

Civil and Intercultural Education in the Conditions of Martial Law in Ukraine: Experience of a Master's Educational Program

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***Abstract.** Currently, in the context of large-scale military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the activities aimed at national-patriotic upbringing of the young generation of Ukrainians are becoming increasingly relevant. Special attention is given to laying the foundations of civic and intercultural competencies among children of middle and senior preschool age. To prepare future masters of preschool education for the implementation of these objectives, an original academic discipline called “Conceptual Principles of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society” has been developed. In the conditions of martial law, the study of this discipline at H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University is conducted in a distance learning mode, utilizing a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous communication forms and methods with the master’s level students. Online resources, services, and tools serve not only as means but also as elements of the content of professional pedagogical training. Future masters of preschool education acquire numerous digital instruments and learn how to use them pedagogically effectively in working with children of preschool age, their parents, and the wider community. Special attention is paid to the communication between future preschool teachers and managers and the families of displaced persons residing in other regions of Ukraine and beyond its borders. In order to maintain an emotional connection with their homeland and stimulate joint activities of children and parents, future masters of preschool education create virtual parent corners, interactive online games and exercises related to Ukrainian studies and local history, as well as interactive online educational events for the parents of preschoolers and members of the community.*

***Keywords:** civil and intercultural education, master's degree students, preschool education, children of middle and senior preschool age, martial law, distance education.*

The full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine has shattered the entire fabric of Ukrainian life and, in particular, fundamentally changed the education system. Now, on the eve of a new academic year, debates are still ongoing regarding the feasibility of returning to at least a blended form of face-to-face and distance learning in regions that remain dangerous due to constant artillery and missile attacks, minefields, and destroyed infrastructure. The liberated territories face particular challenges, as they have often not only lost educational institutions completely due to extensive destruction but also grapple with a shortage of educational personnel, as many teachers have become displaced persons in other regions or even abroad, while others tragically lost their lives.

Therefore, it is evident that distance education in Ukraine will remain relevant in the near future.

Many educators ironically joke that they are grateful for the years of quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which taught them how to work remotely and facilitated the mastery of numerous tools and services for synchronous or asynchronous online communication with students.

We have already written about the peculiarities of distance education, including in the context of martial law in Ukraine [**Shlenova, Konoplenko, Yuryeva, Korneiko, Hlukhovska, 2023; Yalovsky, Lotsman, Yurieva, Parfentieva, Sokolova, 2023**].

The active military operations on Ukrainian soil also highlight the importance of civil and intercultural education. This is evidenced, among other things, by the update on June 6, 2022, of the “Concept of National-Patriotic Education in the Ukrainian Education System” by the Ministry of Education and Science [**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022, June 6**]. The concept defines the goal of national-patriotic education as “the formation of a self-sufficient citizen-patriot of Ukraine, a humanist and democrat, prepared to fulfill civic and constitutional duties, to inherit the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people, and to achieve a high level of interpersonal culture” [**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022, June 6**].

We have also previously addressed the peculiarities of national-patriotic education during a period of martial law [**Yuryeva, Harrison, 2022, November 30**].

At one of the previous conferences, we have already presented new educational technologies and tools that are proposed, theoretically grounded, and successfully used at G. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University to prepare future educators for professional activities in a multicultural society [**Boychuk, Berezhna, Yuryeva, 2021**]. Currently, the focus needs to be shifted in the academic disciplines that provide such preparation: “Conceptual Foundations of Professional Education in a Multicultural Educational Environment” (the third (educational-scientific) level of higher education); “Conceptual Foundations of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society” (the second (master’s) level of higher education); “Educational Event Management in the Ukrainian Multicultural Society”; “Polycultural Education of Primary School Children”; “Cultural Diversity of the Educational Space of the Kharkiv Region” (the first (bachelor’s) level of higher education).

For example, let’s consider the curriculum of the academic discipline “Conceptual Foundations of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society”, which is part of the educational program for the second (master’s) level of education.

The aim of studying the academic discipline “Conceptual Foundations of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society” is to prepare master's degree students for professional activities in the context of cultural diversity in contemporary society and the educational environment of a preschool institution.

The objectives of studying the academic discipline are as follows: to cultivate in students a values-based attitude and respect for diversity and multiculturalism, to develop a positive motivation for professional activities in a multicultural society and the educational environment of a preschool institution, to prepare them for the formation of civic and intercultural competence, socialization, and national-patriotic upbringing of children of middle and senior preschool age in the multicultural social and educational space of Ukraine, and to prepare them for organizing collaboration between preschool institutions and the community, representatives of national-cultural societies, and partnership with parents.

As a result of studying the academic discipline according to the educational program, the following program competencies are developed:

Integrated Competence: The ability to competently solve complex tasks and problems in

organizing and monitoring the educational process in the system of preschool education or in the process of training specialists in preschool education in higher education institutions. This competence involves conducting research and/or implementing innovations in situations characterized by uncertain conditions and requirements.

General Competencies:

- The ability to act socially responsibly and consciously.
- Appreciation and respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

Specialized (Professional) Competencies:

The ability to carry out educational activities aimed at enhancing the psychological and pedagogical competence of educators, parents, and the community.

The ability to organize cooperation between preschool institutions and various social institutions, professional categories, and partnership with parents.

As a result of mastering the content of the academic discipline, students are expected to achieve the following program learning outcomes:

Critically analyze the conceptual foundations, goals, objectives, and principles of preschool education in Ukraine.

Establish interactions with various social institutions, professional categories, and parents to ensure the quality of preschool education and implement research and innovative projects.

Organize methodological support for educational activities in a multicultural environment of a preschool institution to cultivate respect for different nationalities and promote interaction among children.

Acquire knowledge and utilize the legislative framework of preschool education in practical activities.

Apply modern didactic and methodological principles in teaching psychological and pedagogical disciplines in professional practice, selecting appropriate technologies and methodologies.

The content of the academic discipline is concentrated in two content modules: theoretical-methodological and methodological.

The theoretical-methodological module includes the following topics:

Topic 1: Normative and Legal Framework of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society: International and National Context.

During independent work, students are required to analyze and compare a range of international and national documents regarding the reflection of multiculturalism issues in contemporary Ukrainian society and the educational environment of educational institutions. The suggested international documents for analysis include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. The national documents include the Laws of Ukraine “On Education” and “On Preschool Education”, as well as the “Concept of National-Patriotic Education in the Education System of Ukraine”.

Topic 2: Issues of Multiculturalism and National-Patriotic Upbringing in Current Programs for the Development, Education, and Learning of Preschool Children.

In this topic, students are encouraged to independently analyze and compare four current programs for the development, education, and learning of preschool children of their choice (such as “Child in the Preschool Years”, “Child”, “World of Childhood”, “Confident Start”, “I in the World”, “Ukraine – My Homeland”, “Ukrainian Preschool”, “Joy of Creativity”, “Learning to Live Together”, “Sunflower”, “Treasury of Morality”, etc.) in terms of addressing the issues of

civic and intercultural education for children of middle and senior preschool age.

Topic 3: Program of Intercultural and Civic Education for Preschool Children – “Ukrainian Wreath. Region” of the Integrated Course “Culture of Good Neighborhood”: Objective, Conceptual Basis, Tasks, Specifics, Structure.

Based on comparative analysis, students should independently conclude that the program “Ukrainian Wreath. Region” fully corresponds to the fundamental provisions of the state standard – the Basic Component of Preschool Education and can be successfully used in laying the foundations of civic and intercultural competence in children of middle and senior preschool age.

Topic 4: Socio-Psychological Foundations of Personality Development in a Multicultural Environment. Identity. Stereotypes. Gender and Cultural Sensitivity. Attitudes towards People with Disabilities. Tolerance.

The independent work of students on this topic revolves around complex socio-psychological concepts. Students not only need to comprehend their content but also gather relevant theoretical information and multimedia materials on the topic for conducting discussions with children of middle and senior preschool age, taking into account their age-specific characteristics. They also need to engage in educational work with parents of preschool children and the community.

Topic 5: Andragogical Foundations of Work with Parents and the Community. Media Education and the Development of Critical Thinking.

The topic concludes the first semester of studying the discipline “Conceptual Foundations of Preschool Education in a Multicultural Society”. The mastery of the subtopic “Andragogical Foundations of Work with Parents and the Community” should find reflection in the development of interactive educational events scenarios for parents of preschoolers and the community, as well as in creating virtual information booth for parent on interactive boards, such as Padlet or Jamboard.

The modern state standard for preschool education – the Basic Component of Preschool Education – pays great attention to the work of preschool educational institutions with families of their students. The issue of collaboration between preschool educational institutions and families of preschoolers is addressed in many graduation qualification works. Students explore the content, forms, and methods of such collaboration. One of the most popular forms of communication with parents of preschoolers lately, starting from the period of quarantine restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the creation of virtual information booth for parents based on the Padlet service. These corners contain useful information for parents, as well as unique reports on educational work.



Figure 1. Virtual information booth for parents. Virtual interactive whiteboard Padlet



Figure 2. Virtual information booth for parents. Virtual interactive whiteboard Padlet

Independent work on the subtopic “Media Education and Development of Critical Thinking” involves developing discussions with children based on three animated films chosen by the students from the list provided by the instructor. These films mainly focus on tolerance towards diversity, attitudes towards people with disabilities, and introduce preschoolers to Ukrainian culture and the cultures of other nations.

A separate task for independent work involves developing three interactive online games for older preschool children using the Wordwall service, based on the materials from the “Culture of Good Neighborhood” workbooks.

In the context of wartime, where the children's familiar way of life has undergone radical changes, and many families have become displaced within their own country or even across its borders, restoring and preserving the psychological well-being of preschoolers is of utmost

importance. Students, using the Wordwall service, develop interactive online games for children and their parents to engage in enjoyable and meaningful activities that not only entertain and distract but also help broaden the children’s horizons. These activities aim to bring different generations of a family closer together.

At the same time, master’s students strive to create games that help families of their students maintain a connection with Ukraine and their hometowns. Therefore, the themes of the games often revolve around Ukrainian history and culture, with the students choosing illustrations depicting significant places in the Kharkiv region.

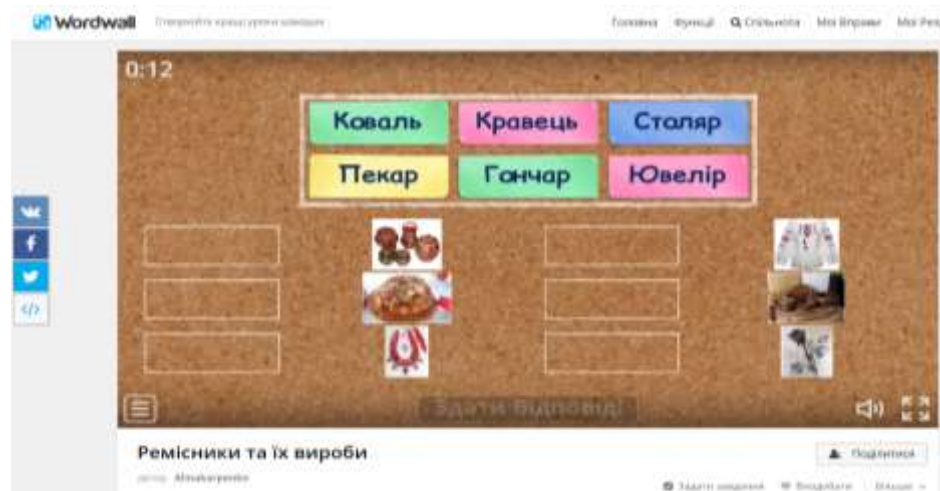


Figure 3. Online game “Artisans and their products”

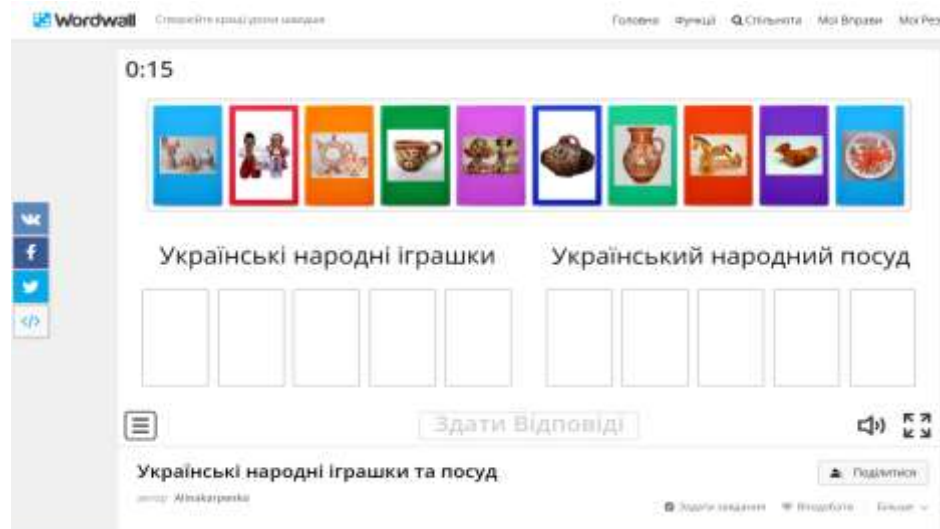


Figure 4. Online game Ukrainian folk toys and tableware



Figure 5. Online game “Bread products of different nations”



Figure 6. Online game “Favorite places of Kharkiv”

In the second semester of their master's degree program, students focus on the methodological content module of the course, which consists of two topics:

Topic 1: Methodology for implementing tasks related to the content line “Nature of the Native Region”. Implementation of tasks related to the content block “History of People and Landmarks of the Region”.

Topic 2: Specifics of working with children based on the content line “Child in the Diversity of Cultures” in the “Ukrainian wreath. Region” program. Conflict resolution aspect in “Ukrainian wreath”. Implementation of the content line “Playing Together”.

Independent work within the methodological content module involves gathering information, exercises, games, and developing lesson plans for children of middle and upper preschool age, focusing on the specified content lines and blocks.

Therefore, in the conditions of martial law in Ukraine, educational activities, both in preparing future preschool education masters and in laying the foundations of civic and intercultural competencies for children of middle and senior preschool age, are largely carried out in a distance format. The focus shifts towards working with parents of preschoolers, uniting families, as well as maintaining an emotional connection with Ukraine, its culture, and homeland.

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