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## PROSPECTS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE NEW UKRAINIAN SCHOOL ON THE EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN AUSTRALIA

The article focuses on the phenomenon of religious education, which is gaining momentum in the sector of private schools in Ukraine, founded by religious organizations. The paper sets out the scientific tasks of characterizing religious education as of today, assessing Australia's experience in providing educational services with a focus on religious education, and determining the prospects for religious education in a new Ukrainian school based on the example of public and private educational institutions in Australia. It is established that the nearest prospects for Ukraine in the field of religious education in the curricula of private schools in Ukraine are as follows: private schools founded by church organizations are actively developing and have a dynamic tendency to increase in number; the private school sector has adopted the traditions of the development of school education in Ukraine along a multi-track, where there are various programs and methods, in other words, there is a focus on the consumer of services, which indicates a high level of pro-European outlook of the Ukrainian educational market. As a result, we have a tendency to adopt positive experience and introduce new school programs, among which there is no place for the situation when one program is the only possible choice. Thus, we have Ukraine's orientation towards successful countries, in particular, their educational systems. Negative trends include the following areas that need to be improved, namely: everything new is not always implemented in the same format as in the donor country, because a new culture and different mentality cannot reflect the positive experience, providing services for consumers from another country. Ukraine is a religiously conservative country, in the sense that the connection of innovations with a «different» religion usually encounters resistance, because the rule of «friend or foe» is applied. First, teachers who are open to innovation must be trained, and then the system under which they were trained must be implemented. Therefore, in the Ukrainian new school there are tendencies to introduce religious education in the private educational space, but the full realization of the Australian experience requires time and resources.

**Key words:** religious education, new Ukrainian school, public and private schools, Australia.

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## ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РЕЛІГІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ В НОВІЙ УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ШКОЛІ ЗА ПРИКЛАДОМ ДЕРЖАВНИХ ТА ПРИВАТНИХ ЗАКЛАДІВ ОСВІТИ АВСТРАЛІЇ

У статті акцентовано увагу на явищі релігійної освіти, яке набирає обертів у секторі приватних шкіл України, засновниками яких є релігійні організації. У роботі поставлено наукові завдання, які полягають у характеристиці релігійної освіти станом на сьогодні, в оцінці досвіду Австралії у сфері надання освітніх послуг із орієнтацією на

*релігійну освіту та визначення перспектив релігійної освіти в новій українській школі за прикладом державних та приватних закладів освіти Австралії. Установлено, що найближчими перспективами для України у сфері релігійної освіти в шкільних програмах приватних шкіл України є наступні: приватні школи, засновниками яких є церковні організації, активно розвиваються і мають динамічну тенденцію до зростання кількості; приватний шкільний сектор перейняв традиції розвитку шкільної освіти України за мультитраєкторією, де мають місце різні програми та методи, іншими словами, йде орієнтація на споживача послуг, це свідчить про високий рівень проєвропейського світогляду українського освітнього ринку; як наслідок, маємо тенденцію до перейняття позитивного досвіду, впровадження нових шкільних програм, серед яких немає місця для однієї обов'язкової. Отже, маємо орієнтацію України на успішні країни світу, зокрема на освітні системи. До негативних тенденцій відносимо наступні сфери, які потребують вдосконалення, а саме: усе нове не завжди реалізується в такому ж форматі, як у країні донорі, бо нова культура та інша ментальність не можуть відобразити напрацьований позитив при наявності споживачів іншої країни. Україна є релігійно консервативною державою, у плані того, що зв'язок інновацій з «іншою» релігією, як правило, натикається на спротив, бо діє правило «своє або чуже». Спочатку мають бути виховані відкриті до інновацій педагогічні кадри, після цього йде впровадження системи, під яку кадри виховувалися. Тому в українській новій школі присутні тенденції щодо впровадження релігійної освіти в приватному освітньому просторі, однак до повної реалізації австралійського досвіду потрібен час та ресурси.*

**Ключові слова:** релігійна освіта, нова українська школа, державні та приватні школи, Австралія.

**The relevance of the research topic.** The network of school education institutions of the Commonwealth of Australia is diverse, considering the peculiarity of the state system, since all Australian states since the mid-nineteenth century have their own constitution, according to which each state or territory has specialized departments responsible for health, education, law and order, etc. All primary and secondary schools are classified as governmental and non-governmental, or private, institutions, which are in turn divided into Catholic and independent schools founded by other religious or non-religious organizations. According to the statistics for 2020, the share of public, Catholic, and independent schools was 65.6%, 18.5%, and 16.2%, respectively (Independent Schools, 2022). We consider it expedient to identify the main forms and scope of religious education in Australia and to find out the main factors that affect the level of penetration of religion in school practice. We consider this experience relevant for Ukrainian schools in the current conditions of democratization and decentralization of the educational space. Therefore, the **purpose** of the article is to determine the prospects for introducing religious education in a new Ukrainian school based on the example of Australian public and private schools.

**The main results of the study.** According to the Constitution, public schools in Australia are exclusively secular, so religious education is not part of the school curriculum in either primary or secondary schools. Nevertheless, each state and territory of Australia has its own provisions for denominational religious education, giving the opportunity and right to have this type of education in school practice. As a rule, public schools use two main models of religious education (Rossiter, 2002): denominational, when representatives of a religious denomination have the opportunity to conduct weekly classes during desig-

nated school hours, and general, when teachers of the institution provide lessons in religion, often called «religious studies» to distinguish it from denominational religious education. Most states in Australia have developed religious studies courses for primary and secondary schools, taking into account its secular nature and avoiding the practice of transmitting a particular religious tradition. These programs are primarily concerned with studying the characteristics of world religions. However, these forms of religious education are not widespread, so more active use is made of the provision that gives religious denominations the right to apply to public schools for the opportunity to teach children belonging to the respective denomination in order to initiate them into a particular religious tradition and promote their spiritual development. In most cases, church representatives receive about 30 minutes a week for their activities. In some situations, different Christian denominations work together to sponsor an interfaith religious education program. A teacher paid by the denomination is usually a full-time employee of the public school and teaches religion on a regular basis. This form of cooperation is typical for a number of evangelical denominations. It should be noted that such classes are more common and typical for primary schools. At the secondary school level, the coverage is not as wide and takes the form of religious seminars that are held with students approximately once a school semester, i.e. twice a year. In accordance with the described conditions and realities, there are four types of schools that differ in the practice of providing religious education (Birmingham, 2016: 86). Special schools that are exclusively non-state and founded by certain religious denominations. This type of institutions is characterized by clear requirements for the administration and teaching staff, as well as rules for recruiting students, with preference given to representatives of the

denomination that is the founder of the educational institution. Religious education is an important aspect of multifaceted school life, both in the classroom in various subjects, which involves the integration of the Christian worldview into the learning process, and in extracurricular activities, such as events, seminars, and various trainings. Open schools. As a rule, these are private institutions founded by religious or non-religious organizations with most flexible requirements for families with different worldview beliefs. There are various reasons for this, including the desire to increase the number of students and thus the level of budget revenues, the desire to attract gifted students regardless of their religion, to improve the school's profile and academic ranking, or for reasons of proselytizing. In schools of this type, religious instruction is mostly present without a pronounced denominational character. Such schools with a weak denominational affiliation are used, for example, by parents with atheistic beliefs who wish to place their children in a religious educational environment to foster appropriate values. Public schools with religious influence, the level of which depends primarily on the religiosity of the local school community, including the principal or parents' association, and determines the degree of penetration of religious instruction in the educational process within the limits of the possibilities provided by the legislation of the respective state or territory. In such educational institutions, prayer and other religious observances take place, and religious organizations that are traditional hold extracurricular activities such as Christmas or Easter, involving students and teachers, or the school chaplain freely uses biblical stories or Christian narratives in the classroom. In addition, the secular curriculum provides an opportunity to teach general religious studies. Public schools without religion. This type of institution is entirely or predominantly secular, with no religious education provided due to the position of the principal or school board to not favor any religious denomination, or due to state or territorial law. Such institutions do not require a chaplain, whose functions are performed by a school psychologist, social worker, or teachers. Such institutions do not place special emphasis on Christian celebrations, teachings, or events and use secular, humanistic, or liberal interpretations of curricula and extracurricular activities to teach students liberalism, tolerance, pluralism, and respect for human rights. Religious education in this case is limited to the official curriculum, of which the subject «Religious Studies» is a part. Thus, in the Commonwealth of Australia, the laws of local states or territories, the affiliation of the educational institution with the public or non-governmental (private) sector, the

level of interest of the school founder in faith-based education, and the religious nature of the local school community, including the administration, teaching staff, and parent association, determine the extent to which religious education penetrates school practice. Depending on these factors, there are schools with different levels and forms of religious education, ranging from the teaching of a general school course in religious studies to the penetration of religious education into all types of educational activities.

At first glance, Australia seems to be different from Ukraine. This difference is primarily due to several factors. First, it is the peculiarities of the state system (federal country), circumstances that influenced social development (it did not experience the consequences of communism, participated rather indirectly in World War II, and at the beginning of its existence owned penal colonies). Secondly, geographical location (isolation from other continents and, accordingly, more opportunities for independent development). However, given the current trends, changes in our society, democratization and liberalization of processes, and the adoption of a number of laws relating to education, the Australian experience will be valuable and relevant for Ukraine, especially in the context of discussing the topic of religious education in the new Ukrainian school.

It is worth noting that Australia and Australians have an interesting history of relations between the state and denominations, as well as teaching religion in schools. Despite the fact that at the beginning of European settlement of the continent all schools were exclusively church schools, and therefore state regulation of schooling was carried out through educational systems organized by religious denominations, in the nineteenth century, changes occurred that led to the fact that teaching religion in Australian schools was limited to church or independent schools, and public education in Australia emphasized the fact that it was «free, secular and compulsory» (Campbell, 2014). This practice was driven by a growing sense of liberalism and pluralism that supported the principle of separation of church and state. As a result, by the time the six former British colonies formed a single Australian federation in 1901, the ideal of secular, compulsory and free education as a public good was a priority for its state governments. However, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Christian religions and the educational systems they ran, through their social activities, initiated a rethinking of the place of religion in public schools. Therefore, state governments began to restore or strengthen the existing conditions for religious instruction in public institutions, including religious education in their secular public

school systems. Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, all states and territories had established legislation that formalized the requirements for religious instruction in Australian public education (Pannam, 1963). As a result, today public schools in Australia are secular under current law. Therefore, religious education is not part of the school curriculum, but each state or territory of Australia (Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory) has provisions for religious education. We state that religious instruction may be provided in a public school if the religious tradition or denomination is able to provide a weekly lesson by delegating a volunteer representative who has the necessary accreditation. We acknowledge that some states offer a «cooperative» program that is Christian in nature and designed so that students of Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and other denominations can participate in religious instruction together. We comment that students may attend religious education classes only if their parents or guardians have given written permission. Furthermore, religious education classes usually last between thirty and sixty minutes each week. Specific guidelines developed in each state or territory for the provision of religious education in public schools are based on general principles (Goldburg, 2008: 243). Therefore, it is worth paying attention to the following positions: educational programs used by religious organizations must have the approval of school associations; parents (or guardians) must be fully informed and give permission for the child to attend any religious classes; the administration of the institution must show an impartial attitude and create equal conditions for all religious organizations that apply with a proposal to provide religious instruction. In view of the above, at this stage of development, Ukraine needs to prepare a training system for educational institutions that will allow it to attract qualified teachers who will be able to impart all the necessary information and develop the worldview of young Ukrainians. The training of teachers should be demanding, given that the general religious level of education and culture of Ukrainians is not yet high enough, unlike in Australian society, because until recently any religious education was officially banned in our country. Therefore, special attention should also be paid to the development of a single general course of studying religion at school. Such a course should not contain doctrines or features of a particular religious denomination, but should be general, given the presence of representatives of different denominations on the religious map of Ukraine, because today Ukraine is a poly-Christian or poly-religious country.

So it is necessary to create all conditions for every citizen to feel comfortable in all areas of their life, including school. The path we are choosing today is a European and global path that allows our country to develop and raise a new generation that will be impartial to pluralism in the religious sphere. The presence of religious education in the new Ukrainian school is a sign of the democratic nature of our society. This is a great advantage, but also a challenge for scholars, social scientists, and educators. In this process, it is necessary to actively study the world experience in the context of the development of educational processes. After all, it is in the history of other countries that we can find many relevant examples that can save us from certain mistakes and disappointments, as well as accelerate the process of changing Ukrainian society and democratizing all its processes.

Returning to the question of the prospects for introducing religious education in a new Ukrainian school, following the example of public and private educational institutions in Australia, it should be noted that despite the many differences mentioned above, there is a sufficient level of common features between the Ukrainian and Australian education systems. First of all, we are talking about educational institutions in Ukraine that introduce religious education into the school process, which is similar to the system and methods used in Australian schools. It is this aspect that creates similar trends between schools in Ukraine and Australia.

One of these factors, which has a progressive trend, is primarily the interest of religious denominations in Ukraine in establishing their own educational institutions. In other words, a significant number of private schools in Ukraine are directly related to the church as a founding organization or indirectly, in that the head of such an educational institution is a representative of a particular church. Therefore, based on the above, we have two negative trends. First, private institutions in Ukraine are not currently successful business projects. Secondly, the main reasons for creating this type of school are the desire to present and pass on the traditions of a particular religious organization, to foster values by creating an appropriate pedagogical environment that correlates with the beliefs and doctrines of the founding religious organization. These issues are typical for Australia, where one third of schools are private sector, and most of them are owned by various church organizations. The Australian experience of the school system helps to make sure that diversification of educational institutions contributes to an increase in the number of schools that implement an educational process aimed at meeting the needs of parents in the upbringing and educa-

tion of children. Such an approach helps to respond more effectively to the expectations of participants in the educational process, creates a situation of healthy competition, promotes the development of pedagogical thought, the search for new forms and methods of teaching, and especially shapes the process of democratization of society.

We state that school education is usually a mirror of society, which is why Ukraine, as a pro-European and democratic state, needs to apply Australia's experience on its way from unification, which was inherent in Soviet school education, to liberalization, which is characterized by the existence of different curricula, pedagogical concepts, and educational traditions. Therefore, the orientation of Ukrainian education towards the best international practices is necessary, but at the same time, this process requires a detailed study and consideration of the peculiarities of our society on the way to their implementation.

That is why we should not expect, given the conservative nature of the Ukrainian educational field, that educational institutions founded by religious denominations will immediately and painlessly occupy a corresponding niche in the educational market. There may be some antagonism in the education sector caused by the novelty of this phenomenon, on the one hand, and by fears of negative results of raising children in a particular religious tradition, on the other. Therefore, the experience of Australia will help Ukraine overcome negative trends, as graduates of private institutions have no less pronounced patriotic feelings, take an active social position and show a high level of tolerance. As a result, the Ukrainian state, which is multinational and multi-religious, is characterized by a high level of conflict, especially among educators. Today, this is especially relevant for Ukraine in the context of a full-scale war, as it is the unity of our citizens that helps to resist the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation.

Of course, such results are the result of many factors, the key ones being the training of appropriate teaching staff, the creation of appropriate conditions

for the development of new schools, and government support for private educational institutions. This is a multifaceted and multifaceted process, in which the teacher's personality, level of professional training, set of personal characteristics and value beliefs play a key role. Higher education institutions that train this type of specialist play an important role in this process. The new Ukrainian school needs a new Ukrainian teacher, an innovator, a progressive and tolerant personality who is a key figure in the implementation of the new educational system.

**Conclusions.** Thus, the study of the current state of education in Ukraine and the study of the experience of religious education in Australia emphasize the relevance of borrowing the Australian experience for the Ukrainian school space. Moreover, despite the differences in the educational systems of Australia and Ukraine, we see similar trends in the development of the religious education sector in schools.

Taking into account that the Australian school network has already experienced the formation and development of religious education in schools, we see it as an advantage to borrow the experience of Australia in order not to repeat the negative aspects, but rather to strengthen and develop positive trends.

In addition, an important feature of Australian education is its diversification, which consists in the existence of schools with varying degrees of religious component in the educational program, as well as clear rules governing the conduct of religious content lessons. The existence and operation of diverse schools contribute to the democratization of society, which means providing a wide choice for parents with different worldview beliefs in choosing an educational institution for their children, and leads to a high level of tolerance. As a result, Australian society is characterized by a high level of cohesion, which is achieved through the education of common values and manifested in the active social position of citizens. This experience is especially valuable for Ukrainian education at the current stage of its development in the difficult conditions of today.

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