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The quality of preschool education in Ukraine: Thirty years of change

Abstract: This article describes Ukraine's achievements in ensuring the quality of preschool education. The research is based on the study of the legislative framework, statistical data, and pedagogical literature on the modernization of preschool education. The purpose of the article is to reveal strategic, institutional, methodical, and value directions in improving the quality of preschool education in Ukraine during 1991–2021 and to determine prospects for its improvement. The main focus is on understanding key changes in the quality of preschool education, achievements in and problems of ensuring the affordability of preschools for children, its flexibility and adaptability, the criteria for improving the quality of preschool education (quality of results, conditions of the educational process, and the organization of children's lives); the professional skills of preschool educators; and the quality of education management in preschools. Aspects of the modernization of preschool education have been scrutinized, including: improving the conditions of the educational process and the organization of children's living spaces, increasing the level of professionalism of preschool specialists (the staff in general), focusing on the result – preschoolers' achieving the appropriate level of competence, etc. Difficulties in achieving a proper level of preschool education quality in Ukraine are demonstrated. A conclusion is made about the need for further improvement of preschool education.

Keywords: preschool education, quality, Ukraine, 1991–2021.

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Introduction

The quality of preschool education is determined by the compliance of its content with the social requirements of the country and human needs, as well as by the result – that is, the level of personal development, which is to be successfully implemented in future life. Different cultural communities may have different definitions of the term »quality of preschool education« (Moss 1996; Rosenthal 2003; Frolenkova 2014). Views on its quality (Woodhead 1998) depend on the system of knowledge and on beliefs and values concerning childhood and child development, especially regarding the goals and functions of preschool programmes (Katz 1993), the content of which is determined by economic, educational, and cultural contexts. To determine the levels of social, emotional, and intellectual development of children in preschools, it is necessary to take into account the type of preschool institution and the quality of its educational services, which differ within and between countries (Melhuish 1993).

Preschool education in Ukraine is an important stage in the upbringing and preparation of children for schooling. It covers children aged 3 to 6 years and is aimed at developing various aspects of their development, including the physical, mental, emotional, and social. Comparative studies have identified sociocultural differences and similarities in preschool education in England and Wales (Wood and Bennett 1999), the USA (Williams 2021), Slovenia (Vidmar 2015), Hungary (Korintus 2008), etc. Noteworthy is a study which describes the quality of educational programmes in Ukraine, Finland, and Kosovo (Suchodoletz et al. 2020). In the context of our study of the quality of preschool education, works highlighting the experiences of individual countries are valuable, including research on the quality of preschool education in Bulgaria (Trifonova and Peneva 2021) and Canada (Varmuza et al. 2021) and on inCLASS factor validity in preschools in Austria (Smidt and Embacher 2021).

International recognition of achievements in the field of preschool education is valuable for Ukraine. Schreyer and Oberhuemer's (2017) research characterizes the legal framework of preschool education in Ukraine. It focuses on continuity of education between preschool and primary school education, the development of

a sustainable system of financing preschool education, improving research on and advisory support for preschools, and updating approaches to working with parents. Putcha et al. (2018) reveal the experience of preschool educators in Ukraine and identify problems they face, including their ability to support children with special educational needs, as well as highlight opportunities to improve the qualifications and career growth of educators.

The purpose of the present article is to reveal the strategic, institutional, methodical, and value directions in improving the quality of preschool education in Ukraine during 1991–2021 and to determine the prospects for its improvement (24. 8. 1991 – Declaration of Independence of Ukraine – to 2021, prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine – 24. 2. 2022).

For 30 years, Ukraine's policy in the field of preschool education generally focused on the development of educational standards, preschool programs of preschool children development (2023), and methodical literature, improving the material and technical support of preschools. Significant achievements have been gained in ensuring the affordability of preschool education and its flexibility and adaptability. However, some resources and conditions still need to be refined. In this article, we provide an overview of reforms in the quality of preschool education. For Ukraine, this means focusing on European values in education and their implementation in the practice of preschools (Zahorodnia 2017; Kozak and Shvydka 2018; Bezborodykh 2019).

Strategic and institutional changes

In this section, we wish to acquaint the reader with the legislative framework for the field of preschool education in Ukraine. It determined the strategic and institutional reforms during 1991–2021, and it will help see achievements and problems in the quality of preschool education.

In the early 1990s, Ukrainian society faced various challenges and problems in economic and social life (Frolenkova 2014). Resources for the education of preschool children were insufficient, since funding and state investment in education were scarce. This time was characterized by a vagueness of axiological guidelines and a lack of unified ideology regarding the purpose of education; the standards and norms adopted in the Soviet period were still valid.

The strategic aim of improving the quality of preschool education involves defining its standards, norms, and tasks at political and social levels. We are speaking about the adoption of relevant laws and regulations which should regulate the activities of preschools. In this context, we trace the sequence of actions of the legislative branch. The *Law of Ukraine »On Education«* (amended in 2017) underwent modifications and updates (in 1994 and 1996), supplemented by democratic principles and norms, and established the main targets of education modernization in order to create people with high intellectual potential. The state programme *»Education (21st Century Ukraine)«* (1994) aimed to democratize the educational process at all levels.

Adoption of the *Constitution of Ukraine* in 1996, which guaranteed basic human rights and freedoms, decent living conditions and the right to education, had a significant impact on the development of Ukrainian civil society. A new philosophy and life ideology were created and the content and form of education were updated; these were to contribute to the formation of the nation and the people of Ukraine. *The basic component of preschool education* (2021) contains the »State Standard of Preschool Education of Ukraine«, which takes into account the provisions of the *United nations international convention on the rights of the child*. The document highlights the invariant and variant components of the content of preschool education, which testifies to its thorough preparation taking into account cultural, social, national, and universal needs. There are clear requirements (indicators) for a 6- or 7-year-old child before entering school due to the mandatory implementation of such educational areas as »the child's personality«, »the child in the society«, »the child in the natural environment«, »the child in the world of culture«, »the child playing«, »the child in the sensory-cognitive environment«, and »the child's speech« (The basic component ... 2021).

On the basis of *The basic component of preschool education* (2021), the laws *On preschool education* (amended in 2017) and *On child protection* were adopted in 2001, which helped harmonize educational work in preschools. The *National doctrine of education development* (2002) defined a strategy for development in the 21st century, including preschool education. Preschool education was recognized as a valuable independent part of the educational system, which caused further reforms. Conceptual targets of its improvement involved the development of the system of continuous education and lifelong learning; the promotion of a healthy lifestyle; constant quality improvement; the introduction of educational innovations; integration of national education into European and global educational environments, etc. (The national doctrine ... 2002).

Subsequent editions of *The basic component of preschool education* (2021) took into account global provisions as well as the achievements of Ukrainian and European scholars and were adopted in 2012 and 2021. The current *Basic component of preschool education* (2021) focuses on the following values: recognition of the value of life; happy childhood as a prerequisite for further self-realization; respect for the child and his individual development and experience; due attention to strengthening and maintaining health (physical, mental, and social), etc.

In this way, in the early 21st century, laws were updated, and educational programmes for the development of preschool children were actively developed, which differed in content from the documents adopted before 1991. Declaring the priority of the principle of child-centredness made it possible for preschool educators to choose programmes in accordance with the needs of children, parents, regions, etc. (Durmanenko 2021; Zahorodnia 2017). In Ukraine, various binding preschool programmes of preschool children development have been approved, as well as partial educational programmes that expand the possibilities of preschool education.

The standardizing regulation of preschool education made it possible to improve the quality of education at the institutional level. Preschool education had

to be accessible to all children. The first years following the declaration of independence of Ukraine were difficult for people. Demographic and environmental problems affected the health of both parents and children. Families could not play a proper role in the upbringing of preschoolers because of their difficult financial situations. The constant search for work and salary arrears limited the role of parents, who tried first to provide material care for their children. Social inequality and the imperfection of legislation on guardianship and care led to the spread of irresponsible parenthood, violence against children, and child homelessness. At the same time, preschools owned by formerly state-run companies were being closed (National report ... 2016, p. 45). From 1991 to 2001, the number of preschools of various types decreased by 8,700 (Table 1). The quality of preschools was low due to overcrowding, an unsatisfactory material base, the state of medical care and nutrition, and an imperfect developmental environment for children and others. Parents were in long queues waiting for a place for a child in preschool. As a result, a significant number of children were not properly prepared for school.

Year	Number of preschools, thsd.	Number of places in preschools, thsd.	Number of children in preschools, thsd.	Coverage of children by institutions of preschool education (percentage of total children aged 3–6 years)
1990	24.5	2277	2428	57
1991	24.4	2243	2268	55
1992	23.8	2216	2063	51
1993	23.2	2189	1918	49
1994	22.3	2101	1736	47
1995	21.4	2014	1536	44
1996	20.2	1856	1342	41
1997	18.4	1770	1172	38
1998	17.6	1638	1103	38
1999	17.2	1216	1055	39
2000	16.3	1117	983	40
2001	15.7	1077	968	41
2002	15.3	1060	973	48
2003	15.0	1053	977	49
2004	14.9	1040	996	50
2005	15.1	1056	1032	51
2006	15.1	1063	1081	53
2007	15.3	1084	1137	54

2008	15.4	1110	1195	54
2009	15.5	1121	1214	53
2010	15.6	1136	1273	53
2011	16.1	1171	1354	55
2012	16.4	1204	1428	57
2013	16.7	1236	1471	61
2014	15.0	1077	1295	55
2015	14.8	1105	1291	55
2016	14.9	1125	1300	57
2017	14.9	1141	1304	59
2018	14.9	1156	1278	61
2019	14.8	1155	1230	63
2020	15.3	1153	1151	63
2021	15.0	1138	1111	65

Table 1: Number of preschools and preschool children during 1990–2021 in Ukraine (Preschool education in Ukraine 2023)

In the early 2000s, there was an urgent need to expand the network of preschools. The adoption of the *Law »On preschool education«* (2001) and the *Regulation on preschool* (2003) established the legal framework for preschools, requirements for group staffing, conditions for the pedagogical process, feeding, health care, management, financial and economic activities, etc. Gradually, the idea for the need to provide education for all preschool children was gaining weight.

The decree on compulsory preschool education of five-year-old children starting from the 2010/11 academic year (Letter of the Ministry ... 2010) had a positive impact on improving the situation, as it stimulated the accessibility, flexibility, and adaptability of preschool education. This decision was preceded by the First national congress of preschool educators (5 November 2010), which established an understanding of the priority of preschool education. All this led to the expansion of the network of preschools. In addition to preschools, there are now other forms of preparing children for school: short-term, walking (with the organization of full-fledged care, games, outdoor walks without special educational activities), counselling groups, weekend groups, clubs, centres, groups for preparing children for schooling, and so on.

The implementation in 2011 of the »State targeted social program for the development of preschool education for the period up to 2017« (2011) has contributed to the improvement of the mechanism for the development of preschool education, ensuring constitutional rights and government guarantees for the affordability of and free access to preschool education in state-run and municipal

preschools. It envisages improving the logistic and educational basis of preschools, developing a procedure for their sustainable innovative development (public rating, quality assessment system, model of diagnostic and prognostic screening of the child's readiness for school, competition for the best website, etc.), deepening cooperation with international organizations and foundations, studying the experience of preschool education in other countries, organizing the national contest »Preschool of the future«, etc.

In general, in 30 years, we were able to overcome social inequality in providing preschool education to the children of Ukraine. In addition to state-run and municipal institutions, there are private centres, institutions of various types and forms of ownership, preschools with different durations of stay, etc. (Table 2). Promoting and encouraging private initiative in the field of preschool education has expanded opportunities for children and parents, as well as helped provide appropriate facilities (Affordable preschool education ... 2020). Thus, in recent years, the number of preschool children waiting to be admitted to preschools has decreased.

Year	Number of preschools		Number of places in preschools		Number of children in preschools	
	<i>state</i>	<i>private</i>	<i>state</i>	<i>private</i>	<i>state</i>	<i>private</i>
2018	14 697	201	1 141 939	13 638	1 268 143	10 094
2019	14 559	204	1 141 040	13 569	1 220 806	9 592
2020	14 843	492	1 123 996	28 794	1 128 929	21 616
2021	14 477	497	1 107 625	29 980	1 087 910	23 448

Table 2: Preschool features by form of ownership (2018–2021) in Ukraine (Preschool education in Ukraine 2023)

The introduction of electronic registration for children in preschools in 2013 had a significant impact on the availability of preschool education (Letter of the Ministry ... 2013). The consistent expansion of the e-preschool system has allowed parents to choose a private or state preschool for their child, depending on their accommodation, facilities for people with special needs, benefits, etc.

Also in 2015, the *Licensing terms for educational institutions* (2015) were approved. They clearly define the list of documents and requirements in the field of preschool education, including in organization and personnel. Such standards for initiating and conducting the educational activities of preschools are now being simplified and updated, taking into account the feedback and wishes of parents, preschool educators, and others. However, problems regarding the availability of preschools in rural areas, ensuring cultural diversity, creating an inclusive environment, etc., need to be solved.

It should be noted that the right to education of children with special needs was proclaimed in 2017. Psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations

kept records, examined children with impaired psychophysical development, referred them to appropriate educational or medical institutions, provided individual consultations, and carried out educational activities among the population of children with special needs (The Law of Ukraine ... 2017).

Indicators of the quality of preschool education are quality resources: educational programmes, human resources, material, financial, and psychological conditions for the normal life of each child, and stable functioning of staff (Kozak and Shvydka 2018). Thus, in addition to the introduction of state standards that reflect the ideals of Ukrainian society, the methodical sphere of preschool education has been modified and modernized in terms of effective methods of teaching and the introduction of practical educational tools and innovations for the comprehensive development of preschool children.

Methodical and value changes

In this section, we analyse the criteria for improving the quality of preschool education in Ukraine: in particular, the quality of the result – the level of children's achievements (development, good breeding, education); the quality of conditions for the educational process and the organization of children's lives; the quality of preschool educators' professional skills; and the quality of education management in preschools.

As already mentioned, in the early 1990s Ukraine found itself in difficult socio-economic circumstances, with a financial inability to properly ensure the quality of education. Preschool education suffered significant losses due to the reduction of trained staff, declining birth rates, and the difficult financial situation of preschools. Still, we managed to preserve and improve this important part of the education system. The values of a market democratic society were introduced one by one, and realization of the tasks of the free development of the individual could be properly realized in the early twenty-first century.

The development of didactic tools and educational and methodical literature for preschool education required time, and, in the 1990s, these were not always available, did not have the proper quality, or did not meet the requirements of the declared content of preschool education. During the first 30 years of independence, the quantity of publications and educational and methodical literature for preschools significantly increased. Preschool educators actively use E-resources, information, and educational platforms in their work. There are enough studies in various educational spheres of children's development. However, there is a disparity in the literature on the activities of preschool children. Thus, most publications are dedicated to »culture« in the direction of »game«, while »play« has the smallest number (Zahorodnia 2017, p. 156).

The task of a modern preschool is to form universal skills and abilities, i.e. the key competencies: social, communicative, informative, cognitive, cultural, special ones (Kozak and Shvydka 2018). The content of *The Basic Component of Preschool Education* (2021) is aimed at this. In fact, the »result« of preschool edu-

cation is a competent preschooler who behaves independently and constructively in various social and life situations. The formation of a relevant degree of life competences at preschool age includes two main components: 1) methodical – aimed at mastering the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities, which are manifested in various spheres of life, game activities; and 2) personal – determined by a set of basic qualities necessary for a child for their full growth and actualization of their needs, intentions, aspirations, desires, dreams, and talents.

In order to assess the effectiveness of preschool education, in particular to determine the level of preschoolers' life skills, an indicative chart is used. It provides a set of assessments by preschool educators of generalized characteristics: the development of game activities; the balance of different forms of activity of the child; and the formation of basic aspects of personality (independence, diligence, humaneness, observation, responsibility, prudence, justice, self-control, and creativity).

In addition, to improve the effectiveness of preschool education, the H. Kostyuk Institute of Psychology with the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine has developed a qualimetric model for determining the child's development level and offered tools for its practical application (Methodical Recommendations ... 2015). This model takes into account the provisions on permissible loads on a preschool child, approved by an order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (The maximum allowable ... 2015). The electronic version of the model for assessing the child's development level before entering school was one of the first achievements of monitoring studies on the quality of preschool education.

The quality of the educational process in preschools has significantly improved. Its organization is based on European approaches to providing a comfortable environment for children's development (Kosenchuk and Kosenchuk 2020). Various initiatives regarding pedagogical staff, their participation in the introduction of innovative methods and projects, and the dissemination of pedagogical information among communities are encouraged. Preschool education technologies have improved due to the abandonment of »school« methods and the focus on play. The educator can develop the ability to invent new techniques, methods, and technologies of education (Czepil 2021). There are more opportunities to choose the various components of preschool education, methods, and teaching aids.

The initial requirement for preschool education technologies is their developmental nature and compliance with such principles as the child's right to play (free choice of toy, theme, game plot, place, and time); the universality of the subject-game environment so that children, together with preschool educators, can both prepare and change it and transform it in accordance with the design of the game, its content, and its prospects for development; systematicity, i.e. an optimal ratio of individual elements of the game between themselves and other objects, etc.

A recent achievement in terms of the quality of preschool education is the provision of appropriate living conditions for children. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of cooperation with parents. In 2020, the Ministry of Education

and Science together with The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Ukraine launched the NUMO platform for preschool development (2020), which enables parents to better understand the needs of modern preschool children, offers practical advice to ensure the quality of preschool education, facilitates effective communication with preschools, and helps develop children's skills. This platform is aimed at solving specific educational tasks, providing tips, and demonstrating specific exercises and tools for working with children. There are videos, posters, and materials.

Another current problem in Ukraine, as well as in other countries, is the provision of educational services of high quality during quarantine restrictions. In such conditions, the political decisions of the state regarding the organization of the educational process in preschools are important. Its documents guide educators and parents in partnership with the community in order to provide psychological and pedagogical support for children in difficult conditions. A dialogue between them helps outline the measures needed to ensure the proper quality of education (Recommendations for ensuring ... 2020).

The success of the implementation of regulations in practice depends on the quality of staff training. The gradual improvement of the education sector in Ukraine and the reform of higher education necessitated improvement in their level of training, which was influenced by the reforms of 1997–98 in higher education: the introduction of two-level education, the introduction of a new list of fields and specialties; and, later, Ukraine's accession to the Bologna system of education. The focus on the competence approach has been facilitated by the implementation of recommendations of the European Parliament and the EU Council (2006), which emphasize the value of the most important resource, i.e. the human, for a country's development and the need for lifelong learning.

With the introduction of compulsory preschool education, requirements for the training of preschool educators have increased. In 2010, a new *Model regulation on the attestation of preschool educators* was adopted (Typical provision on ... 2010) (the previous ones being in 1993 and 1998), according to which master degree is an essential condition for becoming a preschool educator. Another condition for compliance with the position is training in the preschool education specialty. A preschool educator with a different specialty, even a pedagogical one, cannot expect to get a higher qualification category. This, in turn, has necessitated training in the field of preschool education in higher education institutions and updating curricula and professional retraining programmes for the staff of preschools.

The *State targeted social program for the development of preschool education for the period up to 2017* (2011) also contributed to the raise of the professional level of preschool educators. This resolution was the impetus for proclaiming September 27th Educator's Day (later National preschool day), which was first celebrated in 2011, and the development and approval of the *Regulations on the national preschool educator of the year contest* in 2012 (2012). These steps helped improve the situation of preschool educators and raise the prestige of the profession, since it was the most socially vulnerable one in the field. Before these positive

changes, preschool educators had the greatest weekly workload (30 hours) among pedagogues, part-time jobs (most worked 0.85 – 0.9 rates), and low wages. Under such conditions, younger educators did not want to work in preschools (Education and science ... 2021). There was also a negligible number of male professionals in preschools, health workers, or directors. That is, if in society in general there was a pronounced »male power«, in the pedagogical sphere, instead, there was a distinct feminization. In our opinion, even the gender aspect of personnel policy in preschools needed to be improved.

In 2013, the qualification characteristics of pedagogical professions (Job descriptions of ... 2013) were adopted. They clearly describe the powers, functions, job responsibilities, and requirements for competence (professional, communicative, informational, legal) of specialists, which has influenced the specification of higher pedagogical school tasks, thus improving educational professional training programmes in universities. The »Pedagogical constitution of Europe« (2013) regulates preschool educator training. Its leading values are person-centredness, tolerance, love of peace, environmental security, respect for human rights, and solidarity. Such a value platform can serve as an axiology for training a new preschool educator capable of carrying out the tasks of teaching and educating the individual in accordance with the challenges of the era. The main characteristics of the preschool educator training system are fundamentality, universality, and humanitarian and research orientation.

Preschool educator training is practice-oriented, has a solid foundation, and is interdisciplinary in nature; it effectively contributes to the formation of a professional worldview and a holistic perception of objective reality. The integrity of the content is ensured by a comprehensive organization of training of preschool educators which involves the integration of three components: educational-cognitive, research, and educational-practical activities. The content of preschool educator training is inseparable from the content of preschool education. Preschools are full partners of universities in preschool educators' training and are jointly responsible for their professional development.

Thanks to European initiatives, National agency for quality assurance in higher education, a permanent collegial body, has been operating in Ukraine since 2015. Its creation was provided by the law of Ukraine *On higher education* (2014). The main mission of the agency is to »become a catalyst for positive changes in higher education« through the implementation of advisory and information activities, harmonization of standards and development of criteria for quality assurance in higher education, monitoring and analysis of their activities, accreditation procedures, and certification of scientific personnel. The strategic goals include promoting the integration of the system of higher pedagogical education of Ukraine into the global educational and scientific space, encouraging higher education institutions to engage in international cooperation, etc. At the same time, accreditation of specialties can take place through other international agencies (National Agency for ... 2023).

It should be emphasized that the law *On education* (2017) was of great importance for expanding the autonomy of educational institutions, due to the re-

duction of state influence and the establishment of the right to self-government. This has improved the sphere of management and facilitated the control of educational institutions in financial, personnel, and organizational issues. Particular attention was paid to the transparency of institutions, public participation in assessing the quality of education, strengthening marketing, collecting statistics, and making strategic forecasts.

Standardization is another important step for the proper organization of educational activities in preschools. The adoption of standards at different levels of education, specific licensing requirements, and competency indicators have enabled monitoring studies to obtain information and assess the quality of education. The educator's desire to achieve the best results in accordance with the guidelines of the Standard sometimes leads to mistakes in their work. Educators are distracted and exhausted, which leads to poor performance of professional duties. However, there are positive developments in healthy competition between preschools in providing quality educational services.

In recent years, the monitoring of preschool education has improved, as evidenced, in particular, by the launch in 2019 of a pilot project of the Institute of educational analytics aimed at collecting statistical reports in the field of preschool education. Noteworthy is the consultation report of Dr Jan Peeters entitled »Improving the quality of preschool education and child care in Ukraine« (Research on the quality ... 2019), prepared for the UNICEF office in Ukraine in 2018. It states that the monitoring of the quality of educational services in preschool education by the state is underdeveloped; not all institutions, especially in rural areas, have groups of senior preschool children, and some even lack middle preschool age groups. At the same time, in rural areas the number of groups in educational institutions is lowest; in urban areas, it is highest. Thus, 67.3% of preschools in cities have 26–30 pupils in a group (*ibid.*, p. 56).

From 1 November to 15 December 2021, research was conducted (for the first time in Ukraine) on assessing the quality of the educational process according to the ECERS-3 methodology. It was conducted by eight leading and fifty local experts in 200 preschools in Ukraine. The main purpose of the study was to assess the quality of the educational process in preschools by the following criteria: space and furniture; daily personal care practices; speech and literacy; types of educational and cognitive activities; interaction; and programme structuring. Despite the variety of ECERS-3 criteria, analysis of the scale »Types of Educational and Cognitive Activities« showed slight differences in the organization of activities in rural and urban preschools. The average indicator of the quality of the educational process is 5.53 points out of the 7 maximum (Kosenchuk and Pirozhenko 2022). The staff in all forms of ownership were reported to create a positive educational environment for the personal development of each child. In particular, the priorities are to adapt the conditions for children with special needs and to create hobby groups.

Conclusion

In the course of 30 years, preschool education in Ukraine has undergone significant changes in strategic, institutional, methodical, and value areas in improving its quality. We note that the achievements in the field relate to:

- individualization of the content of preschool education due to the availability of various preschool programmes and opportunities for preschools to provide additional educational services in order to form a competent preschooler ready to go to school;
- improving the technology of preschool education and the organization of the educational process, taking into account the individual characteristics, interests, and development needs of each child;
- involving the family in the educational process in preschools;
- improving the training of preschool educators by, in particular, improving the practical component of education; and
- expanding access to educational resources, teaching aids, and methodical literature.

All this indicates the need to modernize the education process and to reconsider the values of education and educational practice at regional and national levels, taking into account the experiences of other countries.

At present, the quality of preschool education in Ukraine is being improved in the following areas:

- constant updating of the content of preschool education, in order to better implement the continuity of preschool and primary education;
- attention to maintaining the health and physical development at the preschool age;
- inclusion, with the development of medical-psychological-pedagogical services in preschool education;
- diversification of types of preschools to ensure accessibility and developing preschool education in rural areas;
- improving the conditions of the educational process and the organization of children's living space through the renewal and expansion of the logistics of preschools;
- involvement of the family in the educational process through the education of parents, systematic preparation for conscious parenting, and the development and dissemination of literature for parents;
- improving the training of preschool educators in universities, an appropriate level of practical training, and the ability to choose from various educational programmes combining related specialties; and
- introduction of monitoring systems for effective assessment of the quality of education (ECERS-3).

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KAKOVOST PREDŠOLSKJE VZGOJE V UKRAJINI: 30 LET SPREMENB

Povzetek: Članek predstavlja dosežke Ukrajine pri zagotavljanju kakovosti predšolske vzgoje. Raziskava temelji na pregledu zakonodajnega okvira, statističnih podatkov in pedagoške literature o modernizaciji predšolske vzgoje v državi. Namen članka je prikazati strateške, institucionalne, metodичne in vrednotne usmeritve, namenjene izboljšanju kakovosti predšolske vzgoje v Ukrajini v obdobju 1991–2021 ter opredeliti možnosti za njeno nadaljnje izboljševanje. Glavni poudarek je na razumevanju ključnih sprememb v kakovosti predšolske vzgoje, dosežkov in težav pri zagotavljanju dostopnosti do vrtcev, njihove prožnosti in prilagodljivosti, meril za izboljšanje kakovosti predšolske vzgoje (kakovost dosežkov, pogoji za izvajanje vzgojno-izobraževalnega procesa in organizacija življenja otrok), strokovne usposobljenosti vzgojiteljev ter kakovosti vodenja v vrtcih. Avtorice proučijo vidike modernizacije predšolske vzgoje, vključno z izboljšanjem pogojev, v katerih poteka vzgojno-izobraževalni proces, organizacije otroških bivalnih prostorov, dvigom ravni strokovnosti predšolskih strokovnih delavcev (osebja na splošno) in osredotočanjem na dosežke – doseganjem ustrezne ravni kompetenc predšolskih otrok. Prikažejo tudi težave pri doseganju ustrezne ravni kakovosti predšolske vzgoje v Ukrajini. Ugotavljajo, da je treba predšolsko vzgojo še izboljšati.

Ključne besede: predšolska vzgoja, kakovost, Ukrajina, 1991–2021.

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