

LANGUAGE POLICY AND SCHOOL EDUCATION AS MAIN FACTORS OF UKRAINE STATE CREATION

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Abstract. *The authors present their views on the formation of the Language Policy and the role of general secondary school education as important factors in the Ukraine state creation shortly before and in the first years of Ukraine's independence. The main drivers of changes in the Language Policy of the Soviet government regarding the state of the Ukrainian language in the USSR are identified. These drivers of changes include (1) activities of nationally oriented public organisations, primarily Ukrainian writers, historians, human rights defenders, and the Ukrainian language admirers; (2) public desire to develop nationally oriented education, which forced the authorities to start implementing very specific measures, first of all – in the field of general secondary school education; (3) the gradual formation of a scientific and pedagogical basis for the versatile Ukrainisation and humanisation of education and upbringing of children and youth giving priority to their native language as a language of instruction; (4) the need to introduce measures for external and internal differentiation of general secondary school education; (5) the psychologisation of the educational process. Based on documentary sources, it is argued that general secondary school education played the role of an important factor in the Ukraine state creation which was facilitated by the specific measures developed by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine to implement the Ukrainian idea in school practice in the first years of independence. The novelty of the present research is that authors extrapolate the past educational experience to the current language situation in general secondary school education in Ukraine. Moreover, the authors represent the opinions of contemporary Ukrainian sociolinguists on the state Language Policy in the field of general secondary school education. The research proves that the strategic ideas laid down at the turn of the last decades of the last century regarding the Educational Policy of independent Ukraine in the field of general secondary school education played an important role in improving the position of the Ukrainian language and in shaping Ukrainian self-identity among children and young people which explicitly and implicitly reinforced the key strategic idea – the idea of the Ukrainian State creation.*

Keywords: *Educational Policy; general secondary school education; Language Policy; Ukraine; Ukrainian language.*

Introduction

In the context of the current and unequivocally unresolved socio-political problem related to the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state one in Ukraine, we consider it appropriate to carry out a historical and retrospective analysis of developing educational component of the problem's solution within the general secondary school education. At the beginning of the 21st century L. Masenko (2004), who is a well-known contemporary Ukrainian sociolinguist, wrote that even 27 years after declaring Ukraine's independence, "the situation in education was not favourable, although it was reported all the time that there was probably 95% of schools where instruction was provided in Ukrainian and Ukrainian was supposedly the language of instruction in all universities" (Masenko, 2004). Moreover, numerous Ukrainian linguists, writers, and public figures expressed their dissatisfaction with the Language Policy implemented by the government back then.

Ukrainian scientific literature contains various research related to different aspects of the functioning of the Ukrainian language. Thus, for instance, much was done by O. Danylevska (2018) and O. Ruda (2012) who investigated modern relations of languages, language practices and cultures and their projections on the social and linguistic consciousness of Ukrainian citizens. The connection between the language and the policy of state creation, issues of language policy were examined by N. Dichek (2020), M. Kocherhan (2008), O. Kuts (2004), L. Masenko (2004), H. Matsyuk (2009). The research by O. Tkachenko (2014), S. Sokolova (2019), S. Sokolova and H. Zalizniak (2018), T. Tkachuk (2015) were aimed at exploring the interaction between various factors of political, social, cultural, scientific life of bilingual environment. What is more, language issues in the context of public administration were investigated by N. Popovych (2011) and I. Lopushynskyi (2006).

It should be noted that close to our research was the analysis of the State Policy in the field of education carried out by I. Lopushynskyi (2006). The analysis showed the influence of the language factor on language training at all levels of education and on reforming language education in educational institutions of Ukraine in the context of European integration processes. The researcher also analysed the state of Ukrainian language education in the diaspora (Lopushynskyi, 2006). The research by N. Dichek (2016) was focused on investigating the ways of establishing a personally oriented paradigm of school education in Ukraine. However, neither these researchers nor others specifically investigated the role of general secondary school education in forming and implementing the State Language Policy, nor did they set goals to conduct its historical and genetic analysis.

The authors of the research limited the analysis of scientific works and experts' opinions on the state and ways of solving the language issue in Ukraine only to those published studies (although in reality there were far more), where – albeit indirectly – the State Language Policy in the field of education was criticised. For instance, the quote from the article by O. Danylevska (2018) represented a consolidated position of Ukrainian sociolinguists: “... sociolinguists conclude that the State Language Policy in general and in the system of language education in particular is ineffective. A sign of Ukrainian linguistic existence is the fact that the expert environment, in particular linguists, whose research interests include the problems of language functioning in society and the analysis of language policy, almost throughout the entire history of independent Ukraine were in a kind of opposition to the state authorities responsible for the language implementation”.

Problem Statement and Research Methodology

The research purpose was to carry out a historical and genetic analysis of the first steps of the State Educational Policy of independent Ukraine in the field of general secondary school education in the context of its Ukrainization. The purpose was specified in the following tasks: (1) to identify the main drivers of changes in the policy of the Soviet government regarding the state of the Ukrainian language in the USSR; (2) to outline the specific steps of implementing the Ukrainian idea in school practice in the first years of independence; (3) to extrapolate past experience gained by researchers to the current language situation in general secondary school education in Ukraine and to represent the opinions of contemporary Ukrainian sociolinguists on the State Language Policy in the field of general secondary school education.

The main inclusion criterion for search was journal articles and monographs written in Ukrainian and English that reflected the language situation in Ukraine in general and language policy in general secondary education in Ukraine shortly before and in the first years of Ukraine's independence in particular from a critical perspective. To achieve the purpose of research the authors conducted the analysis of scientific literature and normative legal acts of Ukraine selected according to the main inclusion criterion mentioned above.

Results

Assuming that the language policy is “a set of political and administrative measures aimed at giving language development the desired direction, ... the part of the national policy of a particular state” (Kocherhan, 2008), or that the language policy can be regarded as one of political mechanisms that affects the structure, functions, use or assimilation of any language (Johnson, 2013), we can suggest

that such a policy began to form in Ukraine not earlier than the latter part of the 20th century: firstly, under pressure from the national-oriented public, that is, “from below”; secondly, only due to the exaggerated situation aimed at adopting the Law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” in October 1989 (in the Soviet Ukraine back then) (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989). Considering this point of view, we can conclude that it is hardly possible to overcome centuries of restrictions concerning the rights and even prohibitions of the Ukrainian language (the Valuev Circular issued in 1863 (Danylenko, 2010; Remy, 2007; Remy, 2016) and the Ems Decree issued in 1876 (Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine, 2001; Reyent, 2016)) in several decades.

We should indicate that the Law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989) in Ukraine, despite the severe resistance of the communist authorities, was adopted thanks to mass actions of the public movement participants who advocated the fate of the Ukrainian language, national sovereignty and national (Ukrainian) priorities in all spheres of life.

According to L. Deshchynskyj (2006), it was under the influence of the national-liberation movement, although heterogeneous in the composition of participants due to their beliefs and demands, that democratic changes began in the Ukrainian republic in the second half of the 1980s and “the writers were in the forefront of this movement” (Deshchynskyj, 2006). It was the writers who defended the Ukrainian language and culture from Russification and who were able to force Gorbachev’s perestroika to “speak Ukrainian” (Deshchynskyj, 2006).

In February 1989, the language situation in Ukraine was compared with the situation in Chernobyl during the Taras Shevchenko Founding Conference of the Ukrainian language society (Ostrozkyi zamok, 2020). Conferenced participants loudly declared the narrowing the scope of use of the native language and initiated the adoption of the Law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” (1989), which became the legal grounds for introducing such new training courses of folk studies as “Ethnography and Folklore of Ukraine”, “Culture and Art of Ukraine”, “Folk Studies”, “Native Land”.

So, since October 1989, when the Law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” was put into effect, the Ukrainian language received the status of the state language (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989). Its functioning and development was recognised as “one of the decisive factors of the national identity of the Ukrainian people”, which guarantees them the “sovereign national-state futureness” (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989). It should be noted that the Law “On Languages” laid down the need to “educate citizens, regardless of their nationality, to understand the social purpose of the Ukrainian language as the state language in the Ukrainian SSR” (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989). We have to state that the issue of developing Ukrainian-language education was almost the first among large-scale national processes.

On July 16, 1990, under pressure from broad public circles, the Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine was forced to adopt the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Ukrainian SSR (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1990), which recognised the independence of the Republic in solving issues of science, education, cultural and spiritual development of the Ukrainian nation. In Part VIII – “Cultural Development” of the Declaration, it was noted: “the Ukrainian SSR, independent in solving issues of science, education, cultural and spiritual development of the Ukrainian nation, guarantees all nationalities living on the territory of the Republic the right of their free national and cultural development. The Ukrainian SSR ensures the national and cultural revival of the Ukrainian people, their historical consciousness and traditions, national and ethnographic features, and the functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of life” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1990).

On the eve of the 1990-1991 school year, in August, the Commissions on Public Education and Science, Culture and Spiritual Revival of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR appealed to the citizens of Ukraine (parents of schoolchildren) from the pages of the newspaper “Education” with a challenge to the State expediency of sending children to Ukrainian schools to teach in their native language, the state functioning of which was low at that time (Zvernennia komisii Verkhovnoi Rady Ukr. RSR, 1990). It was noted back then that the majority of Ukrainian children (especially in cities) did not know the Ukrainian language, there was “renunciation of the native language, ignorance of the history of the native people, oblivion of national roots” in society (Zvernennia komisii Verkhovnoi Rady Ukr. RSR, 1990), which caused a deep spiritual and moral crisis in Ukrainian society. And in order to change this situation, the first task that the commissions suggested to do was to change the work of the school as the future of Ukraine would depend on it.

According to the Law “On Languages” (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1989), 176 Ukrainian-language schools were opened in 1990 alone, and the number of hours allocated for studying the history and geography of Ukraine was increased in the content of secondary education (Berezivska, 2018).

The active core of the national movement who also influenced changes in education, included writers, scientists-historians, public figures, human rights defenders, whose speeches in the press aroused public opinion and activity, and contributed to raising the level of national consciousness and finally shifted the process of national state creation in Ukraine. Thus, thanks to the efforts of Ukrainian history researchers at the level of the decision of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine in January 1989 almost for the first time, it was recognised that there were many complex phenomena and facts which were incomplete, contradictory, biased”, and “the study of the history of Ukraine of the Ukrainian SSR in general secondary schools and vocational schools did not ensure the formation of a holistic view of the ancient and modern history of Ukraine

among students” (Deshchynskyi, 2006, pp. 8-9). The result was the approval of the decision to develop a “Program for Developing Historical Research, Improving Research and History of Propaganda of the Ukrainian SSR for 1991-2000”. And although this program was approved only in July 1990, however, its important cultural and national-creating significance was described by V. Lytvyn in 1994 as follows: “... what is being done thoroughly in the field of research and propaganda of the history of Ukraine is a consequence of the implementation of the mentioned program” (Lytvyn, 1994).

Another factor and driver of changes in general secondary school education in the Soviet era was the adoption of the Law “On Education”, in accordance with the resolution of the Verkhovna Rada No. 1144-XII of June 4, 1991 (Zakon Online, 1991). Without exaggeration, we consider this Law to be a breakthrough step in the beginning of democratic changes in the development of the educational sector, because it justified State expediency of transforming the educational system on the principles of humanism, national interests and universal values as opposed to class Communist interests. Thus, in the 4th article of the adopted Law “On Education”, it was stated: “Ukraine recognises education as a priority sphere of socio-economic, spiritual and cultural development of society” (Zakon Online, 1991). And among the basic principles of education (Article 6), the following principles as “humanism, democracy, priority of universal spiritual values; organic connection with world and national history, culture, traditions” were indicated (Zakon Online, 1991). With the development of democracy in the country and changes in social needs in 1993, and in more detail – in 1996. The Law was clarified (edited), and further amendments and clarifications were made to it, until it became invalid with the adoption of the new Law “On Education” in May 2017.

It can be argued that the need to protect the Ukrainian language, to expand the scope of its functioning and studying initiated by writers intensified the problem of the constitutional declaration of sovereignty of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 1990), which took place on August 24, 1991, when the Verkhovna Rada adopted the act of declaration of independence of Ukraine, which marked the beginning of the creation of an independent Ukrainian State.

Thus, the main drivers of breaking the Soviet language policy and creating the educational policy of an independent state in the country were primarily such internal factors of cultural, educational and political changes as the gradual disappearance (under the pressure of the nationally oriented public) of the totalitarian state monopoly on solving socially significant issues in the humanitarian sphere of people’s lives. The proof of this is the determined decisive influence of humanitarian and public opinion on the definition of State Educational Policy in Ukraine; public desire to develop nationally oriented education, which forced the authorities to start implementing very specific measures, first of all – in the field of general secondary school education; the

gradual formation of a scientific and pedagogical basis for the versatile Ukrainisation and humanisation of education and upbringing of children and youth giving priority to their native language as a language of instruction; the need to introduce measures for external and internal differentiation of general secondary school education; the psychologisation of the educational process. A significant external factor that influenced the formation of general secondary school education policy in Ukraine was the collapse of the USSR and the liberation from communist monoideology.

Adhering to the opinion of the modern linguist M. Kocherhan (2008) that in the process of shaping Ukrainian patriots, “educational work, first of all, should be entrusted to the Ministry of Education. It should always be provided by schools. Most of all, it depends on our teaching whether the current schoolchildren will become nationally conscious citizens, whether they will be able to defend their national dignity” (Kocherhan, 2008).

We should also mention the significant participation of the Ministry of National Education of Ukraine (since 1992 – the Ministry of Education of Ukraine) in determining and implementing the Ukrainian-oriented School Educational Policy. During the controversial transition period of the Ukraine State creation, it was led by the Minister I. Ziaziun (September 1990 – January 1992), who came to the post as a recognised scientist and the developer of ideas about pedagogical proficiency as an integral quality of a teacher, which implies teachers’ ability to apply fundamental principles of individual approach to the schoolchildren.

The activation of the movement for the recognition of the national identity of Ukrainians in the late 1980s stimulated the beginning of a broad public discussion on the need to reform general secondary school education on the national basis, which led to the development of various public and official projects for reforming its work (Berezivska, 2018). Based on the public discussion about the renewal of the school’s activities, the Board of the Ministry of National Education of the Ukrainian SSR approved the Project “Concepts of Secondary General Education Schools of Ukraine” in August 1990, prepared by the team of scientists from the Research Institute of Pedagogy of the Ukrainian SSR (now – *Institute of Pedagogy of National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine*). It was widely discussed both at teachers’ conferences in August and at public hearings during the school year. The concept, which was based on the thesis that “the school is a model of society”, proclaimed the need to restore the cultural function of the school, to revive the traditions of national culture in the content of teaching and upbringing, to refuse to impose political and religious dogmas on the school, and the autonomy of schools in choosing the forms and methods of the educational process (Dichek, 2020). Already in September 1991, the Board of the Ministry adopted the Decision № 8/61 “On the Concept of General Secondary Education Schools in Ukraine”, in which it approved the revised version of the

document. It “defined the main tasks and prospects for the development of the school, the main directions of its spiritual and national revival: restoration of school’s cultural function, reflection of traditions of national culture in the content of training and education, democratisation and humanisation of education, individualisation and differentiation of the educational process and its development taking into account national traditions” (Informatsiinyi zbirnyk Ministerstva osvity Ukrainy, 1992b).

It should be noted that among the ideas declared in the concept, later many ideas modified and detailed were included into further educational documents of independent Ukraine, namely, the principles of nationality, differentiation and individualisation of education and upbringing of schoolchildren, the introduction of variability in the content, forms and methods of education.

During 1991, the Ministry developed and adopted a comprehensive action plan to implement the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR of 12.02.1991 “On the State Program for the Development of the Ukrainian Language and other National Languages in the Ukrainian SSR for the Period up to 2000” (Pedahohichna presa, 1991c), which became a plan of specified actions to strengthen the role and significance of the native language in school’s activities, aimed at promoting “the establishment of the Statehood of the Ukrainian language in all educational institutions” (Pedahohichna presa, 1991c).

In the context of updating the content of secondary education within the Concept of the National School, with the joint participation of scientists of the Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, the Ministry of National Education, the Union of Writers of Ukraine, competitions were launched to create new original textbooks, manuals and programmes for general secondary schools and Pedagogical Institutes (Pedahohichna presa, 1991b).

The development of “The Concept of Patriotic and International Education of Students’ Youth, the Formation of Their National Identity” by the Ministry in 1990 (Pedahohichna presa, 1990) and “The Concept of Aesthetic Development of Students’ Youth” was aimed at achieving the purpose of the national state creation by means of education. Along with the development of “The Concept of Aesthetic Development of Students’ Youth”, the creation of small Academies of Folk Arts and Folk Studies which were supposed to contribute to the restoration of folklore traditions and crafts was approved (Pedahohichna presa, 1990).

The Ministry also developed the Regulation “On the Movement of Students of Ukraine for the Preservation and Multiplication of Traditions, Customs, Rituals of the People”: “My land – the land of my parents”, which was launched on September 1, 1990 in all general secondary schools of the country with the aim to revive national culture among schoolchildren, ensuring the in-depth study of the history of their native land (Pedahohichna presa, 1990). A large-scale comprehensive programme of search, training and upbringing of gifted children and youth “Creative Giftedness” (1990-1991) was also launched (Pedahohichna

presa, 1992a), thanks to which the research by young students was stimulated, and the work of creative voluntary associations of schoolchildren was recognised and justified. In 1991, the Board of the Ministry of Public Education of the USSR approved the “Regulations on the Small Academy of Sciences, the Scientific Society of Schoolchildren and Young Students” (Pedahohichna presa, 1991a). Later, this vector aimed at “developing intelligence, cognitive activity and creative abilities, self-determination in the future profession” of Ukrainian schoolchildren was constantly supported in the activities of the Ministry (Pedahohichna presa, 1991a).

Since the chronological boundaries of the article are limited to the years of formation (prerequisites) and the first years of independence of Ukraine, we should also turn to such an important document that defined the key strategies for the development of education in an already independent Ukraine – the State National Programme “Education” (“Ukraine of the XXI Century”) (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1993) developed under the minister of Education P. Talanchuk (1992-1994). Without a doubt, this document became the first ideological reference point in the development of an independent national education system. The Programme focused on the need to recreate the intellectual and spiritual potential of Ukrainians, on the need for National Science, Technology and Culture to reach the world level, on national revival, the formation of statehood and the democratisation of society in Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1993). The main goal of the Programme was formulated as “defining strategic directions for the development of education in the conditions of State independence”, while the orientation to the national direction of education was determined, “creating such an integral system of continuous education and upbringing that would ensure the formation of the intellectual and cultural potential of the nation” (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 1993, p. 2). The defining component of educational reform was recognised as updating its content and coordinating it with the needs of the individuals and new needs of Ukrainian society, as well as with the standards of world scientific and pedagogical experience.

The definition of key areas of school education renewal in the Programme was largely influenced by such factors as the position and voice of the Ukrainian public, which is associated with the tendency to increase the influence of the nationally oriented part of society on state decision-making, as well as the activity of the educational community regarding the formation of State Policy in the field of education, in particular, general secondary education, which began in the mid-1980s.

According to the activities of the Minister – P. Talanchuk in the educational sphere, there were fundamentally important changes aimed at intensifying the development of nationally oriented education (preparation of updated textbooks, monitoring the implementation of the Law “On the Ukrainian language” (1989) in certain regions of the country), as well as changes directly or indirectly related

to the strengthening of the processes of humanisation of education. In addition, for instance, by the decision of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, since 1993, the creation of Centres for Holding Events Related to the Memory of Holodomor Victims in Ukraine has been initiated in all types of Educational Institutions (Pedahohichna presa, 1993a; Pedahohichna presa, 1993b; Pedahohichna presa, 1993c). But, at the same time, the literature analysis clearly demonstrates that the reform concerning general secondary education took place at an inappropriate pace (Dichek, 2020; Masenko, 2004).

In general, emphasising the national-creation potential of the State National Programme “Education” (“Ukraine of the XXI Century”), we have to use the word “proclaimed”, which is not accidental. Unfortunately, the ideas and principles declared in the document, which are extremely important for the State and development of education as its significant component, have largely remained demonstrated (for example, the provision on granting priority status to education has not yet been implemented). We think it is inappropriate to accuse the developers of the Programme that they did not foresee the growth of the material and economic crisis in the country in the 1990s, and did not take into account the inertia of the educational system itself regarding rapid innovations. In our opinion, we should still remember and appreciate that it is thanks to the ideas laid down in this programme, the ways of humanisation and development of national education were outlined for years to come, the development of school education on the all-Ukrainian basis focused on the needs of both the state and the individual began and is being continued.

Conclusions

In the paper the historical and genetic analysis of the first steps of the State Educational Policy of independent Ukraine in the field of general secondary school education in the context of its Ukrainization was conducted. The authors presented their views on the formation of the Language Policy and the role of general secondary school education as important factors in the Ukraine State creation shortly before and in the first years of Ukraine’s independence. The authors also identified the main drivers of changes in the Language Policy of the Soviet government regarding the state of the Ukrainian language in the USSR. The main drivers of changes included (1) activities of nationally oriented public organisations, primarily Ukrainian writers, historians, human rights defenders, and the Ukrainian language admirers; (2) public desire to develop nationally oriented education, which forced the authorities to start implementing very specific measures, first of all – in the field of general secondary school education; (3) the gradual formation of a scientific and pedagogical basis for the versatile Ukrainisation and humanisation of education and upbringing of children and youth giving priority to their native language as a language of instruction; (4) the

need to introduce measures for external and internal differentiation of general secondary school education; (5) the psychologisation of the educational process. The research proved the fact that general secondary school education played the role of an important factor in the Ukraine State creation which was facilitated by the specific measures developed by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine aimed at implementing the Ukrainian idea in school practice in the first years of independence. Moreover, it proved the fact that the strategic ideas laid down at the turn of the last decades of the last century regarding the Educational Policy of independent Ukraine in the field of general secondary school education played an important role in improving the position of the Ukrainian language and in shaping Ukrainian self-identity among children and young people which explicitly and implicitly reinforced the key strategic idea – the idea of the Ukrainian State creation.

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