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## SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN FUTURE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S TRAINING

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### ABSTRACT

*The article deals with the importance of having soft skills nowadays. Through the analysis and synthesis of scientific and methodical sources, it was found that soft skills are flexible, sometimes non-special, acme competencies for the successful performance of professional duties.*

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The **purpose** of the article is to reveal the content and the conditions for soft skill development in the process of training future primary school teachers, in particular, during the Ukrainian language teaching methods.

To reach the purpose of the article, a set of research **methods** was used: theoretical: analysis of linguistic, educational, psychological, and methodical literature on the problems; synthesis, generalization, comparison; studying the work experience of higher education institutions teachers, defining the conceptual apparatus of research; empirical: observation and analysis of pedagogical phenomena and processes, collective and individual conversations with the aim of identifying the main contradictions and shortcomings in the content, teaching methods to identify the problems of soft skills formation in the process of learning the Ukrainian language teaching methods.

**Results.** It was determined that the term “soft skills” in the context of training a future primary school teacher is considered as a set of personal skills aimed at developing successful, productive learning of primary school pupils, the ability to communicate effectively with direct participants during the educational process (pupils) and indirect participants (colleagues, administration, pupils’ parents).

It has been proven that the new communicative environment enables the productive organization of the educational process participants, encourages creativity by means of developing the potential of methodological techniques, and operations in the form of various documents (working materials) aimed at obtaining the information with a powerful didactic resource for studying professional courses. The analysis of the professional standard “Teacher of the primary school of a general secondary education institution”, which was developed on the basis of the working functions of a teacher and involves a review of attitudes towards professional qualities and changes in stereotypes of the professional development, made it possible to identify a number of soft skills that must be formed in accordance with teacher’s working functions.

It has been found that soft skills include leadership qualities and the ability to work in a team, the ability to teach and negotiate, set and complete tasks, time management, purposefulness, effective communication skills, presentation skills, stress resistance, creativity and analytical abilities.

The attention is focused on the communicative aspect of soft skills. An employee with strong interpersonal communication skills can formulate his needs and expectations from the team and environment and listen carefully to others. She/he should communicate with the participants of the educational process in such a way that everyone has the feeling that he was heard and understood, and even the refusal was done professionally, without leaving a residue of indifference and hostility. The exercises and tasks for forming soft skills during the course of Ukrainian language teaching methods are offered.

**Conclusions.** The necessity of updating the content of educational programs and courses of the specialty 013 “Primary education” to further develop future

*primary school teachers' soft skills is proven since their professional and personal success depends on soft skills formation.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Communication, Media Text, Media Education, Primary School Teacher, Soft Skills, The Ukrainian Language Teaching Methods.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today, such new criteria have been identified in the training of future primary school teachers as the need for nationally conscious citizens with an active position, seeking to innovation and education throughout life, able to think critically and communicate effectively in society, showing a high level of communication.

Employers define "soft skills" as the leading key skills in the context of global information digitalization. Thus, in 2016, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the report "The Future of Jobs" named a list of universal skills ("soft skills") that will be most in demand in the labour market in the next 20-30 years and will become the basis for the formation of a new generation of professionals (Koval, 2015).

Recent labour market research shows that employers' interest in soft skills has increased, in particular, 93% of entrepreneurs from 16 European countries consider them equally important as professional knowledge and skills. That is why it is necessary to form them in the course of professional training, in particular, of primary school teachers.

Under the conditions of modern requirements, graduates of higher educational institutions must acquire deep theoretical knowledge, develop proven skills and abilities, acquire creative qualities, improve critical thinking, form a value attitude towards future professional activity, and can communicate productively (Belmaz et al., 2019). Nowadays, Ukrainian schools need qualified specialists with universal teacher competencies, which are called soft skills

or sometimes they are also called human or unified.

The essence of the conceptual content of "soft skills" has been clarified by many researchers (Bolstad, 2017; Dweck, 2008; Abdullayev, & Rebar, 2021 etc.). The scientists examine future-oriented needs and requirements for training, professional activity, changing stereotypes, teaching to perform tasks of various complexity, and achieving professional success. Taking into account the social and pedagogical significance of the Ukrainian language for the forming and developing of a primary school pupil's personality, the Ukrainian language teaching methods play an important role in the training of intending primary school teachers (Snape, 2017).

Teachers must not only possess the set of requirements for the pupils' training, in particular, knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes, but understand the degree of mastering them, so that already formed pupils' skills and abilities, personal values become theirs, but also change accordingly to the new conditions for providing the educational services (the global coronavirus pandemic, the full-scale invasion of the Russian army into Ukraine, which has changed not only the content, but also the form of educational activity, when education is under the conditions of risk, aggression, and moral stress, adds urgency to this problem).

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the content and the conditions for soft skill development in the process of training future primary school teachers, in particular, during the Ukrainian language teaching methods.

To achieve the purpose, the following tasks were put: to carry out a definitive characterization of the concept of “soft skills” and determine its components in the context of the professional standard “Teacher of the primary school of a general secondary education institution”; to analyze the main problems of forming soft skills in the process of teaching the course of the Ukrainian language teaching methods; to give the examples of tasks for forming students’ soft skills.

## METHODOLOGY

To achieve the purpose and solve the tasks, a set of research methods was applied: theoretical: analysis of linguistic, educational, psychological, and methodical literature on the problems; synthesis, generalization, comparison; studying the work experience of higher education institutions teachers, defining the conceptual apparatus of research; empirical: observation and analysis of pedagogical phenomena and processes, collective and individual conversations with the aim of identifying the main contradictions and shortcomings in the content, teaching methods to identify the problems of soft skills formation in the process of learning the Ukrainian language teaching methods.

## RESULTS

The concept of forming soft skills has become a component of the global labor market in the most diverse spheres of the economy and society. For the most part, soft skills are identified with employability skills (skills for employment), people skills (skills for communicating with people), non-professional skills, key skills (basic 32 skills), skills for social progress (skills for social development), life skills. The vast majority of scientists have reached a consensus regarding the basic elements of soft skills.

These are knowledge, abilities and skills: communication, the ability to think critically and structure, to solve problems, to work in a team; to learn throughout life and manage information, entrepreneurship, ethics, morality and professionalism, leadership, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, responsibility; decency / reliability, creativity, computer literacy, objective self-assessment, the ability to manage conflicts, to negotiate, the desire to learn; cultural awareness, empathy, time management, sociality, self-esteem (Robles, 2012; Snape, 2017). Instead, T. Hoholkina and A. Pavlenko (2020) interpret soft skills as a set of non-specialized, important universal skills responsible for successful participation in productive activities, which are cross-cutting skills, that is, not related to a specific subject field. This approach focuses attention on the social significance of such skills.

According to M. Robles (2012), soft skills are skills acquired thanks to additional education and personal life experience to use one’s own development in professional activities. This indicates a comprehensive approach to the characterization of soft skills. T. Kozhushkina (2018) examines the psychological component of soft skills and attributes them “to social skills: the ability to persuade, to find an approach to communicate with people, to lead, to carry out interpersonal communication, to negotiate processes, to work in a team, to implement personal development, to manage time, to be erudite, creative, etc.” (Kozhushkina, 2018: 78).

We note the similarity in the content of the concept in the research of N. Dluhunovych (2014), who also defines “soft skills” as social skills that make it possible to establish interaction with different age categories of people.

I. Tkachuk and N. Sosnovenko (2019) believe soft skills are communicative and managerial talents, which, according to the authors, include “the ability to persuade, to lead, to manage, to make presentations, to find the right approach to people, the ability to resolve conflict situations, to master the art of oratory”. In other words, they mean these talents not as the qualities and skills defined by the professional profile of a specialist, but those that can be defined as universal.

The contextual analysis of various scientific sources makes it possible to dwell on such a semanticization of the term “soft skills” in the context of training a future primary school teacher - a set of personal skills aimed at the successful, productive teaching of primary school pupils, the ability to communicate effectively with direct participants in the educational process (pupils) and indirect (colleagues, administration, pupils' parents).

There is no unified list, just like the classification of soft skills. We assume that the presence of soft skills and competencies forms the social competence of intending specialists, develops the ability to mobilize in a specific social and professional situation, develops sociability, which accumulates in the choice of words, able to produce one's expression as clearly as possible, filling it with a meaningful load. Considering that the language teaching methodology makes it possible to work with productive linguo-methodological material, we get an environment for the effective formation of soft skills (Pashko, & Pinchuk, 2020).

Soft skill is a sociological term that refers to a person's emotional intelligence quotient, a set of personality traits, social skills, communication skills, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism. Data from the content analysis of the interpretation of the term made it possible to somaticize

soft skills as flexible, sometimes non-specialist, acme competencies (acme is the top, peak, the highest degree of something, flourishing) for the successful performance of professional duties (Sapozhnykov, 2020).

The means for the implementation of these elements are presented in the professional standard “Teacher of a primary school of a general secondary education institution” (2020), which was developed on the basis of the labour functions of a teacher and provides for a review of attitudes towards professional qualities and changes in stereotypes of the development of his professional competence.

The analysis of the document content made it possible to identify a number of soft skills that must be formed in accordance with the work functions of a teacher: “Planning and implementation of the educational process”, “Evaluation of the results of primary school teachers' work in general secondary education institution”, “Generalization of the own pedagogical experience and its presentation to the pedagogical community”, “Providing methodical assistance to colleagues in matters of training, development, education and socialization of primary school pupils of a general secondary education institution”, “Conducting pedagogical research”, “Reflection and professional self-development”, “Creating the educational environment”, “Ensuring and supporting learning, education and development of pupils in an educational environment and family”.

The survey of lecturers and teachers showed that the main soft skills are the following: the ability to persuade, to work in a team, resolve conflicts, adaptability, flexibility, time management (optimal

organization of time), and responsibility (Pinchuk, 2020).

All functions found their implementation during the study of the Ukrainian language teaching methods by future specialists. Therefore, during seminars, practical and laboratory classes, and the organization of students' individual works, we must focus on these requests and respond flexibly, changing both the content and the process of students acquiring relevant knowledge, gaining professional experience, and changing value orientations regarding the creation of a new educational environment (Hrona, 2021, p. 225).

The principal skills are communication skills. An employee with strong interpersonal communication skills can clearly formulate his needs, and expectations of the team and the environment, listen carefully to others (Tkachuk, & Sosnovenko, 2019). He must communicate with the participants of the educational process in such a way that everyone has the feeling that he was heard and understood, and even the refusal was done professionally, without leaving a residue of indifference and hostility.

For example, it is not customary to say "No" in China. From childhood, they are taught various methods to tactfully "refuse". Therefore, when a Chinese refuses, a person always remains satisfied, as if he was actually told "Yes". The survey of teachers and students made it possible to come to the conclusion that 46% of respondents consider it the most difficult skill to speak in front of an audience, 24% – to criticize reasonably, and 30% – to draw attention as a quality interlocutor. Therefore, the communicative aspect of the formation of soft skills is leading.

An effective means of forming soft skills among students during the practical, seminar and laboratory classes on the Ukrainian language teaching methods is consideration of problematic issues that encourage thinking, drawing conclusions, and comparing. For example, studying the topic "Methods of studying the "Text" section":

- *What is the practical significance of the ability to divide the text into paragraphs, to determine the beginning, the main part and the ending of the text?*
- *What are the means of communication between parts of the text in the language? Why introduce them to primary school pupils?*
- *Is it possible to consider the formation of primary school pupils' text-creating skills as a condition for effective composition-creating activity at the next levels of education?*
- *Is writing essay competence one of the ways to develop pupils' creative abilities?*
- *What is the role of teaching to create reasoning compositions for the developing primary school pupils' communicative abilities?*
- *Do you see the need to connect the work of teaching the creation of descriptive essays with the choice of style and genre in primary school? Why?*
- *Do you think that the preparatory stage for learning to create written reasoning essays can be started already in the first grade? Justify your answer.*
- *How do you see the difference between explanatory reasoning and evidentiary reasoning? Do you think it is appropriate to introduce primary school pupils to this division of reasoning texts?*

- *Is it possible to assume that children learn to relate the title and content of the work, starting from literacy lessons?*
- *Why do you think it is important to divide texts into thematic groups when learning to create descriptive essays: 1) portrait description of a person (appearance, character); 2) description of an animal, or plant; 3) description of an inanimate object; 4) description of the interior; 5) description of natural phenomena; 6) landscape description? Which thematic groups should start studying, and which ones should be started later? Why?*

We offer the content of tasks and exercises for the purpose of forming soft skills:

- Create a “bank” of case tasks for primary school pupils. Let’s consider the examples of such tasks for 4th form pupils.

**Task 1.** Describe the appearance of the bird to your friends who could not come to the excursion. Describe the bird (nightingale) in such a way as to convey its beauty to arouse the admiration of listeners for its singing skill.

**Task 2.** Write a letter about your city (town, village) to your friend.

**Task 3.** Imagine that your classmates are going to the local history museum on Sunday. You should: a) announce the excursion during the educational lesson, b) tell your parents about it. How are the statements different? Write your ideas.

**Task 4.** Create an essay based on the storytelling method at the level of a primary school pupil. For example: In the famous Ukrainian folk tale “Dumpling” (“Kolobok”), the fox outwitted the main character and ate it. What story could Dumpling (Kolobok) tell in order to distract the attention of the Fox and not fall into a trap?

The adoption of the lifelong education concept, the philosophy of open education, distance learning and externships require students and teachers to have special skills in working with information, understanding the role and importance of the world of media in the professional and cultural development of an individual - aspects of the forming soft skills (Drushlyak et al., 2022; Kozhushkina, 2018).

Considering this, the educational process in higher education institutions must be aimed at updating the content of professionally oriented courses, teamwork, and pedagogical practice by ensuring the integration of the content of media education with professional courses, mastering students’ culture of research work with media and text; creating and using by students of their own media educational product in the process of formal and informal education, and this will contribute to the effective training of future specialists (Hreb, & Hrona, 2021).

For this purpose, during practical and laboratory classes, we offer students the following tasks:

- Create some tasks for distinguishing between fact and judgment based on the material of the text from the primary school textbook “Literary Reading”.
- Formulate thesis for a short motivational speech in front of pupils regarding the need to acquire critical information perception skills (select and indicate the age of the audience).
- Develop a “Method of Paradoxes” to combat the negatives of clip thinking? (Mykhailo Kazinik, a world-renowned professor and teacher, in his practice used the method of “paradoxes”, which develops analytical abilities and critical thinking; a paradox emerges from a

contradiction; a convenient exercise that eradicates the consumerist attitude to information and teaches reflection). We offer samples of “paradoxes”:

- The best things in life are free.
- The more choice, the less choice. “There was nothing like this in my childhood,” your grandmother told you more than once. Yes, now it’s a great choice. However, it happens that when you come to a supermarket, your eyes run away from the abundance. And it all ends with the fact that you cannot decide on a choice and leave with nothing.
- The more you try to control the situation, the less you succeed. Unfortunately, many things are out of control, so the best solution would be to control yourself.

We found out that it is difficult for students to express their opinions quickly and sufficiently comprehensively, and to choose convincing arguments. Sometimes, claiming absolute knowledge, they cover their ignorance with self-confident, domineering intonation. The ability to summarize information, grasp complex ideas, feelings and ideas and formulate them in a few words is not always manifested, individual statements are reflective in nature (Pinchuk, 2020).

It proves that it is necessary to intensify the work to overcome these problems, and to pay special attention to the issues of further development of soft skills, which depend on professional and personal success, updating the content of educational programs.

## DISCUSSION

The strategic purpose of the modern school is obvious: improving the quality and effectiveness of education and ensuring the comprehensive

development of the pupil’s personality. It can be achieved through the institution’s continuous innovative development, primarily through the systematic using modern approaches in the educational process. We share a view on this new educational strategy, which involves the development of intending primary school teachers’ soft skills. After all, students get the opportunity to delve deeper into the structure of complex didactic processes and objects, to reach almost any degree of their detailing.

The practical aspect of the work showed how to build an educational process so that students understood the necessity of the studied material and could immediately apply the acquired knowledge in practice. We have proven that the intensive exchange of information between the participants of the educational process contributes to the student’s educational development, the acquisition of thorough methodical knowledge, skills, and is a powerful incentive for self-education, personal professional growth and creative development.

## CONCLUSIONS

It was established that the educational process should be structured in such a way that the student understands the necessity of the studied material and can immediately apply the acquired knowledge in practice. Each subsequent lesson will be effective and accessible, more flexible, learning will be formed according to the principle of “growth”. This is how it is possible to qualitatively develop soft skills in classes on the Ukrainian language teaching methods, emphasizing the students’ ability for interpersonal interactions and the expression of personal characteristics.



The components of soft skills are the ability to think critically, namely: analyze the existing situation, generalize and change behavior in accordance with the environment, the ability to feel,

understand and analyze the feelings and emotions of other people which will be the vector of our further research in the context of learning the Ukrainian language teaching methods.

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### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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#### АНОТАЦІЯ / ABSTRACT [in Ukrainian]:

#### ФОРМУВАННЯ ГНУЧКИХ НАВИЧОК У ПРОЦЕСІ ПІДГОТОВКИ МАЙБУТНЬОГО ВЧИТЕЛЯ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ

У статті обґрунтовано значущість гнучких навичок. Шляхом аналізу і синтезу науково-методичних джерел з'ясовано, що гнучкі навички – це змінні, інколи поза фахові, акме компетентності (акме — вершина, пік, вищий ступінь чого-небудь, розквіт) для успішного виконання професійних обов'язків.

**Мета статті** – розкрити зміст, умови формування гнучких навичок у процесі підготовки майбутнього вчителя початкової школи, зокрема, методики навчання української мови.

У ході дослідження було використано комплекс **методів дослідження**, що містив теоретичні (аналіз літератури, синтез, узагальнення, порівняння) й емпіричні (спостереження, бесіди тощо) методи.

**Результати.** Визначено, що термін «гнучкі навички» у контексті підготовки майбутнього вчителя початкових класів – комплекс особистісних навичок, що відповідають за успішне, продуктивне навчання учнів молодшого шкільного віку, здатність ефективно комунікувати з безпосередніми

учасниками освітнього процесу (учні) й опосередкованими (колеги, адміністрація, батьки учнів).

Доведено, що нове комунікативне середовище уможлиблює продуктивну організацію учасників освітнього процесу, спонукає до творчості за допомогою розвивального потенціалу методичних і технічних прийомів, операцій у формі різноманітних документів (робочих матеріалів), спрямованих на отримання інформації, з потужним дидактичним ресурсом для вивчення фахових дисциплін. Аналіз професійного стандарту «Вчитель початкових класів закладу загальної середньої освіти», який розроблений на основі трудових функцій педагога, і передбачає перегляд ставлення до фахових якостей та зміни стереотипів розвитку його професійної, дав можливість виявити низку гнучких навичок, які мають бути сформовані відповідно до трудових функцій педагога.

З'ясовано, що до них відносять лідерські якості та вміння працювати в команді, вміння навчати та проводити переговори, ставити та виконувати поставлені завдання, управління часом, цілеспрямованість, навички ефективної комунікації, презентаційність, стресостійкість, креативність, творчий підхід до роботи та аналітичні здібності.

Акцентовано увагу на комунікативному аспекті гнучких навичок. Співробітник з потужними навичками міжособистісного спілкування вміє чітко сформулювати свої потреби, очікування до команди й оточення, уважно вислухати, як їх формулюють інші. Він має так комунікувати з учасниками освітнього процесу, щоб у кожного залишилося відчуття, що він був почутий та зрозумілий, і навіть відмова була зроблена професійно, не залишаючи осаду байдужості й неприязні. Запропоновано вправи і завдання для формування гнучких навичок під час вивчення методики навчання української мови.

**Висновки.** Доведено, що є потреба в оновленні змісту освітніх програм та контенту дисциплін спеціальності 013 «Початкова освіта» з метою подальшого розвитку гнучких навичок майбутніх учителів початкової школи, оскільки від сформованості таких навичок залежить їхній професійний та особистісний успіх.

**КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА:** комунікація, медіа текст, медіа освіта, учитель початкових класів, гнучкі навички, методика навчання української мови.

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