

PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS OF ADAPTATION OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN – INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS TO LIVING AND STUDYING IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

The article discusses the challenges that Ukrainian children experience adapting and integrating into the cultural and educational space of the Republic of Lithuania during the war in Ukraine. In this article, adaptation is viewed as a subsystem, a necessary element, and, most importantly, a crucial prerequisite for effective integration. Accordingly, the specific socio-pedagogical conditions for the effective integration of children and young people into the European multicultural society are outlined. We believe that the dynamics of adaptation largely determines the effectiveness of integration.

Keywords: social adaptation, integration, education of the Republic of Lithuania, support programs, socio-pedagogical conditions, Lithuanian schools.

Introduction

Relevance and novelty of the topic. As a result of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian occupiers since February 2022, millions of Ukrainian citizens have had to flee the country. Many of them found refuge in European countries. A large number of the refugees were children. According to statistics, as of May 2022, which was the first wave of migrants, 15,786 Ukrainian refugee children arrived in Lithuania. This country created the necessary conditions for them, including the social and educational ones. By that time, 8,527 children had already started attending school (*Ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymas 2022–2023 mokslo metais Aplinkraštis dėl ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymo 2022–2023 mokslo metais*). The timelines and dynamics of the relevant assistance influenced the pace of children's adaptation to living and learning in new conditions.

The problems of migration, the flows of children and adults in the world, and the temporary stay of displaced persons in another country are closely related to the issues of adaptation and maladjustment, integration and disintegration, which are the criteria for their socialization in society. The sense of belonging, social cohesion, self-identification, and integration are recognized as the necessary basis for a successful, prosperous life in society. The loss of this foundation can have devastating, unpredictable, and detrimental consequences for a person.

The outlined problems have been studied both internationally (Ameen, R., Cinkara, E., Gilmartin M., Dagg, J., Hill, K., et al.) and in Ukraine (Inozemtseva, A., Titar, I., Yavir, F., et al.), scholars.

Ameen R., & Cinkara E. investigated the problems of rapid adaptation of migrants affected by military aggression to life in an English-speaking country. Their work was aimed at studying the level of resilience of adolescent migrants from Arab countries to European countries as well as identifying the impact of learning the English language on their quality of life (Ameen, R., & Cinkara, E., 2018). Hill K. addressed similar issues in a broader context and studied the experience of successful German secondary school teachers in integrating immigrant students into a conservative region of the country (Hill, K., 2020).

The scholarly work of Gilmartin M. & Dagg J. aimed at an in-depth study of the concept of "integration" (its definition, evaluation, promotion, and development) (Gilmartin, M. & Dagg, J., 2021). The analysis of scientific and pedagogical sources made it possible to clarify the current take

on the outlined problems. At the same time, it should be stated that there is a limited number of in-depth studies in this pedagogical context.

Object of the article: the socio-pedagogical conditions to ensure effective adaptation and gradual integration of temporarily displaced Ukrainian pupils into the Lithuanian education.

The purpose of the article is to identify the socio-pedagogical conditions that are currently being created in Lithuanian education to ensure effective adaptation and gradual integration of temporarily displaced Ukrainian pupils, students into the European education system.

Objectives of the article:

- to expand the possibilities of studying the European educational system by explaining the key research concepts;

- to clarify and thoroughly explain the definitions of "adaptation" and "integration", to determine the relationship between them;

- to identify and analyze socio-pedagogical conditions in educational institutions of Lithuania, which ensure flexible adaptation of Ukrainian children to changes in life and accelerated promotion of their integration into the European educational space.

Research methods. *Theoretical:* analysis of regulatory documents, analysis of scientific literature; synthesis and generalization of information.

Theoethical aspect of the problem of pedagogical conditions of adaptation and integration of children-refugee into a new living and educational space

Many scholars have studied the essence of the concepts of adaptation and integration and substantiated their content and discussed their differences differentiated them. Arguing that these are concepts of the same research field. Inozemtseva, A., Titar, I., Yavir, F. recognized that the definitions of these concepts are unclear/ are not exhaustive, their content is not clearly defined and is often interpreted in different ways. In particular, analyzing these concepts in detail in the economic, social, psychological, demographic, anthropological, and medical contexts, Titar, I. drew attention to significant differences found in theoretical and methodological foundations (Titar, I., 2016).

The socio-pedagogical aspects of the problem were explored by E. Colson, V. Harrell-Bond, and D. Ryan who insisted on understanding adaptation and integration not as one-stage processes, but as those that contain a certain sequence of stages (Colson, E. (2020); Harrell-Bond, B. (1986); Ryan, D. (2008)). The conclusions of these researchers give grounds to consider the processes themselves not as simultaneous, but not as occurring sequentially.

In our opinion, effective integration is possible provided that the adaptation to qualitatively new conditions is successful. At the same time, this does not mean that a person begins to integrate into a certain space after full adaptation, especially given that this is an ended process. Rather, adaptation should be considered as a subsystem, a necessary element, an important prerequisite for effective integration. The dynamics of adaptation largely determine the effectiveness of integration.

At the same time, Gilmartin M. & Dagg J. consider integration to be two-fold, i.e.: both as a process and a result in which a person or a group of people are accepted into society. They suggest that an integrated community can include people from different backgrounds; they live, work, study and communicate together on the basis of common rights, responsibilities and opportunities” (Gilmartin, M. & Dagg, J. 2021).

In general, modern scholars have identified the areas of integration of migrants that operate within the framework of socio-cultural (identity change) and resource (economic development and stability) approaches. Within the socio-cultural theoretical and methodological approach, adaptation is understood as leveling out an extremely difficult emotional state. This state is the result of psychological stress caused by a change in the usual social, cultural, and educational environment. It reflects the ability to adapt to other conditions, to find new ways of coexistence of the identity of a migrant person with the identities of other groups among which this person found himself or

herself. Convergence and finding commonalities in the respective identities is interpreted as integration (Cheong, P., (2007); Titar, I. (2016)).

Significant scientists E. Colson, V. Harrell-Bond, D. Ryan consider the resource approach to be important today. Within its framework, adaptation is interpreted as the ability to adapt to the loss of the vast majority of resources in new conditions of existence (Colson, E. (2020); Harrell-Bond, B. (1986); Ryan, D. (2008)). In this context, integration is understood as the joint use of resources by a migrant person and the host country.

Scholars have grouped resources into the following groups: material and cultural (spiritual); social and personal. The nature and extent of the losses affect the intensity of adaptation to a new space. And their recovery can be facilitated by both social support from the state and support from friends, like-minded people, public organizations, religious denominations, etc. (Colson, E. (2020); Harrell-Bond, B. (1986); Ryan, D. (2008)).

Research on related issues have proven that the problems of integration of migrants who find themselves in a particular country for various personal reasons significantly differ from those faced by forced migrant refugees. The latter have a harder time adapting to new living conditions in the country that has granted them asylum. This is because, in addition to serious economic, social, and domestic problems that are actualized in such situations, the vast majority of newcomers are affected by psychological trauma and usually need serious psychological support. This makes the matter of stabilizing the emotional state of adults and children a priority. After all, the lack of balance in the psycho-emotional state of an individual is a serious obstacle to ensuring the quality of his or her life. It can also have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those around them.

The above connects the concepts of "adaptation" and "integration" with a category whose content implies the ability of an individual to adapt in the face of dynamic changes and the readiness to respond effectively to the difficult life situations created in this regard. In other words, It is about life competence, the development of which in a child becomes a priority in any society, especially in times of crisis.

Accordingly, adaptation is interpreted as the ability of an organism to adapt to environmental conditions and changes occurring in it. The term school adaptation is understood as a purposeful educational activity that involves organizing a set of measures to improve the positive and level the negative perception of the world and environment, forming a sense of belonging to the institution where a person receives education, readiness to fulfill new requirements, achieving school success (Androsovyč, K., (2016).; Grzymala-Kazłowska, A., & Phillimore, J. (2018); Serin, H., & Bozdog, F. (2020)).

Social support programs for Ukrainian children in Lithuania

The European education system has experience in developing and ensuring safe educational environment. Lithuania has social programs in place to support Ukrainians. In particular, the Republic of Lithuania, after identifying and meeting the most acute basic needs of Ukrainian refugees, i.e., housing, food, clothing, shoes, school supplies, etc., urgently organized social support, where one of the main requests was to ensure learning opportunities for children («Dėl laikinosios apsaugos Lietuvos Respublikoje užsieniečiams suteikimo»).

Since the first days of the war, citizens of Ukraine who arrived in Lithuania and have the right to temporary residence have been admitted to school. They are enrolled in general education programs. This process is in the focus of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania.

A working group was set up in the spring of 2022 to study the organization of education for Ukrainian students in Lithuanian schools. In May, its members inspected the conditions for the implementation of the general education program for Ukrainian refugee students. (Regulation on the analysis of regional policy approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania in 2022 (April 27, No. V-641 (clauses 7.4 and 10.3)).

The content of the report "On the organization of education of students of the general education program who arrived in the Republic of Lithuania from Ukraine in connection with the military actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine" states: "Thirty-three general education schools have 18748 pupils, of whom 1462 are Ukrainians, which is 7.8 percent of the total number of pupils. It was found that most Ukrainian children study in secondary schools - 803 people and in gymnasiums - 587 people. Most Ukrainian children study in Kaunas gymnasium - 223 students (Lithuanian and Russian are the languages of instruction), Klaipeda progymnasium "Santarve" - 199 students (Russian is the language of instruction), and Utena Vituriai progymnasium (Lithuanian is the language of instruction) - 109 students" (Ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymas 2022–2023 mokslo metais Aplinkraštis dėl ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymo 2022–2023 mokslo metais, p.4). This shows that parents of students from Ukraine consider the presence of Russian-teaching schools in Lithuania to be a possible resource and a favorable condition for the adaptation of their children in the Lithuanian school environment.

Lithuanian educators also identified the problems parents faced in organizing their children's schooling. The report states that there are usually no problems with finding an educational institution for children's education. The Migration Center directs parents to the municipality, where they are immediately assigned to an educational institution according to their specific needs (location, type of institution, resources to meet personal needs, etc.)

Among the problems that parents of Ukrainian students faced when enrolling their children in educational institutions were the following: lack of textbooks and school supplies; language of instruction and the ability to learn their native language; need for psychological and inclusive support, etc. Schools and the municipality are successfully addressing these issues.

They also provide possible assistance in solving the problems that parents of pupils encountered when enrolling their children in school. They are flexible and understanding about the lack of necessary documents (lost during the move); overload of children studying in Lithuanian (full-time) and Ukrainian (distance) schools. By the way, in Lithuania, distance learning is not recommended for preschool children and students in grades 1-6; they study only in the regular mode.

Interviews with parents and other family members of students from Ukraine in Lithuania, conversations with students of educational institutions, as well as teachers of Lithuanian schools (from Lithuania and Ukraine) confirm the conclusions of the commission. This indicates a certain tendency of the processes taking place in Lithuanian education in the analyzed area.

Many Lithuanian schools, on their own initiative, organize various forms of support for Ukrainians, both material and moral, psychological, etc. Such assistance to students is provided in the form of distribution of food packages, school supplies, seasonal clothing and footwear collected by school parent councils, Lithuanian families, and groups of teachers at educational institutions.

To ensure effective learning, Ukrainian students are provided with laptops and tablets at school and at home, which allows them to work with electronic textbooks. The children note the friendly and respectful attitude of Lithuanian teachers towards them.

Since the lack of places in kindergartens has become a problem for Ukrainians in Lithuania, some schools have found an opportunity to organize and ensure the proper operation of groups of preschool children from Ukraine. Usually these are multi-age groups where Lithuanian Russian-speaking specialists are educators, and Ukrainian teachers have the opportunity to work as their assistants.

The country's authorities constantly inform municipalities and educational institutions about measures and additional funding to facilitate the integration of newly arrived children and their families; about opportunities for education and integration services. The Ministry advises heads of municipal education departments and schools on these issues. The National Agency of Education provides consultations to all those who organize education, specialists in education support. The Vilnius Lithuanian House advises teachers on educational materials, regularly in mixed (contact and distance) ways, and organizes their training.

Introducing temporary adaptation classes in Lithuanian schools made it possible to launch flexible adaptation mechanisms, with the inclusion of psychological support, to positively influence the intensity of a person's adaptation to life in new conditions. Communication in these classes was initially conducted exclusively in Ukrainian. At the same time, activities were organized to study the Lithuanian language, history, and culture to overcome language barriers and communication difficulties.

The duration of period of adaptations individual for each pupil. According to the pupil's condition, needs, capabilities, and abilities, teachers, together with parents, develop individualized maps for each student. Each child is gradually included in regular classes with peers under the psychological support of specialists. Psychological support continues to be provided as needed. Through the means of pedagogical consulting, constant communication with the pupil's family is established both in-person and remotely. Special attention is paid to children with disabilities and other issues; an inclusive form of education is organized for them (Ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymas 2022–2023 mokslo metais Aplinkraštis dėl ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymo 2022–2023 mokslo metais). Such process is systematic and mandatory for all Lithuanian schools where students from Ukraine are currently studying.

One of the many functions of the Vilnius Lithuanian House is to provide methodological guidance and support to Lithuanian teachers. Its staff develops, adjusts, and improves adaptation programs for working with children who have come from the war zone. They also provide methodological recommendations for teaching foreigners, advise teachers on relevant issues, and organize various forms of professional training for them (Ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymas 2022–2023 mokslo metais Aplinkraštis dėl ukrainiečių vaikų ugdymo 2022–2023 mokslo metais).

In addition to the above, the Republic of Lithuania has provided an opportunity to establish schools that work in accordance to Ukrainian general education programs. To launch them, a written consent issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania is required. The agreement contains guarantees that the program meets local educational standards and qualification requirements for specialists established in Ukraine and Lithuania. It also stipulates that the study of the Lithuanian history and language is mandatory.

Expanding the staff of Lithuanian schools with Ukrainian teachers has a positive impact on the speed of adaptation of students in a learning environment that is in foreign language. Even though teachers are merely/purely assistants in the learning process, their role has a significant positive impact on the quality.

Thus, the research results allow us to assert that at the adaptive stage, we recognize the following as favorable conditions: providing support to students at the level of the state, city (village), municipal institution and educational institution (school); organization of psychological support, which should provide psychological comfort, an atmosphere of support during adaptation and post-adaptation periods implementation of the principle of natural correspondence through the consideration of age and individual developmental characteristics as well as meeting educational needs through extracurricular and non-formal education; development of effective communication (language courses, social media, etc.). Such conditions were provided in the Republic of Lithuania for Ukrainian pupils who suffered from the war.

So, integration within the framework of the socio-cultural approach becomes possible when the identities of Ukrainians and Lithuanians, converge. Overcoming language, cultural, and mental barriers will help to see that they have much in common. This will definitely have a positive impact on the nature of interaction between Ukrainians and the Lithuanian community. In this context, the management of the organization of education of Ukrainian children at the integrative stage is an issue that requires close attention.

Conclusions

1. Considering all of the above, the main condition for the adaptation of Ukrainian children to the Lithuanian educational system for their further integration is a safe adaptive school environment. Such environment involves: presence of temporary adaptation groups; proper psychological support; implementation of an individual approach to education; provision of opportunities to learn the Lithuanian language, history, and culture; adaptation of curricula in Lithuanian educational institutions for Ukrainian students.
2. The specific conditions for the gradual ensuring of effective integration are the systemic efforts of Lithuanian educators and their productive interaction with Ukrainian participants in the educational process (students, their parents, families, and possibly teachers). Such conditions were provided and are working effectively now in the Republic of Lithuania for Ukrainian students.
3. Further joint activity, cooperation should be aimed at developing pupils' eco-thinking and life competences; creating a multicultural space for Ukrainian and Lithuanian pupils and developing reintegration programs for returning to their previous place of residence. These and other issues require additional attention and further consideration.

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UKRAINOS VAIKŲ, KAIP PERKELTŲ ASMENŲ, GYVENANČIŲ IR BESIMOKANČIŲ LIETUVOJE, PEDAGOGINĖS SĄLYGOS

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Santrauka

Straipsnis skirtas Ukrainos moksleivių socialinės adaptacijos ir integracijos į Europos kultūros ir švietimo erdvę problemai karo Ukrainoje metu. Lietuvos Respublika buvo viena pirmųjų šalių, aktyviai parėmusių Ukrainą ir griežtai pasmerkusių karą su valstybe agresore Rusija. Lietuva daugeliui ukrainiečių suteikė neatidėliotiną laikiną apsaugą ir atvėrė vaikams galimybę mokytis.

Šiuo metu sprendžiamos įvairios problemos, susijusios su Ukrainos moksleivių, patekusių į ekstremalias karo veiksmų sąlygas, prisitaikymu prie naujo gyvenimo ir mokymosi Europos sociokultūrinėje edukacinėje erdvėje.

Straipsnyje aptariami teoriniai ir metodologiniai problemos aspektai, įvardijamos socialinės-pedagoginės sąlygos veiksmingai vaikų ir mokinių adaptacijai ir lanksčiai integracijai į Lietuvos visuomenę.

Mokslinės ir pedagoginės literatūros šia tema studijavimas leido išsiaiškinti pagrindines sąvokas ir atsekti jų ryšį su pedagogine „gyvenimo kompetencijos“ kategorija. Remiantis sisteminė šio klausimo teorinio aspekto analize yra pagrįsta mintis, kad efektyvi žmogaus integracija yra įmanoma, jei jis sėkmingai prisitaiko prie kokybiškai naujų sąlygų. Tai nereiškia, kad žmogus pradeda integruotis į naują erdvę po visiško prisitaikymo - tai yra atviras procesas.

Adaptacija yra vertinama kaip posisteminis, būtinas elementas ir, svarbiausia, esminė veiksmingos integracijos prielaida. Adaptacijos dinamika daugiausia lemia integracijos efektyvumą. Atitinkamai nubrėžiamos konkrečios socialinės-pedagoginės sąlygos veiksmingai vaikų ir jaunimo integracijai į Europos daugiakultūrę visuomenę.

Pagrindinė Ukrainos vaikų adaptacijos Lietuvos švietimo sistemoje sąlyga, kuri padėtų jų tolesnei integracijai – saugi, adaptacijai palanki mokyklos aplinka. Tokia aplinka apima laikinų grupių, palengvinančių adaptaciją, kūrimą, tinkamą psichologinę pagalbą, individualaus požiūrio į ugdymą įgyvendinimą, galimybes mokytis lietuvių kalbos, istorijos, kultūros, ugdymo programų pritaikymą Lietuvos švietimo įstaigose Ukrainos moksleiviams. Konkrečios sąlygos laipsniškai užtikrinti efektyvią integraciją. Tam yra svarbios sistemingos Lietuvos pedagogų pastangos ir produktyvi jų sąveika su Ukrainos ugdymo proceso dalyviais. Straipsnyje iškeliamos tolesnių šių sąlygų įgyvendinimo tyrimų perspektyvos.

Raktiniai žodžiai: socialinė adaptacija, integracija, Lietuvos Respublikos švietimas, paramos programos, socialinės-pedagoginės sąlygos, Lietuvos mokyklos.