

Teaching the EU common values in the context of war in Ukraine

Dr Alina Maslova, mav2429@gmail.com

Associate Professor, Department of Methodology of Teaching Germanic Languages, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine

Dr Olga Goncharova, goncharoo82@gmail.com

Associate Professor, Department of Methodology of Teaching Germanic Languages, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine

Type of submission: practice-inspired working paper

Abstract

This paper deals with the peculiarities of teaching the EU common values in the context of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. The authors describe the EU common values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights in detail and present the analysis of scholars' opinions on this issue. It is also mentioned that under the conditions of war in Ukraine all these values are being violated. As well as all the spheres of life of Ukrainian people the sphere of education suffers greatly from the Russian aggression. The authors acquaint the readers with the statistics from official sources as for the number of educational institutions which were totally or partly damaged or temporarily displaced to the territory, controlled by Ukraine. The publication highlights the necessity of promoting the EU common values among young generations and presents a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers" (J. Monet module), designed by a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine). Aims, outcomes, objectives, structure of the course are described in the publication.

Key words: EU common values, war in Ukraine, foreign languages, teacher training, multilingualism in the education

Changes in the system of education have become especially relevant with the beginning of a large-scale war, unleashed by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. Under these circumstances the Ukrainian higher education was facing numerous tasks that required immediate solution. As stated by S. Shkarlet et al. (2022), the most urgent of them are the following: restoration of functioning of educational institutions; organization of the educational process in blended and distance learning forms; creating safe conditions for all participants of the educational process; providing psychological support for teachers and students, implementing programs for their psychological rehabilitation and adaptation; digitalization of education; reinvention of displaced universities; innovative activity development; modernization of the educational content and bringing the educational system in line with international standards; strengthening European integration processes in the field of education; restoration and development of the infrastructure of educational institutions that were destroyed and damaged in the

result of the Russian Federation armed aggression. It should be noted that by the 1st of August 2022 nearly 2,200 educational institutions of Ukraine were ruined, including 225 completely destroyed, 1,975 partially damaged. Among them 7 Universities were completely destroyed (Shkarlet et al. 2022).

The situation in the occupied territories (Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk, Luhansk regions), where education institutions were on the verge of survival, turned out to be especially critical. Thus, Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Melitopol, Ukraine) was temporarily transferred to a new place in the city of Zaporizhzhia on the basis of Khortytsia National Academy in accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 431 (May 12, 2022). This step preserved the life and health of students, teachers and employees of our university, as well as contributed to the full functioning of the institution of higher education in conditions of war. The University had to make huge efforts to ensure quality of educational and scientific activity, to keep educational staff and students. Moreover, our University had to continue fulfilling obligations regarding the implementation of international projects, one of which was conducted within Erasmus+ Programme (Jean Monnet Actions in the field of Higher Education: Modules) aimed at the dissemination and promotion of common European values in the education and training of future foreign language teachers. Thus, **the aim of this paper** is to prove the essential necessity of promoting the EU common values among Bachelor students. These are the future foreign language teachers who can lay the foundation for the EU common values in primary school students as the youngest representatives of Ukrainian and European society.

The literature review argues that the image of the European Union is inseparably connected with a set of conventional values, and all its member states should accept, respect, and protect the fundamental rights of people living on the area (Borca, Rus and Sava 2020). In this regard the EU is seen as a community of values described below.

Human dignity acknowledges the uniqueness of every human being and proves the fact that every individual has his own intrinsic worth regardless of his or her belonging to specific societal groups or having any other personal characteristics or choices. Other individuals and public authorities are expected to respect and protect this worth. This way human dignity is understood as a fundamental right and the cornerstone of all other rights guaranteed by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000).

Freedom is a complex value including freedom of movement and a number of individual freedoms such as respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information. In a broad sense freedom is strongly connected with individual's autonomy or free personal development which requires requires equal recognition for all individuals.

Democracy, as one of the EU common values, presupposes a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. The value guarantees holding regular, fair and free elections providing all the EU adult citizens with corresponding political rights and allowing them to make a truly free choice during the elections.

Equality is considered to be a complex and dynamic value existing in different spheres of life among diverse societal groups. This means non-discrimination, equality of results or equality of opportunities regardless gender, race, nationality, language, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property or birth. This includes respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, equality between men and women, protection of the rights of children, the elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Rule of law means that that everything the EU does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by EU member states. In this sense the rule of law is strongly connected with democracy and respect for human rights.

Human rights as one of the founding values of the EU presuppose that every EU citizen has to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Crego, Maňko and Ballegooij 2020).

In spite of the fact that the above mentioned foundational values are interdependent and commonly known, they need to be cultivated, taught and fostered amongst people, in particular amongst newcomers in society such as youngsters and immigrants. For that purpose, the EU member states

should join their efforts to stimulate attention, facilitate the exchange of best practices, collect information by research, and provide mutual advice and support (Veugelers, de Groot and Stolk 2017).

The objective to cultivate the EU common values is generally supported by the Ukrainian government policy aimed at Ukraine-EU cooperation in all spheres of life – economy, trade, social policy, medicine and education. According to survey results (Buhbe 2017), the Ukrainians believe that European values serve as a foundation for a successful society, and thus perceive them as worthy guiding principles. Both supporters and opponents of European integration in our country as a whole share such key European values as human dignity, individual freedoms (respect for private life, freedom of thought, religion, assembly, expression and information), democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, peace, solidarity, tolerance, and the value of human life. None of the survey participants (2,000 respondents aged 18–65) rejected the enumerated values. On the contrary, the support of these values and our country integration into the EU have become topical especially now in the context of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine. According to the latest results of a survey of more than 19,000 people conducted by L. Walter and others in November 2022, overall attitudes of the Ukrainians towards the EU are generally positive (72 %). Thus, 83% of respondents would support Ukraine's accession to the European Union (if we compare this figure with survey results in November 2021, before the war escalated, it can be noted that significantly fewer Ukrainians (58 %) were in favour of joining the EU) (Walter et al. 2022).

Milestones of Ukraine-EU cooperation such as entering into force of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (September 2017), submitting an application to join the EU (February 2022) and gaining the EU candidate status (June 2022) gave a new rise to the promotion of the UE common values in Ukraine. Yet, in spite of the fact that the majority of Ukrainians believe that Ukraine should integrate into the EU and share its values, Buhbe (2017) proved that the process used by Ukrainians to gain knowledge about European values was not systemic and needed further improvement. Buhbe (2017) did not find any information sources in the Ukrainian media space that would systematically highlight a 'European' way of life and shared values. This suggested that Ukrainians might have been forming their notions about Europe indirectly – through watching and listening to Russian media. Thereby, Buhbe (2017) revealed wide opportunities for the manipulation of individuals with unstable and controversial ideas about European values. In this regard it became vital to save, accept and promote the EU key values destroyed by the aggressor country on all levels including the system of education. Taking into account all the mentioned above we come to the conclusion that a certain amount of work should be done to promote the European way of life and common values through teacher training, as teachers are considered the main pillars of education and the critical actors in promoting European values. On one hand, they have the power to enhance and bring essential changes to the educational process of the whole country (Komar et al. 2021). On the other hand, the analysis of our University curricula proved the fact that there is a definite lack of educational courses on the EU shared values.

In order to overcome this discrepancy, a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University (Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine) designed a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers" within the framework of the grant project under the Erasmus+ international program (J. Monet module). Before developing the Module, the teachers of the Department of Methodology of Teaching Germanic Languages and the Department of Primary Education carried out a needs analysis, which was based on a survey. More than 200 students and future teachers of foreign languages took part in this survey. According to the analysis of the responses, the following was found out. On the one hand, students are not aware enough of what common European values are. On the other hand they believe that these values as well as European language standards should be introduced into Ukrainian educational space (Goncharova and Maslova 2022). The results obtained from the survey proved the necessity of designing the Module on strengthening the European common values. The Module is aimed at training of Bachelor students in their 4th year of studies, who specialize in teaching foreign languages to preschoolers and junior high school students. The main objective of the Module is to strengthen the EU common values through the European policy of multilingualism during the training of future primary school teachers. As a result of learning on this Module, students (future teachers) should have demonstrated: 1) knowledge and experience in the EU common values and policy of multilingualism as well as the EU's educational matters (language policy, reforms, curricula, learning strategies, creativity

development in language learning and teaching sphere, etc.); 2) ability to strengthen EU common values through teaching a foreign language to Ukrainian primary schoolchildren taking into account all European education requirements; 3) ability to introduce European common values and language standards into Ukrainian educational space while teaching foreign languages to children from an early age; 4) ability to contribute to the linguistic diversity and language learning in Ukraine, based on the main vectors of EU's policy of multilingualism, thus strengthening the EU common values.

The introduction of European Union issues is covered by Module's two-part structure. The theoretical part (60 hours) will deal with acquaintance with EU common values, issues of preschool and primary school foreign language learning and teaching in the European Union (policy, reforms in teaching foreign languages, learning strategies, creativity development, educational alternatives etc.). This part of the Module will cover issues which deal with the European Commission's mission to enhance cooperation in the field of multilingualism and improve the effectiveness of language teaching in schools, thus promoting the value of freedom of movement; will outline main aspects of the EU common values through policy of multilingualism.

The practical part (60 hours) included Future Foreign Language Teacher's Portfolio with a compulsory section "How I promote EU common values through my teaching" in two different dimensions. Firstly, by taking part in one-week intensive course on strengthening the EU common values through teaching foreign languages to the children of preschool and primary school age under the title "Europe-oriented Ukrainian Foreign Language Teacher". This one-week course will rely on the Common European Framework of References, recommendations of the Council of Europe and its European Center for Modern Languages as well as on learning the EU common values through high quality language standards. Secondly, students will conduct their teaching practice in preschool and primary educational institutions. Thus, they will use and disseminate the EU common values, strategies and major course issues in their home cities while conducting their teaching practice in preschool and primary educational institutions.

The expected tangible results of the Module are:

- Curriculum of the course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers",
- E-course book on EU common values for Bachelor students of preschool and primary school specialities,
- Future Foreign Language Teacher's Portfolio with a compulsory section "How I promote EU common values through my teaching",
- Photo and video recordings of course participants' teaching practice,
- Information leaflets about the Module.

The suggested Module develops critical thinking skills, promotes language competence of students and contributes to the global spread of the EU common values. The Module is in line with the mission of the EU's policy in terms of multilingualism. We believe that this initiative will improve the educational and pedagogical process in Ukraine, as well as bringing it closer to common European values dissemination and new language standards establishment. Moreover, we hope that the developed course will create a basis for learning and teaching foreign languages from an early age and will contribute to the promotion of common values of the EU.

In summary, as Kyiv Mayor V. Klitschko and the Minister of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine – O. Chernyshov – told the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe members: "We are defending not only Ukraine, but also European democratic values" (the 43rd Congress Session, 25-27 October 2022, Strasbourg, France). In the same way the Ukrainian system of higher education is fighting right now for its right for the existence in the context of Russia's military actions against Ukraine. That's why we believe that a training course "Strengthening the EU common values through the policy of multilingualism in the education and training of future teachers", designed by a group of teachers of Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University

(Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine), will become a powerful tool of promoting the EU common values among students (future foreign language teachers) who can lay the foundation for the EU common values in primary school students as the youngest representatives of Ukrainian and European society.

References

Borca, C., Rus, C., and Sava, S., 2020. Building up European identity in primary education. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 40 (2), 3-13.

Buhbe, M., 2017. *How Ukrainians perceive European values. Main Results of an Empirical Survey*. Berlin, Germany. 22p. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/13731.pdf> (accessed 21 April 2023).

Crego, M.D., Mañko, R., and Ballegooij, W., 2020. *Protecting EU common values within the Member States. An overview of monitoring, prevention and enforcement mechanisms at EU level*. Brussels: EPRS. 140p.

Goncharova, O., and Maslova, A., 2022. Building up the common European Values in professional training of future foreign language teachers. *Studies in Comparative Education*, (1), 5–12.

Komar, O., Kolisnichenko, A., Derkach, S., and Kapeliushna, T., 2021. Newly qualified foreign language teachers' adaptation in profession: challenges, problems, first achievements and further prospects. *Advanced Education*, 8 (17), 35-45.

Shkarlet, S., Vitrenko, A., Rohova, V., and Kostiuchenko, O., 2022. *Education of Ukraine under the conditions of the state of martial: informational and analytical collection of papers*. Kyiv: MON.GOV. 358p.

The 43rd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. 25-27 October 2022, Strasbourg, France. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/-we-are-defending-not-only-ukraine-but-also-european-democratic-values-kyiv-mayor-klitschko-and-minister-chernyshov-tell-council-of-europe-congress> (accessed 21 April 2023).

Veugelers, W., de Groot, and Stolk, V., 2017. *Research for CULT Committee –teaching common values in Europe*. Brussels: European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies. 220 p.

Walter, L., Mayer, S.J., Dollmann, J., Jacobsen, J., and Meth, A., 2022. *High levels of support for European Union accession in Ukraine during the war in 2022. An analysis based on the ReUP study*. DeZIM. insights Working Papers 6, Berlin: German Center for Integration and Migration Research. 13p.