part of a child's education, while there exists a strong public emphasis on the social and moral formation of the child (the development of a child's competence to act in real life situations). This disagreement is primarily caused by the imperfection of the links between the legislature and bodies of the public management which carry out the monitoring of the quality of the preschool education programs.

Another way of introducing innovations into the spiritual-moral education of the preschool children is the not-state confessional kindergartens purposing to solve the problems of spiritual-moral education of children within a context of the specific cultural-religious traditions.

Such preschool educational institutions and separate groups, in which the pivot of the educational process was a concrete religious tradition, began opening as early as in the end of the previous century upon the parents' request and on the initiative of the religious associations. Today, it is high time to organize such kind of kindergartens in Ukraine; after all, it is regulated by the recently accepted regulation on the possibility of creating the confessional preschool educational institutions.

In such kinds of kindergartens, the principle of continuity and succession of spiritual-moral religious education of children in families, kindergartens and religious communities is realized. Their construction, on the basis of Ukrainian traditions and annual circle of religious holidays, is an important characteristic of the development environment and educational process of the confessional kindergartens on the whole.

CONTEMPORARY STATE OF UKRAINIAN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION, ITS INSTITUTIONS AND DETERMINANTS

At the present stage of the development of our state, Ukrainian parents have faced a number of obstacles which brake the normal development of a Ukrainian family and hinder bringing up children in families. The downfall of many moral-ethical standards of a traditional Ukrainian family and increase of conflicts in the relations between parents and children make all questions, which concern the enrichment of the contemporary Ukrainian parents' knowledge necessary for the harmonization of family relations and performance of the parental roles in the family and society altogether, particularly topical. In our opinion, it is the creation

of the confessional preschool centres that can be one of the variants to solve the certain problems of the Ukrainian family and the family education.

A kindergarten is the most widespread type of the preschool educational institutions. In it the supervision, care, health improvement, training and education of children, as well as development of their abilities are provided.

Almost each typical inexperienced family will, sooner or later, face the problem with entrusting their child to someone's care while they, the parents, are at work, because there is a limit on the number of places in the state preschool educational institutions. Nowadays, it becomes every time more actual to send children to private kindergartens, which are a real alternative to the official preschool institutions.

In spite of the fact that in the society there is still observed a noticeable mistrust to the non-state structures of such a type, whose maintenance, moreover, requires a lot of money, such kindergartens gain their popularity increasingly.

Among the advantages of the non-state kindergartens there can be mentioned the following: smaller groups (from 5 to 10 children), better care and, last but not least, considerably more effective curricula – from the alphabet, drawing, and dancing to riding and mastering foreign languages. Private kindergartens are much better supplied with the teaching and educational base, the newest equipment and technologies. The qualification level of their working personnel is also considerably higher.

The spectrum of services which is rendered by the private kindergartens depends on their reputation. Montessori and Waldorf preschool institutions, which look rather exotically against the background of the traditional kindergartens, enjoy a special popularity.

The Waldorf approach program pays great attention to the creative development of children, including practising music, weaving, embroidery, carving, and drawing. The teachers are not allowed to press on a child in case some task or craft is not to his or her liking – there dominates a profound respect for the little individualities, quiet and comfortable conditions, confidential and amicable relations between the children and the grown-ups.

However, there are also drawbacks in such kindergartens. The Waldorf pedagogy categorically does not recommend developing a child's intelligence prematurely, that is, to learn reading, writing and arithmetics, whereas without mastering the three R's children face difficulties with normal adaptation for a standard school.

The Montessori system also aspires to the maximum disclosing of children's abilities without putting any constraints on them. Contrarily to the Waldorf system, here in every possible way the teachers wish to develop the intellectual world of children.

The children study and develop independently in the rate which they themselves choose as the best for them, and the teacher only helps them, directing to observations and meditations.

The teacher does not teach, but assists to coordinate the independent activity of the children, thereby pushing them to a self-training. The technology of development training by the Montessori methods stimulates a child's self-development in the kindergarten.

The main task of the teacher is the creation of a special development environment (also known as the Montessori environment) in which the child acquires new habits and skills.

The principles of the Montessori pedagogical program in a kindergarten are the following:

- a) the creation of a special environment with the didactic material;
- b) the possibility of an independent choice: children themselves select the zone and duration of their employment;
- c) children's self-control and discovering of errors by themselves;
- d) the cultivating and observance of certain rules (to tidy up after oneself, to move quietly in the room, etc.) assists a gradual adaptation of children to the rules within a society and accustoms them to keeping an order;
- e) the age difference of children within a group helps to develop the feeling of mutual aid, cooperation and responsibility;
- f) the absence of any school desks, instead of which there are only small scatter rugs, easy chairs and small tables;
- g) a child is the active participant of the process. Not the teacher, but children help and teach each other. This helps to develop children's independence and confidence (Bilets'ka 2008, p. 77).

In Maria Montessori's kindergarten any kind of competitiveness is present. A child is not compared to the others that gives a chance to form his or her positive self-estimation, confidence and self-sufficiency.

The child and his or her achievements are not assessed. This helps to form an independent, self-confident and objectively self-estimating personality.

The kindergarten which works in accordance with the Montessori methods provides a child the possibility of being himself or herself. In the course of the training the child can develop such qualities as self-dependence, resoluteness and his or her own freedom of decision making, which will be irreplaceable in his or her further adult life.

However, in this system there also are minuses, because, after all, it is more like not so much a kindergarten, but an elementary school, where the most part of the day the children study. Getting used at their own discretion to select and change tasks, and to communicate on equal terms with the teacher, the children will face problems with getting used to school discipline and subordination.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the expansion and creation of a network of the various preschool educational institutions will give an opportunity to create such conditions under which children will be able to realize wholly their abilities, children's creativity will develop freely, their cognitive abilities will be stimulated by rising their many interests, and their character will be formed.

The study and introduction into practice of the Ukrainian system of the preschool education of the advanced pedagogical experience of the foreign countries, in particular – the creation of a variety of the existing and organization of new, unconventional types of educational institutions of the preschool section of education, will accelerate the integration of Ukraine into the international educational space.

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STRESZCZENIE

W artykule przeanalizowano praktykę pracy różnych typów placówek edukacji przedszkolnej w innych krajach oraz nowe sposoby podejścia do organizacji przedszkola jako integralnego ogniwa narodowego systemu oświaty. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono doświadczeniom amerykańskich pedagogów w organizacji edukacji przedszkolnej, dla których podstawowym priorytetem jest aktywny udział dziecka w procesie dydaktyczno-wychowawczym, oraz ujednoczenie osobistego i zawodowego podejścia do organizacji tego procesu w placówkach przedszkolnych.

Słowa kluczowe: oświata przedszkolna; prywatne przedszkole; konfesyjna placówka przedszkolna; innowacyjne technologie nauczania