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LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF UKRAINIAN MIGRANTS IN THE EU: THE ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

Being considered as a complex phenomenon, migration requires policy responses based on facts, figures and scientific evidence. In recent years it attracts attention of researchers investigating social, economic, legislative and other aspects of human life.

Ukrainians are not recent wave of economic immigrants in the European countries. Firstly, highly educated professionals came there seeking the opportunities to realize their potential in a chosen country. Social and political processes in Ukraine related with the development of young independent state, difficult economic situation largely contributed to mass migration of Ukrainians to these areas. Most of them entered on short-term tourist visas and then overstayed legally or illegally. In 2015, for example, citizens of Ukraine (500 thousand, or 19.2 % of the total number of first residence permits issued in the EU) continued to receive the highest number of permits. Around three quarters (376 thousand) of all Ukrainians who received first permit in the EU in 2015 received an employment related permit [3].

By 2017, Ukrainians had formed one of the largest immigrant communities from Eastern European countries on the territories of German, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and others. The social structure of the Ukrainian community there is represented by peasants, workers, engineers, doctors, musicians, former military officers, teachers etc. Most children of Ukrainian migrants came to the host countries of their parents when the common rules for exercising the right to family reunification in 25 EU Member States were established [2].

It is well documented that in most European countries migrants have lower educational attainment levels than natives. Numerous studies focus mostly on the approaches to education of migrant children, development of their social and educational identities, adjustment to new culture, ways of inclusion etc. However, access to education for migrant children is almost universally guaranteed in the EU, but this does not automatically equate to access to adapted education, taking into account specific needs linked to socio-economic disadvantages and *linguistic* challenges.

Migrant children face many adjustment factors (migration stress, change, trauma and loss) but their ease in resettling in is largely dependent on their ability to learn languages. “Plurilingual and intercultural education as a right”, one of the foundation documents, insists on the central role that language plays in the process of education: “Language is a tool for acquiring knowledge, one aspect of the development of the person, as both individual and social actor, a means of and factor in understanding and making sense of reality, and a vehicle for imaginative creativity” [1, p. 5]. It locates plurilingual and intercultural education within a rationale concerning the right to education, so that language education “becomes that element of the process of education which puts languages in the service of a quality education and in relationship with the general aims of the school and the rights of learners” [1, p.3]. The need for plurilingual and intercultural education arises from the linguistic rights of the individual, but also from the value attached to linguistic diversity and thus to *multilingualism* as one of the positive characteristics of European societies.

The plurality of European societies themselves as reflected in the diversity of languages and types of communication, communities and social groups, religious and educational cultures, and identities cause the necessity to monitor and assess language education taking into consideration all previously mentioned factors. The majority of research works contributing to understanding language education concentrate on learning or teaching the language of the host country, i. e. “language education refers to the process and practice of acquiring a second or foreign

language” [14, p. 266]. When developing policies to promote the linguistic and educational integration of children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds, it is necessary to take account of the multiplicity of their linguistic, educational and *cultural* experience. A review of literature indicated that little has been said about education of Ukrainian children with migrant background.

That is why language education of Ukrainian children with migrant background needs researching with paying attention to the previously mentioned factors. The authors of this paper assume language education of such children as the process of learning language of host country and other foreign languages as well as mastering the language of the country of origin. It can be presented as the complex of activities realized at three levels: formal, non-formal and informal. Among the main tasks there are as follows: to reveal how language education for Ukrainian children has been conducted in EU countries and how it can contribute to their educational integration. The analysis can take the following as the main determinants: language policies by the government especially at the national levels, institutional support of migrant children in classroom and extracurricular activities, the role of volunteers, NGOs, migrant associations, family and church in studying languages. Academic literature, policy reviews, and interviews with individuals involved in the process of language education are treated as the main sources used in the analysis of previously mentioned issues.

References:

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