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PEDAGOGICAL PHENOMENON OF THE DANISH EFTERSKOLE

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The paper highlights the unique Efterskole pedagogy in Denmark which generates evidence of high-quality education for young people from the ages of 14 to 18 striving to choose their future path in life after finishing lower secondary school education before continuing on to upper secondary education. The author notes that the educational process in the Efterskole is grounded on the pedagogical theories by Grundtvig and Kold which emerged in the field of Danish education in the nineteenth century. Efterskoles are subdivided according to different profiles and target groups into special needs schools and specialized schools with a specific subject profile. It is stated that these schools have a common educational focus on general education and democratic citizenship equipping young people to manage the challenges of modern society. The Efterskole educational programmes are considered, comprising such aims as to enhance the students' independent critical thinking as well as to develop them as democratic and socially conscious citizens with a global outlook preparing for various life's challenges. It is outlined that the Efterskole helps high school students build lasting friendships and relationships, expand horizons, and develop a perspective on life. Through dialogue and active interaction, as students and teachers staying together in an educational community around the clock, students work on defining their own individual needs, interests, values and identity. Distinctive Efterskole pedagogy promotes a sense of positive personal relationship, shared values and shared responsibility, creates favourable conditions for developing students' social and interpersonal skills as well as contributes to making them more autonomous learners and self-aware mature personalities.

Key words: Danish Efterskole, democratic citizenship, interpersonal skills, responsibility, secondary education, well-rounded personality.



У статті висвітлено особливості освітньої діяльності данської *Efterskole* як специфічного педагогічного феномену у системі середньої освіти країни. Цей тип середньої школи створено для молодих людей віком від 14 до 18 років, які завершили обов'язковий дев'ятирічний етап навчання у середній школі і ще не визначилися з траєкторією подальшого життєвого шляху – продовжити навчання у гімназії з метою вступу до закладу вищої освіти або долучитися до професійно-орієнтованої освітньої програми задля здобуття професійно-технічної освіти у певній галузі. Зазначено, що освітній процес в *Efterskole* ґрунтується на педагогічних теоріях видатних данських освітян XIX століття Кольда (1816-1870) і Грюндвіга (1783-1872). Сьогодні *Efterskoles* вирізняються за предметними профілями (мистецький, гуманітарний, спортивний тощо) та цільовими групами учнів з певними спеціальними потребами. Окреслено, що ці школи мають спільну освітню спрямованість на виховання всебічно розвиненої особистості зі сформованою демократичною громадянськістю на основі вивчення циклу загальноосвітніх дисциплін та залучення до суспільно значущої діяльності. *Efterskole* забезпечує подальший розвиток в учнів самостійного критичного мислення, креативності, а також сприяє вихованню відповідальних громадян з розвиненим почуттям обов'язку, патріотизму та глобальним світоглядом. Указано, що навчання і виховання у цих закладах середньої освіти, де учні та викладачі цілодобово перебувають разом в освітньому середовищі, допомагає молодим людям у побудові міцних дружніх відносин з однолітками та сприяє ефективному діалогу й активній співпраці всіх учасників освітнього процесу. Наголошено, що виконання різних видів діяльності в урочний та позаурочний час створює сприятливі умови для ефективного формування в учнів навичок міжособистісної взаємодії, спільних морально-етичних цінностей та відповідальності, забезпечуючи загалом гармонійний особистісний розвиток кожного учня.

Ключові слова: данська *Efterskole*, середня освіта, демократична громадянськість, відповідальність, усестороннє розвинена особистість, навички міжособистісної взаємодії.

Introduction. Modern Ukrainian secondary school requires modernization of its content and organization on the way to effective integration into the global educational environment. Optimizing the process of addressing these issues becomes possible only with a critical study of the progressive pedagogical experience of foreign countries, Denmark in particular.

Today, Denmark is renowned for the advanced state of its education system which, in its turn, greatly contributes to the high standards of social welfare. Excellent opportunities for active learning and well-rounded personality development of young people are provided in the country. At the same time the Danish educational system aims to be democratic, open and flexible ensuring competitiveness in a modern global society. According to the Danish School Act of 2014 (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014), there are three main goals of schooling, which are as follows: «1) challenge all students to reach their fullest potential; 2) reduce the significance of students' social background for academic results; 3) the trust in the



school and students' well-being must be enhanced by showing respect for professional knowledge and practice» (p. 18).

School education in Denmark is not only focused on the outcomes of learning, but teachers try to develop an orientation towards self-enhancement, self-cognition and interest in new things in young people. In schools, students are valued for their personal qualities and interpersonal skills, which, in its turn help build confidence in their future social role in society.

The aim of the article is to highlight the theoretical foundations of the organizational and pedagogical peculiarities of the Danish Efterskole (founded by the author during her participation in the Staff Training Week at the VIA University College (Aarhus, Denmark) in October, 2018). The *supportive objectives* of the study are as follows: 1) to outline stages of the Danish secondary school system; 2) to give a brief account on the history of setting up Efterskole in Denmark; 3) to explore the Efterskole profiles; 4) to analyse and generalize the Efterskole pedagogical concept.

Methods. The research paradigm was interpretive, which placed emphasis on a complex of complementary theoretical methods: a critical analysis of pedagogical sources on the research issue; generalization the author's first-hand experience of the pedagogical phenomenon «Danish Efterskole»; monographic method – to interpret the results obtained in a coherent logical perspective.

The study was underpinned by the educational theories by Grundtvig and Kold which emerged in the field of Danish education in the nineteenth century providing the basis for setting up Efterskole. These theories reflect the view that the learning process should prepare students for adult life on the grounds of understanding their personal inner world and their place in the world at large. Additionally, the study exploited Honneth's theory of personal development based on the interaction which contributes to a student's social development and personality enhancement.

Main Text. The school system in Denmark embraces: compulsory primary and lower secondary education phase (nine years of education) provided mainly through the state municipal schools (Folkeskoles); and upper secondary education phase (two to five years of education) covered by the umbrella term «youth education» (Ungdomsuddannelser). The latter phase offers a range of programmes for 16-19 year-olds embracing two spheres:

- 1) university preparatory education qualifying for access to higher education;
- 2) vocational or technical programmes which are aimed at direct entry to the labour market (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014).

In the Danish secondary education system, everything is arranged in such a way that high school students do not have the fear of going to college and do not fall into the confusion when choosing the path in life. This is due to the so-called postschool, in Danish known as Efterskole (literally from Danish «postschool») – a kind of boarding school unique to Denmark where students (Danish and foreign ones as well) aged 14 to 18 can choose to spend a year or even two years of their lower secondary school education before continuing on to upper secondary education. That is, after completing their compulsory education, many students do not go straight to upper secondary (high school), but instead advance to the



Efterskole. This type of school is for young people who have not yet decided what they want to do after school or who have not been fully socialized.

Nowadays, in Denmark every year a significant number of high school students repeat a year or even two years of schooling (known as 10th grade), as it is recommended that young people take as much time as they need to find their particular areas of strength. Though some high school students join the tenth grade classes that are provided by their own schools, there is also an increasing incidence of students going to Efterskole instead.

In the paper we have decided to exploit the Danish word Efterskole for the adequacy of translation. It is explained by the fact that in English there is the term *Continuation High School* as a suitable description for the Danish Efterskole. However, the American English term *Continuation High School* is a misleading concept of the Efterskole's aims and form offering not only academic programs but career orientation and counseling, work study assistance, job placement as well with the view to developing students' career perspective. Therefore, the term *Efterskole* will be utilized throughout the paper to refer to this unique Danish school.

The first Efterskole was set up in 1851 by a Danish teacher Kold (1816–1870) who exploited the pedagogical ideas of the famous Danish poet and priest Grundtvig (1783–1872) – a founder of the Danish folk high schools. The main essence of Grundtvig's pedagogy was to prepare students for life on the basis of providing them with an understanding of their personal inner world and their place in life at large. Grundtvig and later on Kold as well put the premium on narrative, storytelling and dialogue in the learning process as the main methods of students' personality development. But, while Grundtvig considered the folk high school to be only for adults, Kold intended those schools to be for young people aged 14–18 assisting them to be preoccupied with acquiring general knowledge and reflect on how they see themselves (Allchin, Bradley, Hjelm, & Schjørring, 2000).

In the following we will take a closer look at the up-to-date state of affairs with Efterskoles in Denmark. Today an Efterskole is a private school that receives substantial state subsidy – about 66% of the school budget being covered from central government and 33% being paid by the parents (Danish Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 12). Currently there are more than 260 Efterskoles throughout Denmark attracting about 28,500 students from all strata of society. The size of these schools varies from 35 to 500 students but it is on average approximately 100–120 students. Efterskoles offer profound education in such areas as the natural sciences, arts, physical education, besides the obligatory subjects of general education, and prepare young people for adulthood through enhancing their personality development (Danish Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 11).

Efterskoles pursuing common educational goals on enlightenment for life, general education and democratic citizenship are subdivided according to different profiles and target groups into: general schools, special needs schools and specialized schools with a specific subject profile (e.g. sports, theatre, outdoor activities, etc.). It presupposes different normative culture and focus in every Efterskole. Such secondary educational institutions are as follows (Efterskole Association, 2018):



- schools with all subjects taught in English;
- schools focusing on sports;
- schools focusing on music;
- schools focusing on art;
- schools focusing on music theatre/drama;
- schools focusing on outdoor activities;
- schools focusing on sailing;
- schools focusing on international cooperation;
- schools for students with dyslexia (there are 20 schools of this type);
- schools for students with special needs (20 schools of this type).

Most Danish Efterskoles are located in picturesque regional areas that are rich in nature (only a few being located in a city), with students and teachers staying together in an educational community around the clock, even during the weekends too. As a result, this togetherness and distinctive pedagogy promote a sense of positive personal relationship and shared values, and create favorable conditions for developing students' social and interpersonal skills as well as making them more autonomous learners and mature personalities.

The distinctive pedagogical concept in Efterskoles takes into account Honneth's theory of personal development based on the interaction which contributes to a student's social development and personality enhancement (Honneth, 1992; 1995; 2007). The interaction, in its turn, is connected to the three recognition categories – *love* (takes into account individual's physical needs and emotions being met by others), *rights* (refers to the development of moral responsibility and consequently enhancing moral behaviour), and *solidarity* (relates to recognition of personal traits and abilities through «a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences between human subjects in a universal, and more specifically, intersubjectively obligatory way» (Honneth, 1995, p. 122)) – important to developing a positive attitude towards oneself (Honneth, 1992; Honneth, 1995). As noted by Honneth (1995), «for it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem- provided one after another, by the experiencing these three forms of recognition – that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires» (p. 169).

Being essential to strengthening students' self-esteem and ensuring their self-realization, recognition is considered an important means of valuing or respecting other people, and it is also fundamental to self-understanding. These findings by Honneth (1992; 1995) have provided educators at Efterskoles with the three main domains of pedagogical influence: 1) the affective sphere of education (correlates with «love recognition form»), which ensures intersubjective, and emotional experience with others in particular and the world at large; 2) the moral sphere of education (correlates with «rightsrecognition form»), which contributes to personal moral and ethical enhancement; 3) the social sphere of education (correlates with «solidarityrecognition form»), which creates the environment for friendly relationships in a very open manner generating new friendships through which



students build confidence in developing their own identity, enhancing their sense of self-worth as well as responsibility and concern for others.

Given the above mentioned, the Efterskole provides active interaction that goes far beyond classes and into the diversity of life, which is conducive to the wider democratic community. Valuing subject competence, Danish teachers are distinguished in building democratic relationships with students, and they focus on citizenship education and autonomous learning (Dorf et al., 2012). Various types of group and project work are very popular in these schools with the view to encouraging students' active interaction as well as focusing on their personal and citizenship development (McNess, 2004). One more aspect of this is that all students perform chores for themselves and for the common good, cleaning their own accommodation, helping to cook the meals as well as collaborate in pairs and in groups in the course of different project work. Due to this practical experience grows a sense of shared responsibility and an appreciation of the meaningfulness of contributing to the common good. In such a way, by providing students with an important understanding of social and democratic integrity in society, Efterskole contributes to the social cohesion within society.

Functioning in the form of boarding school the Efterskole offers a specific pedagogical system based on rules and social practices compliance and respect. This specific pedagogical system allows students and teachers to build friendly relationships in different contexts (e.g. learning, household etc.) on the basis of active and engaging collaboration. The educational interaction at the Efterskole unfolds in many different frameworks, both inside and outside the classroom with teachers who do not just teach, they are didactically present conducting meaningful interaction. The teachers are authentic interlocutors as well, who take the questions young people have about their lives and future seriously, and who also guide them in relation to matters they might not yet even know the answer.

Conclusion. Summing up the results, it can be concluded that the Danish secondary education system is designed in such a way that high school students who are not sure what they want to do after the compulsory schooling or who experience difficulties in socializing can attend postschools known as Efterskoles. In these schools adolescents aged 14-18 can spend a year or even two years before deciding where to go next. In the Efterskole students have more opportunities to develop their talents in different academic spheres as well as to be actively involved in democratic citizenship. The key words underlying Efterskole pedagogy are well-rounded personality development, interpersonal skills and solidarity. Combined with the specific pedagogy, Efterskole creates favorable conditions for both academic and social strengthening of students as well as making them more autonomous and mature.

In the context of the issue under study, the scope of further research envisages exploring the areas of general education in the Efterskole as well as pedagogical techniques exploited by the Danish educators in the sphere of students' well-rounded personality development with the view to considering the prospective ways of borrowing Danish progressive ideas into the educational environment of Ukraine



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