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TELEOLOGICAL APPROACH AS AN EDUCATIONAL DETERMINANT

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This article highlights the teleological approach as a conceptual and methodological determinant of educational, particularly foreign language training for military personnel. The author draws attention to the philosophical tradition of teleology – from ancient approaches to modern readings – and explores the nature of teleological interpretation as a specific form of explanation of social and scientific phenomena focused on goals, values, and purposive actions. The article argues that education is inherently a goal-based system, so a teleological approach can offer a profound methodological basis for understanding the structure, function, and content of educational processes. The author pays particular attention to the hierarchy of educational goals, their normative and value-based nature, and their role in organising a learning process and stakeholders' activities. The article focuses on English-language training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine since Ukraine's integration into the European space, participation in international organisations, and expansion of international military cooperation have significantly underscored the importance of military specialists' command of English. The author argues that, to optimise the language-training process, goal setting must be continuous and consistent. It is necessary to create a system of goals based on specific analytical procedures that serve as an algorithm for formulating language-learning goals and objectives, starting with a particular language task in each lesson and culminating in the achievement of the ultimate goal of language learning. The article illustrates the goal-oriented nature of curricula, course planning, and teaching practice and confirms the importance of teleological interpretation of educational policy, curriculum development, and the organisation of language training. The author also shows the potential to strengthen the integrity, effectiveness, and sustainability of language-learning systems amid institutional and social transformations.

Keywords: teleological approach, goal-oriented education, language learning, the hierarchy of goals.

ТЕЛЕОЛОГІЧНИЙ ПІДХІД ЯК ОСВІТНІЙ ДЕТЕРМІНАНТ

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У статті висвітлюється телеологічний підхід як концептуальна і методологічна детермінанти освіти, зокрема іноземної мови, для військовослужбовців. Звернено увагу на філософську традицію телеології – від античних підходів до сучасних інтерпретацій – та досліджує природу телеологічної інтерпретації як специфічної форми пояснення соціальних і наукових явищ, зосередженої на цілях, цінностях і цілеспрямованих діях. Аргументовано, що

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освіта за своєю суттю є цільовою системою, тому телеологічний підхід може стати глибокою методологічною основою для розуміння структури, функції та змісту освітніх процесів. Особливу увагу зосереджено на ієрархії освітніх цілей, їх нормативному та ціннісному характеру, а також їхній ролі в організації навчального процесу та діяльності зацікавлених сторін. Акцентовано на навчанні англійської мови у Збройних Силах України, оскільки інтеграція України в європейський простір, участь у міжнародних організаціях та розширення міжнародного військового співробітництва значно посилюють важливість володіння англійською мовою військовими фахівцями. Зазначено, що для оптимізації процесу мовної підготовки необхідно встановлювати цілі на постійній і послідовній основі. Необхідно створити систему цілей, засновану на конкретних аналітичних процедурах, які слугують алгоритмом для формулювання цілей і завдань мовного навчання, починаючи з конкретного мовного завдання в кожному уроці і закінчуючи досягненням кінцевої мети мовного навчання. Проілюстровано цілеспрямований характер навчальних програм, планування курсів та педагогічної практики і підтверджено важливість телеологічного тлумачення освітньої політики, розробки навчальних програм та організації мовної підготовки. Продемонстровано потенціал для зміцнення цілісності, ефективності та стійкості систем вивчення мови в умовах інституційних та соціальних перетворень.

Ключові слова: телеологічний підхід, цілеспрямоване навчання, вивчення мов, ієрархія цілей.

Introduction. The concept of *goalorientation* has its roots in ancient times and is more often associated with the control of social communities, where any task is considered goal-oriented if it achieves a solution to a specific problem or a predetermined objective. Another aspect of *goal orientation* is the purposiveness of an organized activity aimed at achieving the intended result. *Goal Orientation Theory* explores and develops both aspects. Modern science and practice have accumulated extensive material, the understanding of which allows us to enrich the traditional interpretation of the concepts of *goal orientation*. In contemporary research, the concept of *teleology* co-exists with the concepts of *goalorientation*. Contemporary scholars interpret teleology as a principle and tool for studying human and social activity. However, to date, there is no consensus on the concept and essence of teleological interpretation of education. The content of this approach as an interpretation method, as well as the specific means and techniques for establishing educational goals, remains largely unexplored. The literature lacks a comprehensive understanding of the role of teleology in various areas of educational activity. There are different points of view regarding the interpretation of goals in the content of education. All these

considerations have determined the choice of the topic for this paper.

Analysis of recent research and publications reveals a relatively small number of works on the topic. Although domestic scientists pay attention to teleological explanation of various issues (there are scientific papers that study ancient philosophical thought [14], some works that examine current issues concerning the teleological determination of social phenomena, in particular the general theory of law and the philosophy of law [8]; some authors focus on a teleological nature of the economic system [15], others study teleological meaning in political discourse [10]. However, scientific discourse lacks domestic works that specify educational issues from a teleological perspective. On the other hand, European scientists suggest a greater variety of works in this diffuse and challenging field. They concentrate their arguments on teleological descriptions and explanations of various 'goal-directed' phenomena, specifying their logical structure and proper uses [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9; 11; 12; 13, 16; 17]. Nevertheless, there is still a shortage of research focused on the sphere of education.

The goal and objectives of this article are to explore the potential of teleological interpretation for understanding educational issues, detail the target concept, clarify its aspects, and justify

teleological interpretation as a distinct type of interpretation of social phenomena, particularly of education and language learning.

Main material and results. The concept of teleology originates from two Greek words: *τέλος*, which means 'end', 'aim', or 'goal', and *λόγος*, which denotes 'explanation' or 'reason'. So, we can understand teleology as the explanation or reason for something, considering its purpose or goals.

The term *teleologia* appeared in 1728 when, in his *Philosophia Rationalis, Sive Logica*, Ch. Wolff used the term to refer to a branch of natural philosophy which deals with the end purpose of things and the general order of nature. But the issues articulated there were new to European philosophy. D. Sedley believes that "teleological thought is among antiquity's most widely recognized contributions to the history of science" [1: 317]. He considers Socrates to be "an influence on the development of teleology", who can, he believes, "compete even with Aristotle for historical importance" [1: 317]. Socrates' disciple and follower, Plato, described humans as acting with the intention of achieving a goal. For Plato, action is goal-directed: every person chooses actions under the belief that those actions will achieve some good end [2]. Aristotle's causes "for the sake of which" were frequently though anachronistically included under the broad banner of "teleology" [3: 849]. Plato consistently presents human action as *teleological* – that is, directed toward some perceived good or end (*telos*). Philosophers of various schools have, in one way or another, faced the need to answer the question of whether a given phenomenon has a goal, and if so, what exactly it consists of. Teleology becomes the focal point for questions about the meaning of the world and human existence.

Descartes had a mechanistic understanding of teleology and did not believe that it existed in nature. Descartes claimed that nature did not have internal causes. He viewed the world as a mechanism operating according to the laws of motion and causality, where only God

sets the ultimate goals. Kant considered teleology as a regulative principle of reason and postulated that people perceive organisms and nature as if they were created for specific goals. Still, this perception is due to the way people think rather than a property of nature itself. Hegel argues that teleology is immanent in the world. The goal is not imposed from outside but is revealed by Being and Spirit itself. History and nature are a process of self-realization of reason and freedom [4].

Among other features, J. Perner & J. Roessler emphasize goals as "inherently value laden" [5: 204], which is reminiscent of Aristotle's conception of *teleological causation*, where "the explanatory force of a goal is inseparable from its evaluative properties: the goal is 'the good to be achieved'" [6: 227]. S. Oliver, citing Aristotle's final cause, considers an action rational if an acceptable reason can be given to explain it [3: 849]. This Aristotelian notion of teleology differs from the idea of G. Gergely and G. Csibra, who consider an action as rational and goal-oriented "if, and only if it is seen as the most justifiable action towards that goal state that is available within the constraints of reality" [7, p. 255]. B. Malyshev views the goal as a cause that not only directs, but directs purposefully. He considers the goal and the means to achieve it are the fundamental structural components of the teleological interpretation [8].

So, the topic of a teleological understanding of Being has been one of the most important for philosophy throughout its history. J. Jorati believes that the concept of purposiveness has lain at the center of intense scientific and philosophical debates since the early modern period [9]. In one form or another, all leading philosophers have discussed the question of viewing social phenomena as goal-determined systems. O. Shevchenko assumes that "the concept of the common "good" as the final goal ("Telos") and the intended purpose can be applied to any social and political activity, and the scope of teleological judgements and ascribed teleological

reflective senses to a certain conceptual entity is potentially infinite" [10: 195].

Teleology remains significant because it addresses questions that lie at the core of human existence. In an era dominated by technology and scientific reductionism, the search for meaning and purpose persists. Teleology provides a framework for addressing these timeless questions, connecting the empirical with the existential in ways that resonate across disciplines [11]. Teleology becomes the point that concentrates questions about the meaning of the world and human existence.

Within contemporary philosophical science, we can say about the following types of teleology: 1) a general philosophical theory of goals and the relationships they express; 2) ontological explanation of goals and goal dependencies in nature and society; 3) methods of cognition that uses the category of goal and concepts of its semantic field or teleological methodology; 4) description of behaviour determined by conscious goals, the structure and transformation of these goals.

In this paper, we focus on the teleological interpretation of education, and the probable intentional actions stakeholders can take in accordance with the educational goals they find significant. Interpreting education through the teleological perspective seems of great significance for theorists and practitioners in the sphere of education since we are summoned to configure our education systems (ES) as critical instruments for the guarantee of delivering the knowledge, competencies, and character qualities demanded by our uncertain and hasty "Brave New World" [12: 28] and "If a man knows his why, he can tolerate almost any how" [13: 14]. We understand the teleological interpretation, also known as purposive analysis, as a method of explaining the phenomenon of education that focuses on discerning and applying the underlying goals or objectives that the higher school aims to achieve. Following O. Volkov, we understand teleology as a set of goals that share particular principles to form a whole [14: 31]. We acknowledge that modern science employs teleology as a

principle that complements the traditional cause-and-effect approach with the methodology of cause-and-effect analysis [15: 60]. Following J. Perner, we understand an intentional action as one that involves the practical reasoning schema when stakeholders aim for a more attractive state of education than it is presently [16, p. 99]. According to him, this schema features the following:

(1) Teleology. The schema is teleological as the actions are directed at bringing about a goal state.

(2) Value facts. The goal is something 'good' in some minimal sense of being attractive, desirable, needed, worthwhile having, etc.

(3) Normative reasons. Normative reason can be used to justify an action to bring out its point.

(4) Objectivity. The reasons for acting are objective facts, not mental states representing, or purporting to represent facts.

(5) Publicity. Reasons for acting are not 'private' affairs but public.

We recognize that one of the most fundamental characteristics of education as a system is its goal orientation. We highlight it alongside the main features of the system, including the subject and educational approaches, methods, and technologies. Each element of the educational system has distinct tasks and goals, which are ultimately aimed at achieving a higher, overarching goal. Thus, the teleological interpretation of education enables stakeholders to make "at least three kinds of inferences. First, it allows action predictions in situations where the environment changes but the goal remains constant. Second, teleological representations predict and attribute goals to ongoing actions even before educational outcomes are realized. Third, the assumption of efficiency can provide a basis for inferring situational constraints of an observed goal-directed action" [17: 41].

In this paper, we aim to address the issues related to learning a foreign language at higher military schools, considering the aforementioned postulates. It is of special interest and

great significance today, as proficiency in foreign languages among Ukrainian military personnel is a priority task of cooperation with foreign partners and a prerequisite for such collaboration.

We understand the process of foreign language learning as a specially organized interaction between stakeholders (MOD, military universities, teachers, and military students), through which students acquire knowledge, master the methods of developing language skills, and apply the acquired knowledge in the professional sphere. From a teleological point of view, we determine any activity (and therefore the activities of teachers and students) by its goals. Being clearly defined and playing a structuring role in the education system, the goals constitute a coherent hierarchical system. These goals can be either ultimate or intermediate, immediate or long-term.

Thus, the 'Strategy for Language Training under the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine for 2026–2031' states that language training is an integral part of the overall system of training military personnel, with the ultimate goal of mastering foreign languages to the proficiency level necessary to perform official duties and train abroad. Achieving the ultimate goal is impossible without fulfilling intermediate goals, which are step-by-step measures aimed at ensuring the language preparedness of the Ukrainian military personnel through the practical, continuous, and standardised foreign language training system focused on the needs of military service, professional development of officers, sergeants, and cadets, and the integration of innovative technologies and best practices from NATO countries. A highly effective and comprehensive language training system for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, capable of providing training that meets NATO standards and the practices of Alliance member states, must be established by 2031. This long-term goal requires that every military university graduate be proficient in English at a level sufficient to communicate in a multinational environment (no lower than Standardized

Language Profile (SLP) 2 for tactical-level officers and SLP2+ / SLP3 for operational and strategic-level officers according to STANAG 6001) [18].

Based on the objective facts regarding the current level of English proficiency among Ukrainian military personnel, the strategy emphasizes the value and necessity of English-language knowledge as a key competence for the Ukrainian military at the national level. It outlines a systematic, comprehensive approach to developing and maintaining the necessary level of language training. It explains the ultimate goal and intermediate objectives, offers normative reasoning grounded in evaluative facts about the practical abilities that military personnel ought to acquire during language training, and provides guidelines for teachers who facilitate this process. Thus, the strategy fully corresponds to the practical reasoning schema suggested by J. Perner and discussed above.

Since the topic of this article concerns the teleological understanding of the learning process, or, in other words, the goals and objectives underlying language training, let us take a closer look at goal setting in the language training process, which means defining specific, measurable, and actionable objectives that the stakeholders intend to achieve. We see that the hierarchy of goals encompasses the ultimate goal of language training, the goals of an educational institution that provides language training, the objectives of the discipline "English language", and so on, all the way down to the goals of a specific lesson, since it is teacher's activities that contribute to achieving the ultimate goal and intermediate objectives. When planning teaching activities, the teacher addresses the curriculum, which formulates the learning objectives as general provisions and suggests general, formalized goals that require clarification and tailoring. It is essential for teachers not only to know the general objectives but also to be able to specify them and transform them into learning objectives for specific topics and lessons.

The learning objectives of each lesson are formulated as specific learning tasks and structure the lesson, performing guiding, content-related, systematizing, and result-oriented functions in language training. We understand the didactic and methodological components of a lesson as the interrelated activity of the teacher and students aimed at solving the lesson's learning tasks. However, the objectives of each lesson are not isolated; the curriculum determines them since each topic contains structural elements of language education as a whole. That is why planning teachers' and students' activities within the curriculum – the system of lessons – can help achieve the set goal of language teaching: the development of language skills and competences. The goal of each lesson should necessarily include: 1) content (an issue of a general every day or military discourse); 2) a communicative component (language skills and language material that are necessary to solve the problem); 3) a cognitive component (intellectual skills and specific strategies for cognitive activity, formed through the solution of a given task); 4) a cultural component (social or professional aspects of the issue under consideration). The central element of the lesson is a communicative task designed to master new linguistic information and acquire new language skills. Each task is a methodically organized, step-by-step solution to a problem, supported by specific teaching strategies and based on specific content that develops the learner's speech skills. The communicative task is presented as a system of exercises and includes: 1) orientation exercises aimed at activating background subject-specific knowledge and experience, accumulating linguistic means for solving complex tasks, and forming cognitive strategies; 2) subject-specific exercises to develop language skills in various types of communicative activity; 3) control exercises for self-assessment, intermediate, and final assessment.

The hierarchy of goals suggests that the goal of developing speech skills and competencies in types of communicative activity involves the sequential achievement of micro-goals. Let us

consider an excerpt from a lesson on the topic *Military technology* [19: 63–70]. We formulated the lesson goal as: *By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to describe basic performance data for armoured vehicles.* We use the SMART goal-setting model (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound), which teachers usually apply to establish criteria for effective goal-setting and objective development.

The achievement of specific language goals (development of lexical and grammatical skills) depends on achieving other objectives: the development of reading skills (LO 3), listening (LO 4), writing (LO 5) and speaking (LO 6), as learners work with information by reading, listening and producing their own statements on the topic in written and oral form. In addition, the lesson achieves an indirect goal – enhancing professional knowledge (capabilities of NATO countries' weapons and military equipment) (LO 7) – as well as developing overall communication skills (the ability to describe) (LO 8).

In the process of language teaching, the teacher builds a consistent set of goals as a continuous process based on specific analytical procedures that act as an algorithm. The teacher formulates lesson objectives based on repeating cycles, built on the same matrix, which involves:

presentation of a new topic through the obligatory repetition of previously studied material that is necessary for the new topic,

practicing a new topic, enhancing and deepening the knowledge and understanding of the learnt material,

producing output on the studied topic as preparation for a new topic.

At the same time, parallel and sequential progress is ensured from the teacher's actions in each lesson to the entire multi-level chain of multifunctional goals.

Conclusions. The education system as a whole, and foreign language training in particular, has a multi-level, hierarchical, three-dimensional structure that ensures the strength, stability, and high degree of coherence of all its components, as well as

its ability to withstand external and internal challenges.

Consequently, using a teleological method of interpretation in the study of education and language training is based on the fact that: language training is a goal-oriented system; the integrity of the language training is ensured by the goals formulated in the current legislative and regulatory acts in the context of

education; goals are important for ensuring the stability and functioning of the language training system; goals represent a holistic hierarchical system that is inherently stable; goals are one of the most important criteria for interpreting the meaning of learning tasks; without knowledge of learning goals, there can be no fruitful practical activity to achieve them.

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