



## Some Debatable Issues of Primary Education: Foreign Experience

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**Abstract:** In this article analyzed some debatable issues of primary education from the perspective of foreign experience. Moreover in this article illustrated experiments and methods of education in foreign countries. In addition author tried to determine some issues which affected the quality of primary education. As a result of this analyzes author tried to give some methodical suggestions and recommendation to solve these problems.

**Keywords:** primary education, debatable issues, education, secondary education, factors, foreign experiences

### INTRODUCTION

Primary education as an object of study, research and experiment occupies a special place; it is an educational space that belongs to the phenomenon of childhood, a valuable period of life, a time of inexhaustible needs of the child in cognition, which, assuming losses at an early age, are completely irreplaceable in further education. [1, 15p]

According to its goals, modern primary education is designed to lay the foundations of knowledge, develop mentally, morally, aesthetically and physically, taking into account the individual and age characteristics of children, positive self-esteem and responsibility in order to successfully study at the subsequent stages of secondary school.

From the whole block of general problems of the development of modern primary education, we will single out the following:

- choosing the "right" age to start learning;
- determination of the criteria of readiness for the school of the future first grader;
- second-year studies at the preschool stage and in primary school as a way to "equalize" performance indicators;
- ways to solve the problem of adaptation of children in kindergarten and school;
- forms of cooperation between kindergarten and primary school teachers;
- factors influencing the realization of the right of "equality of chances in education" as a socio-economic and pedagogical problem. [2-4, 89p]

### DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

There are serious differences among specialists in the approaches to determining the goals of primary education and solving the problem of choosing the "right" age for starting children's education, which deserve attention. [5, 69p] Proponents of an earlier start of children's education put forward various arguments, referring to new research by scientists, to the practical experience of raising children

in the family and in preschool institutions, but above all to global changes in society and their reflection in the life of the modern generation.

The appearance, interests and needs of tomorrow's first graders have changed. They have significantly outstripped their peers of previous years in the volume and level of information received, possession of electronic means of communication, live in conditions of increased educational requirements. These features led to a reduction in the time that previously belonged to a carefree childhood; the beginning of education for younger children (toddlers 3-5 years old); attempts to reduce the period of compulsory education (from 9 to 13 years) at the expense of preschool. [6-8, 45p]

Their opponents claim that the attack on the legitimate rights of children, on the "reduction" of time belonging to childhood, is taking place:

- firstly, because of the definition of the age of the baby as a preschool, a priori school-oriented, as well as securing the social status of a "preschooler" for him, and not, for example, a "playing" or "growing" ("developing") child;
- secondly, due to the reduction in a number of European countries of the age of starting school preparation by 2 years compared to the traditional age of 6-7 years;
- thirdly, due to the more serious educational load on 5-6-year-olds, which is actually shifting the direct educational responsibilities of primary school to the preschool stage. [9, 45p]

A significant loss for the development of the child turns into a restriction or a real reduction of time, which traditionally belonged to the game, "children's fun", as a specifically child-like activity, recognized at all times and by all peoples as the most valuable gift. [10, 89p] Teachers state a reduction in children's "free" time, that is, for children's games, and are critical of the fact that more and more often the professionalism of educators and primary school teachers is evaluated not in terms of their ability to play with children, but the ability to conduct classes close to school lessons. The following arguments are given: "A reading and even writing preschooler becomes a "model" of a kindergarten graduate"; "Today, in an effort to form subject knowledge among children faster, the school is trying to artificially stimulate the acceleration of the child, his "growing up" through preschool education, disrupting continuity in content and forms." [11-14, 67p]

In the book "Crisis in Kindergartens", scientist E. Miller discusses the crisis in American kindergartens caused by the reduction to a minimum of the play activities of educators with children, which is seen as a threat to their physical development, health and, as a consequence, successful learning in the future. [15, 78p]

The dominance of the preparatory school function at the expense of the game objectively led to the creation of a special link between preschool and school education, designed to perform the following tasks:

- create conditions for providing children with an appropriate level of training to achieve an "equal start";
- prepare them at the level of "school maturity" to assimilate the initial basic knowledge, skills and abilities for their subsequent consolidation and continuation in primary school;
- help to adapt to new conditions when moving from a family to a more regulated environment.

**EXPERIMENTS AND METHODS OF EDUCATION IN RUSSIA.** The new requirements of the market economy and the rapidly emerging information society have put the education system in front of the need to radically rethink the essence of all educational goals and objectives, forms and content of education of the younger generation. Responding to the demands of modernity, Russian teachers called the meaning and purpose of education the development of the personality of schoolchildren, and the strategic task of educational policy is to stimulate their activity. The second generation of state educational standards has been developed to implement the set goals and objectives. [16, 55p] Unlike

the standards of the first generation, which were focused on the results of subject-based learning and the preservation of the general high level of knowledge inherent in domestic education, the standards of the second generation bring to the fore the development of personality and competence approach, emphasize the importance of operational competencies. In these conditions, it makes sense to turn to the already existing positive experience of our schools and, above all, to the systems of developing learning L.V. Zankova and Elkonina–Davydova. [17-18, 55p]

The system of L.V. Zankov made a serious contribution to the improvement of the didactics of the Russian school. Zankov tried to reveal the nature of the connection between the construction of the learning process and the development of students. He was interested in the question of the mechanisms of development, about the real reasons for a child to achieve a certain level of development. Is training omnipotent? During the experiment, the scientist used methods of psychological study of students. This made it possible to conduct a thorough study of the effectiveness of the implemented pedagogical innovations. Based on the research conducted under the guidance of Zankov, the following results were obtained: the position of the leading role of learning in development was proved (a change in the structure of learning entails changes in the mental appearance of schoolchildren); it was revealed that learning does not act in a straight line, but is refracted through the internal characteristics of the child, through his inner world, as a result of which each child is influenced by the same form of education reaches its stages of development; the concept of "general development" is introduced as a common goal and indicator of the effectiveness of primary education; the lines and methods of studying the general development of schoolchildren are revealed; it is shown that so far in practice huge reserves of child development have not been used. The most important result of this work was the description of the didactic features of the teaching system, effective for the general development of schoolchildren, and the creation of practical manuals for schools: programs, textbooks, methodological manuals.

L.V. Zankov's system is characterized by a rich content of primary education, which, as the author pointed out, should give students a general picture of the world based on the values of science, literature, and art. The richness of the content of education is achieved, firstly, by including in the curriculum (with a normal hourly load) as separate subjects of natural science (from the first grade);

secondly, by enriching the content of subjects generally accepted in primary classes – native language, reading, mathematics, labor training, aesthetic cycle subjects;

thirdly, by changing the ratio of the importance of the so-called main and secondary subjects (music, fine arts, labor lessons);

fourth, by increasing the proportion of knowledge received by children under the guidance of a teacher outside of school, during various kinds of excursions;

Fifthly, by introducing independent, personal, everyday observations of children into the course of the lesson (students are given the opportunity to share observations with friends, this enriches the lesson and has a beneficial effect on the self-perception of children at school).

This approach to the selection of the content of education provides a variety of activities of children in the learning process.

**Experiments and methods of education in other foreign countries.** The preparatory stage in different countries was created in their respective national forms. In the USA, the function of the preschool stage is carried out by day care centers for children, preschool classes, kindergartens or "nanny schools". In Germany, Austria and Switzerland, "preparatory groups or classes" are located at kindergartens or primary schools, depending on the degree of readiness of the child for school. In France, various forms of integration of children's and primary classes are used, for example, kindergartens, the so-called "mother schools", designed for kids 2-5 years old, operate in primary school mode. The senior group of kindergarten kids (4-5 years old), merged with the first year of primary school, is a "preparatory

class". In Finland, preschool groups are designed for children 6 years old, in Italy - a "preparatory school year" in kindergarten ("children's school"), in Poland - zero classes at schools or preparatory groups in kindergartens, in the Czech Republic - "mother schools". [19, 32p]

In contrast to foreign experience, the Ministry of Public Education and Science, in order to realize the constitutional rights of citizens, aims to increase the accessibility of preschool education, and not replace it with pre-school education and does not provide for such a replacement. Preschool institutions operating in various countries are distinguished by a variety of types, target orientation, methods of education and training, including alternative education systems that correspond to the pedagogical concepts of Dewey, Piaget, Montessori, Fresne, Steiner.

Waldorf kindergartens (R. Steiner's model), which have found distribution in many countries of the world, when determining the main tasks of education proceed from the principle of naturalness, rejecting the artificial acceleration of child development and an earlier start of education to prepare for school. In Germany and Austria, the preparatory stage is designed to use game forms of learning, to develop educational (speech and motor) skills and skills for subsequent school education in reading, writing, counting, as well as social behavior skills. There are also kindergartens where any main tasks are prioritized, for example, achieving an "equal start" (the aspect of leveling the level of preparation for school); orientation to the highest possible academic results (the educational aspect) or an emphasis on leveling (correction) of social behavior and adaptability to certain conditions (the socializing aspect). In Denmark, similar tasks are carried out within the framework of the concept of "free education" with an emphasis on the development of independence and responsibility, which is part of the tradition of the national educational model, where the focus is on the child, his orientation to the children's collective, emotional and social development. [20, 78p]

For a long time, teachers and psychologists believed that the criterion for determining the level of development of children aged 5-6 years and the beginning of their education is the natural ability (readiness) to learn. Later, this level was "measured" by the amount of knowledge and ideas that the child was able or managed to acquire before entering school. The research idea was aimed at studying the "circle of ideas" of children about the surrounding reality and at determining the requirements that were presented to them as future first-graders. The formation of heterogeneous groups of heterogeneous age and development becomes a factor in strengthening the continuity of ties by bringing together goals and objectives, organizational forms and methods of work at different stages of primary education, as well as accelerating the process of their integration. They have proved themselves in practice more effective than homogeneous groups, both for the overall development of children and for their ability to adapt to a new environment. It is much more difficult than determining the "right" age to start learning, the problem of choosing the criteria of readiness (ability) of a preschooler to study in elementary school, "school maturity" is solved. [22, 56p]

Currently, the programs of preparatory groups in most countries are focused on the development of children's ideas and skills of self-knowledge of the material world around them and social behavior in their environment. Priorities are chosen differently when determining the school readiness index. The focus may be on the study of the native language and the development of speech skills (Austria), or the development of intelligence, observation, speed of memorization, accuracy of expression of thought, creative imagination (Bulgaria). In a number of Scandinavian countries, the ability of children to learn cola is considered as a result of the training itself, regardless of their general level of development by the time they enter the 1st grade. Finland is among the leading countries in the academic performance (quality of training) of students identified in the course of international studies (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS). The country does not recognize a differentiated approach to children in determining their abilities when

enrolling in school, as well as the division into "weak" and "strong". Everyone is accepted, including children with developmental disabilities, and achieve "equality of results".

**Some factors that affect the quality of primary education.** The mutual influence of external and internal pressures causes a particularly acute problem of the quality of school education. The quality of school education is a derivative of its goals and objectives. It must meet both the social needs of the state and the needs of the individual. The quality of school education is primarily its compliance with certain standards of requirements defined by standards and regulations and they can be measured. In addition, the quality of education is evidenced by a variety of personal achievements of students or school staff, which can not always be quantified through the lack of development of relevant criteria. It is impossible to measure, for example, traditions, the spirit of the school, the emotional well-being of children, the degree of burnout of teachers, but they are vivid subjective arguments for assessing the real quality of education. We emphasize that the quality of primary education by parents is very often assessed from the standpoint of the child's security and comfortable stay at school. And this is right, because at this age, social and health-saving functions are no less important than educational ones, because the younger the student, the more difficult it is for him to protect himself.

Of particular importance in characterizing the quality of primary education is the mastery of younger schoolchildren with such neoplasms of this age as the ability to learn, readiness (operational, meaningful) to continue studying in primary school, moral upbringing, positive social experience. Unfortunately, there are no officially recognized science-based criteria that could be applied unconditionally in this very complex case, but psychologists and educators are conducting intensive research in this direction [5, p. 1145]. The quality of education in primary school depends on many factors that cannot be disclosed in the article. Our goal is to determine their totality, to emphasize the need for systematic actions to improve the quality of primary education.

The first factor is to ensure that mass primary education is really accessible and compulsory for all primary school-age children, regardless of their place of residence, ethnic origin and financial status of their parents. Organizational and scientific measures are currently being implemented to ensure the right to education of children with developmental disabilities at their place of residence, including in general education institutions, integrated (inclusive) education is provided in the educational systems of developed countries of the world, but for this it is necessary to allocate tax finances and introduce teacher assistants to the school staff.

The second factor: How is it possible to use the achievements of the preschool period of childhood. Now there is a significant gap between regions in providing preschool children with systematic education. In some regions, almost 75 percent of children attend preschool institutions and receive full-fledged preparation for school. But the unwillingness of the preschool education network to meet the growing demand of parents for raising children in preschool institutions is becoming more and more noticeable. And a large reduction in preschool institutions during the previous decades due to the economic and demographic crisis, as well as a decrease in the licensed volume of admission of applicants to the specialty of preschool education caused the unavailability of the first stage of continuing education for most children. This problem is especially acute in rural areas, where in some areas this figure is in the range of 30-36%. Such circumstances create difficulties in the implementation of continuity, the use of early development opportunities in primary school, objectively reduce the quality of primary education. Obviously, it is necessary to resume the organization of preparatory groups at schools with a differentiated stay regime, because the restoration of the kindergarten network and personnel training is a long process. Preschool training should not be a "mini-school", innovations in the form of all kinds of paid courses for children, which are common in large cities, mainly saturate children with information, and do not develop abilities that are priority for this age.

The third factor: Creation and "cultivation" of the educational environment on the basis of universal and national values. The environment is a combination of natural and social conditions and influences surrounding a person; it is our living space that actively or passively affects consciousness and feelings. The younger student has direct or indirect connections with natural, social, educational, gaming, technological and psychological-pedagogical environments. The upbringing, training, and development of the child is the result not only of the activities of the teacher, the family, but also of the influence of all these environments. The location of the school, the condition of its building, the number of children in the family, the placement of primary school classes, their fullness, the presence of extended day groups, a good dining room, a medical office are the basic prerequisites for high-quality education of younger schoolchildren. It is the environment that attracts parents more in private educational institutions. [2, c. 35].

From our point of view, an autonomous primary school or an institution in a complex with a kindergarten is optimal for primary school age. In conditions of the same funding of state institutions, the attitude of the directorate and teachers to the arrangement of the environment for primary classes is very different. In some institutions, it is still visible in the courtyard that there are no playgrounds and sports grounds for younger schoolchildren, experienced participants, in others – in an orderly manner, each zone is equipped, the interests of six-year-old first-graders are taken into account. A special role should be given to the creation of material conditions for the preservation and development of children's health: matching furniture, recreation areas, separate tables for meals, safe toilets, and the like. The spatial and subject equipment of classes for elementary school students in recent years has become an innovative field, where various ways of equipping it with furniture, visual, toys, etc. are being implemented. The educational environment should be convenient, interesting, safe for primary school children, so that it helps to fully realize educational, educational and developmental functions. It is important that children and parents take an active part in its creation.

The fourth factor: The system-forming factor of the quality of school education is the quality of its content. The effectiveness of primary education largely depends on the purpose and theory of content selection, its structuring by educational areas, subjects, and how accurately it correlates with the needs and capabilities of children of a particular class.

**Some suggestion for improving the quality of primary education:**

1. determination of the content of all educational areas on the basis of humanization, integrity, and the needs of general cultural development of children;
2. application of the state standard as the main mechanism for the implementation of the social order of the state on the education of children, regulatory regulation of the content, volumes of educational material;
3. introduction of a competence-based approach to the selection of content and definition of requirements for students' knowledge;
4. integration as a principle of designing and implementing content through integrated courses, which makes it possible to better take into account the integrity of the world, to reveal to children the interrelationships between various phenomena, events, and the like;
5. purposeful enrichment of the content with educational and developmental material that creates prerequisites for the versatile education and development of students;
6. variability of the implementation of the state standard by creating author programs and corresponding textbooks.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, the current situation of the development of school education needs to understand its quality as a holistic integrated result, which is influenced by many factors: the availability of primary education, the possibility of using the achievements of preschool education, the creation of a favorable educational environment, high-quality content and modern textbooks, the full implementation of the ideas of personality-oriented education, the formation of key competencies, the technologization of methodology, monitoring as a means of quality management, personal and professional training of a teacher. High quality primary education can be achieved in every school if a team of like-minded people works there, the spirit of partnership, mutual support and inspiring management reigns.

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