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MODERN INTERPRETATION OF PSYCHODIDACTIC IDEAS OF J.A. COMENIUS

**СУЧАСНА ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ ПСИХОДИДАКТИЧНИХ ІДЕЙ
Я.А. КОМЕНСЬКОГО**

**WSPÓŁCZESNA INTERPRETACJA IDEI PSYCHODYDAKTYCZNYCH
J.A. KOMENSKIEGO**

Abstract

The article analyzes and compares modern scientific sources and the Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius and thus interprets his psychodidactic ideas in the modern context. It is found that Comenius' psychodidactic ideas are nowadays effectively interpreted in the context of two concepts: universal education, that is without coercion (the imitation of nature; the introduction of inclusive education; an individual approach to every child) and the importance of teachers (the subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils; a humanistic approach to teaching; pedagogy of partnership; pedagogy of success). Based on the analysis of Comenius' psychodidactic ideas, the relevance of approaches proposed by the educator is justified. Consequently, the trends in the modern development of the educational environment and its future prospects are determined. It is proved that the leading psychodidactic ideas of John Amos Comenius serve as the basis for the current concept of the new Ukrainian school, which is actively implemented today.

Keywords: John Amos Comenius, the Great Didactic, psychodidactic, the concept of universal education, the importance of teachers

Анотація

У статті шляхом аналізу та порівняння сучасних наукових джерел й Великої дидактики Яна Амоса Коменського нами здійснено сучасну інтерпретацію його психодидактичних ідей. Обґрунтовано, що психодидактичні гасла видатного педагога успішно інтерпретуються у чинних освітніх документах та на практиці у контексті реалізації двох ідей: ідеї вільного навчання та виховання – без примусу (пріоритетність принципу природовідповідності; запровадження інклюзивного навчання; індивідуальний підхід до кожної дитини) та ідеї значущості ролі вчителя (суб'єкт-суб'єктні стосунки учителя і учнів; гуманізм педагога; застосування педагогіки партнерства; застосування педагогіки успіху). На основі аналізу психодидактичної спадщини Коменського

виокремлено актуальність підходів, запропонованих ученим. На цій основі визначаються тенденції сучасного розвитку освітнього середовища і його подальші перспективи. Констатовано, що провідні психодидактичні ідеї Я. А. Коменського закладені в основу чинної Концепції «Нова українська школа», що нині активно реалізується.

Ключові слова: Ян Амос Коменський, Велика дидактика, психодидактика, ідея вільного навчання, ідея значущості ролі вчителя

Sociopolitical and economic processes in Ukraine require a new pedagogical vision of how to deal with the problems of the national education. The modern school should be able to cultivate a democratic culture and develop the competencies, which are necessary to live in European society. One should be able to analyze them critically and improve and use them productively. In search of the ways to solve educational problems, the community of scholars, practising teachers, organizers and educational managers regularly analyze the historical ideas of national educators, as well as the experience of foreign scientific schools. John Amos Comenius (1592–1670) is, without doubt, one of the most outstanding educators of all times. His educational legacy is an invaluable contribution to the world pedagogy. According to D. Lordkipanidze (Lordkypanydze, 1970: 440), Comenius is a “universal phenomenon”. In various historical periods, scholars attempted to solve the contemporary issues of pedagogy and pedagogical practice with the help of Comenius’ educational legacy. However, the evaluation of his work depended on subjective factors, namely ideological, religious, cultural, educational and political. According to K. Raumer (Raumer, 1875–1878), “the pedagogical ideal of Comenius is so perfect and complete that all the latest educational achievements are still unable to reach it”. K. Schmidt (Shmydt, 1880: 760) holds the same opinion of it.

The scientific analysis of the existing researches on Comenius’ works shows that his educational legacy has been explored by various Ukrainian scholars in the context of studying, shaping and developing Ukrainian pedagogical thought (Tkachuk, 2014: 25–28) “Studying Comenius’ works,” S. Myropolskyi (Myropolskyi, 1871: 97–135) indicated, “we familiarized ourselves with his novel pedagogical ideas, which the modern world is based on, and found solutions to the problems of the future. The principles of pedagogy discovered and justified by the educator are so profound that Comenius’ pedagogical doctrine is a consistent system, whose components are essential parts of our science in its contemporary development” (Myropolskyi, 1871: 97–135). According to S. Myropolskyi (1871), John Amos Comenius “not only comprises Franko, Bazedov and Pestalozzi

and the elements of the historical development of pedagogy, but also the essential foundations for its future development” (pp. 117–118).

Certain issues of modern didactic were thoroughly studied by A. Aleksyuk (Aleksyuk, 1998) (didactic of higher education), V. Bondar (Bondar, 2005) (general methodological and theoretical issues), V. Buriak (Buriak, 2001: 49–51) (students’ independent work), V. Lozova (Lozova, 2002: 101–118) (problem-based learning), O. Savchenko (Savchenko, 2012) (developing intellectual skills and enhancing motivation, autonomy and creativity in pupils) et al. These scholars also clarified the origins of didactic, but nevertheless did not generalize Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas. It must be noted that Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas were partially characterized in a paper by I. Osadchenko (Osadchenko, 2017: 216–226). However, the significant psychodidactic potential of Comenius’ educational legacy has not yet been considered in different contexts.

This paper aims to analyze and compare modern scientific sources and *the Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius* and thus interpret his psychodidactic ideas in the modern context.

The paradigm of the modern educational space in Ukraine is based on the current concept of the new Ukrainian school (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018). Indeed, this is a multifunctional document since it describes priorities and trends in the development of education in the country.

Employing such scientific methods as analysis, synthesis, comparison of the concept, findings of modern scholars and *the Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius*, the authors of the paper have singled out the two dominant ideas, which unify these works, namely the concept of universal education based on an individual approach to education and the importance of teachers. Consequently, these very ideas of the outstanding educator are still relevant and paid considerable attention from the scholarly community. Their description is presented below.

1. The concept of universal education without coercion

The title page of *the Great Didactic* edited in 1657 depicts a symbolic sign with the inscription, “Omnia sponte fluant; absit violentia rebus”. This is the main idea of Comenius’ pedagogical views, which he chose as the motto for his didactic works, “All things flow spontaneously in the absence of violence” (Komenskyi, 1989). Given that psychology had not originated back

then yet, Comenius relied on his own observations on pupils. However, his reflections on thinking, volition and other mental processes are still of profound scientific interest.

One of the most important psychodidactic components of **Comenius'** concept of universal education without coercion was **the imitation of nature** (Lordkypanydze, 1970). The analysis of relevant research findings (Myropolskyi, 1871: 97–135; Tkachuk, 2014: 69–71), textbooks on the history of pedagogy (Shmydt, 1880), the history of didactic (Bondar, 2005; Savchenko, 2012) shows that most scholars agreed on the following interpretation of Comenius' view on the imitation of nature: man is part of nature. The imitation of nature implies the correspondence of education with nature and its laws regardless of anyone. Since man is part of nature (microcosm to macrocosm), Comenius (Komenskyi, 1989) raised the question of the correspondence with nature in the broad sense. He urged to respect child personality, take into account his / her natural characteristics, develop cognitive abilities. Comenius (Komenskyi, 1940: 57) indicated that education should “avoid boredom, shouting and beating and make learning fun to help pupils reveal themselves”. The New Ukrainian school will “work on the principles of the learner-centered model of education. Under this model, the school takes into account rights of the child, the child's abilities, needs and interests, thus implementing a principle of child-centrism in practice, to the maximum possible extent” (Kontseptsiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

It must be noted that Comenius' educational efforts were aimed both at nurturing gifted pupils and enlightening the whole mankind: from talented to mentally retarded and disabled individuals since “it is important to help them properly comprehend science, virtue and religion so that they can benefit from the present and prepare for the future. If we grant this opportunity only to some individuals and exclude all others, it will be unfair to those who have the same nature. Thus, the educator proclaimed the great goal of general education. When his opponents would tell him “it is not out of every piece of wood that a Mercury could be carved”, Comenius (Komenskyi, 1940: 97) would answer “but out of every human being, if he be not utterly corrupt, a man can be formed”. He did not consider “the diversity of minds”, that is individual characteristics of the child's soul and skills as an obstacle to learning. Comenius put forward the idea of compensating for disabilities through education and learning, “Given their greater need for our help, the blind, the deaf and the slow-witted should be

even more involved in culture since their nature, due to internal deficiencies, is less able to help itself". Thus, it relates to another aspect of the imitation of nature – **inclusive education** (the term not introduced by Comenius). Nowadays, inclusive education is a global educational and social issue incorporated into many legal documents (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

The typology of learners depends on their individual characteristics: an acute or dull mind; a fast or slow pace of intellectual activity; an attitude towards learning – striving for knowledge or indifference to it; character traits – obedience, cruelty, kindness, stubbornness, etc. In accordance with these criteria, Comenius (Komenskyi, 1940) determined six types of learners and proposed recommendations to implement an individual approach. He would quote Plutarch, "Nobody can change the inner nature of the child, but anyone can nurture his / her virtue through education" (Komenskyi, 1940).

Thus, when speaking about the goals and objectives of education, Comenius emphasized **an individual approach** to every child as the psychodidactic basis needed for the efficiency of this process. He suggested taking into account age profiles of pupils, although he did not specify them. It is related to modern pedagogy: the timing of puberty differs in pupils and, therefore, their achievements should be compared with their own previous results and not with those of more successful pupils (Kremen, 2011: 33–34). The concept indicates, "such means of personalization of the educational process as work by individual plans and educational trajectories, under individual research projects significantly improve educational outcomes" and "schools will take into account each child's abilities, needs and interests, equitable and fair treatment will be ensured for each pupil" (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018). The authors of the article emphasize that the concept of psychology was not introduced at the time of Comenius. He, however, was in particular interested in psychodidactic aspects of education.

Scholars from all over the world still pay considerable attention to Generation Y, also known as Millennials, that is pupils born between 1990 and 2000. Their views and lifestyles are fundamentally different from those of older generations. They regard life as a constant creation, a harmony between earning money, learning new, self-improvement and hobbies. For them, there is no clear distinction between work, study and leisure. In addition, jobs are not expected to be serious and boring. Today pupils, also

known as Generation Z, are significantly different from previous generations. They do not necessarily share the views of adults. Therefore, future generations of Ukrainian pupils should be able to attend such a school, which complies with all challenges of the present (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

According to V. Kremen (Kremen, 2011: 33–34), the current reforming of the education system in Ukraine should aim “to adjust education to specific skills and interests of pupils” (Kremen, 2011: 33–34). The New School formula consists of nine key elements: “1) new educational content based on enabling the competencies necessary for successful self-fulfillment in society; 2) motivated teaching staff who enjoy freedom of creativity and professional development; 3) a cross-cutting educational process that informs values; 4) decentralization and effective administration that will bring real autonomy to schools; 5) teaching based on partnerships between the pupil, the teacher and parents; 6) a focus on pupil’s needs in the educational process, i.e. child-centered education; 7) a new school structure that allows to master the new content and acquire life competencies; 8) fair allocation of public funds that ensures equal access to quality education for all children; 9) a contemporary educational environment that will provide necessary conditions, means, and technology for education of pupils, teachers, and parents, not only in the premises of the educational establishment (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018). Thus, Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas are effectively interpreted in the context of implementing universal education without coercion. The implementation of this concept is specified in the interpretation of Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas such as the principle of natural conformity, the introduction of inclusive education and an individual approach to every child (without Comenius’ introduction of the terms “inclusive” and “individual”).

2. The importance of teachers

“When *teachers* are friendly and supportive, they will not repel pupils by their strict behaviour and will attract them with their adherence, manners and words. They will be able to win their hearts easily so that pupils will rather be at school than at home,” the outstanding educator stated (Komenskyi, 1940).

One should be able to perceive and understand teaching in the context of subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils, which

is humane and pedagogically expedient, in order to maintain individuality and uniqueness of pupils, as well as their diverse abilities and learning preferences, interests and aspirations. It must be noted that Comenius (Komenskyi, 1940: 44) considered the educational process to be subjective, *“the art of teaching”*. During such interaction, teachers and pupils manifest themselves most clearly, get to know each other better and reach a mutual understanding. Due to subject-subject interactions, the child realizes the meaning of his / her own life and activities, determines his / her personal trajectory of development, develops and implements plans for the future.

Today, the problem of the subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils is much more relevant due to the following factors: the increasing importance of the human factor, the rapid transition from an industrial society to information one; democratic trends and processes; the realization of the National Open World project and a system of the national patriotic education; the construction of the most individualized educational trajectory; the creation and use of the modern pedagogical environment; the need to develop and introduce innovative and practice-oriented results of pedagogy, technologies and proven best practices of teaching (Boiko, 2012: 3–17).

Practice shows that efficient pedagogical interaction fully discloses abilities and skills of pupils, as well pedagogical competencies of teachers. Based on the well-established educational relations, it is possible to achieve such a level of “community” at which there is no domination, emotional tension and distrust between the participants in the education process. Instead, they learn to accept individual and psychological parameters of each other, put themselves in others’ position, identify themselves with others. Under modern sociocultural conditions, the teacher is expected to shape cognitive, emotional, volitional and motivational spheres of pupils and cultivate their capacity for self-realization based on the subject-subject interaction. The following quotation by V. Sukhomlynskyi is consistent with Comenius’ ideas: “If a teacher becomes a friend to a child, if such friendship is illuminated with noble admiration, a striving for something bright and sensible, then no evil will appear in the child’s heart”. This quotation was chosen as one of the guidelines of the concept of the new Ukrainian school (Kontseptsiiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

Therefore, **the subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils** is the most important aspect of modern interpretation of Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas in the context of the importance of teachers.

Comenius (Komenskyi, 1989: 112–113) indicated, “If there is no love, we will remain simple rodents who have reached the limits of their vanity in all our other activities,”. The humane subject-subject interaction should penetrate the whole system of education, which is a progressive global trend objectively inherent in Ukrainians since humanity is a characteristic feature of Ukrainian mindset.

The authors of the article believe that the nature of the subject-subject interaction depends on how humane the teacher’s position is and encompasses his / her selfless work, respect and faith in every child personality, attention and assistance, objective evaluation of his / her own and pupils’ actions, a thorough and self-critical analysis of his / her professional activities, etc. Humanism is a result of the teacher’s great and long-term work on improving his / her professional competency. As V. Sukhomlynskyi (Sukhomlynskyi, 1977: 292–308) noted, “Heartiness, warmth, friendliness in relation to the child are what can be in general called *kindness* and are the consequences of the teacher’s self-development and self-improvement”.

Therefore, humanism is an element of pedagogical thinking characterized by changing views on the child as the subject of interaction aimed at nurturing his / her unique individuality. **Humanism** is the main aspect of modern interpretation of Comenius’ psychodidactic ideas in the context of the importance of teachers.

Based on the analysis of some researches (Bekh, 2004: 5–15; Boiko, 2012: 3–17; Savchenko, 2012), the authors of the article established that pedagogical interaction occurs at three levels, namely co-subordination, cooperation, co-creation. Co-subordination implies the relationships built on a strict observance of human rights and responsibilities of the participants in the education process.

Cooperation (partnership) is interaction based on co-subordination, although the teacher and child are viewed as equal partners united by a common dialogue, which is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of education. They are both the subjects of educational activity. As K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (Abulkhanova-Slavskaia, 1989: 106) noted, “There is no fundamental advantage of one’s self in the relations between the subjects. Therefore, the relations between selves are reversed”. Cooperation involves acquiring new knowledge. The condition of each partner, both teacher’s satisfaction and child’s success, is their general achievement.

The highest level of interaction between the teacher and pupils in the process of establishing educational relations is co-creation, which in-

volves co-subordination and cooperation, during which all the subjects participate in a creative dialogue and search for new aspects of education content and teaching techniques in order to help every child to develop and express himself / herself. The existing and potential capabilities of the teacher are realized, too.

The targeted development of relations from co-subordination to cooperation and co-creation contributes to the efficient intellectual and emotional development of every pupil. In addition, it makes it possible to reveal the potential of teacher competency, teaching techniques and improve the personal qualities of the teacher. The following factors, however, decrease the efficiency of interaction between the teacher and pupils: lack of relevant educational programmes, textbooks, common requirements for teachers and clear behaviour rules for pupils, unjustified value orientations of pupils and ways of their social adaptation and social security. The current research is consistent with the views of certain scholars (Bekh, 2004: 5–15; Boiko, 2012: 3–17), who, justifying the levels of pedagogical interaction, do not reduce the concepts of equality (of the teacher and pupil) and full freedom (of pupils) to the conditions and principles of an individual approach to education. The analysis of historical sources such *the Great Didactic*, namely Chapter XXVII “Of School Discipline” (Komenskyi, 1989), and V. Sukhomlynskyi’s (Sukhomlynskyi, 1977: 292–308) views on school discipline (Komenskyi, 1940) shows that the utopia of the concept of universal education primarily consisted in the recognition of “universal” relations as the initial position of school, their freedom from the basic principles of morality, social relations and life needs. Therefore, the current research considers the levels of interaction between the teacher and pupils, does not separate cooperation and co-creation from co-subordination and does not contrast them with each other. Almost four centuries ago, John Amos Comenius indicated that schools should be “workshops or manufactories of humanity, ... where minds are instructed in wisdom to penetrate all things, where souls and their affections are guided to universal harmony of the virtues” (Kontseptsiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

Currently, the pedagogy of partnership implies “communication, interaction and collaboration between the teacher, the pupil and the parents. Pupils, parents and teachers are united by common goals and aspirations; they are free and involved allies, equal participants to the educational process and all responsible for its outcomes (Kontseptsiia «Nova ukrainska shkola», 2018).

Thus, another aspect of modern interpretation of Comenius' psychodidactic ideas in the context of the importance of teachers consists in **implementing pedagogy of partnership**.

It must be noted that Comenius (Komenskyi, 1940) considered the education process to be rather productive, "*teaching them with certainty*, so that the result cannot fail to follow" (Komenskyi, 1940). The sense of certainty is crucial to mental development of the individual since it is directly related to his / her natural activity as the basis for generating future activities and life activities in general. One should have at his / her disposal a permanent system of stimulating and directing reinforcements to develop himself / herself and perform any action. It is precisely success that can give strength, inspire faith and confidence to overcome any obstacles and creates the basis for developing healthy self-esteem and creative skills. Learning is more effective if the pupil has strong motivation. Motivation primarily implies striving for success. Therefore, the focus on success should be a prerequisite for building an effective education system since it is necessary "to instil a love of learning into the minds of our pupils" (Komenskyi, 1989).

Given the establishment of market relations in Ukraine, social demand for pedagogy of success has been largely transformed. Indeed, high-quality education is identified with the individual's competitiveness. When the individual is pleased with himself / herself, he / she has self-respect and dignity. As these feelings are comprehended and realized, they gradually turn into a sense of pride for himself / herself. The efficiency of the education process is a powerful driving force for developing and realizing the potential capabilities of pupils: this conclusion is now recognized as one of the pedagogical axioms (Tkachuk, 2014: 69–71).

Thus, the aspect of modern interpretation of Comenius' psychodidactic ideas in the context of the importance of teachers implies **implementing pedagogy of success**. In general, the realization of this idea is specified in the interpretation of Comenius' psychodidactic views such as the subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils, a humanistic approach to teaching, pedagogy of partnership, pedagogy of success (such terms as "the subject-subject interaction", "humanism", "pedagogy of partnership" and "pedagogy of success" not being introduced by Comenius).

Therefore, the analysis and comparison of modern scientific sources and *the Great Didactic of John Amos Comenius* have contributed to modern interpretation of his psychodidactic ideas. It is found that Comenius' psychodidactic ideas are nowadays effectively interpreted in the context of two

concepts: the concept of universal education, that is without coercion (the imitation of nature; the introduction of inclusive education; an individual approach to every child) and the importance of teachers (the subject-subject interaction between the teacher and pupils; a humanistic approach to teaching; pedagogy of partnership; pedagogy of success). It is proved that the leading psychodidactic ideas of John Amos Comenius serve as the basis for the current concept of the New Ukrainian School, which is actively implemented today.

The analysis of only certain underlying concepts of Comenius' educational legacy proves that his educational ideas are in harmony with the present and are important for developing various educational institutions in Ukraine. The idea of creating the national school based on Comenius' principles is a utopia now. Studying Comenius' psychodidactic ideas makes it possible to objectively consider conceptual principles of pedagogy and determine and justify the new educational paradigm taking into account the historically developed theories and practices of the education process organization.

Due to page limitation, the current research does not fully disclose Comenius' psychodidactic ideas in the context of their modern interpretation. Hence, further research should continue to analyze them more in detail.

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