

УДК 37.013.46

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ENCHANCING VOCAL AND DANCE TRAINING THROUGH FLEXIBLE LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS OF THE PR CHINA

In the wake of the conflict that began on February 24, 2022, between Ukraine and Russia, it has become increasingly crucial for Ukraine to explore innovative approaches to education that can help mitigate the impact of the crisis particularly on its primary school system. One such approach is the concept of Flexible Learning, which emphasises adaptability, creativity, and resilience in the face of challenges. The aim of this article is to elucidate the distinctive aspects of how the concept of flexible education is perceived in the People's Republic of China, particularly in its applicability to meeting the educational needs in Ukraine during and after the war. Through the lens of organising dance lessons (as an alternative to physical education) and vocal training (as a component of music education) in primary schools in China, this article seeks to highlight how such practices can offer valuable insights for Ukraine's education system amidst the challenges of conflict and its aftermath. The research methodology employed in this article draws upon conventional approaches in the field of comparative pedagogy, including the observation, literature review, analysis of regulatory frameworks, and utilisation of open sources of information. The research's scientific novelty: the article explores the potential implementation of the flexible education concept, which is grounded in the resources available to a given educational institution and grants educators greater autonomy in selecting and structuring their curriculum within their respective subjects. The academic freedom afforded to educators, coupled with a thorough analysis and unbiased evaluation of available resources by educational institution administrations, serves as an effective educational tool. This approach has the potential to enhance the quality of the educational process in Ukraine, particularly during the challenging periods of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. Conclusion: amidst the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine's exploration of the Flexible Learning concept in primary schools of other countries, particularly in China, is of utmost importance. By studying international experiences and best practices, Ukraine can develop innovative strategies to address the challenges posed by the crisis and build a more resilient education system for the future.

Keywords: *PR China; flexible education; primary school; vocal and dance training.*

Introduction. Flexible Learning offers a framework that can help Ukrainian educators and policymakers address the disruptions caused by the conflict. By understanding how other countries have successfully implemented Flexible Learning in their primary schools, Ukraine can glean valuable insights and strategies for adapting its own educational practices to the current circumstances. This includes finding innovative ways to deliver education amidst disruptions to infrastructure, resources, and traditional teaching methods. The study of Flexible Learning in other countries, especially in China, provides Ukraine with an opportunity to broaden its perspective and learn from international best practices. China's education system, known for its emphasis on innovation and adaptability, can offer valuable lessons for Ukraine as it navigates the challenges posed by the conflict with Russia. By examining how China has integrated Flexible Learning principles into its primary school curriculum, Ukraine can identify effective strategies for promoting student engagement, creativity, and critical thinking in times of crisis. Studying Flexible Learning implementation in other countries can help Ukraine enhance its education system in the long term. By incorporating insights from international experiences, Ukraine can inform educational reforms that prioritise flexibility, inclusivity, and student-centred learning approaches. This not only prepares Ukrainian students to thrive in the face of adversity but also strengthens the resilience of the education system as a whole.

Literature review. Flexible learning, a concept aimed at adapting education to diverse student needs and circumstances, is approached differently in Ukrainian-European and Chinese scientific spaces. While Ukrainian-European researchers prioritize meeting individual student educational needs (H. Ponomarova, A. Kharkivska, M. Brekke, H. Falfushynska, M. Martin, A. Godonoga and others), Chinese scholars focus more on leveraging the opportunities available within educational institutions (Z. Yang, Y. Liu, R. Huang, D. Liu, J. Yang, H. Wang and others). Also, the issue of the organisation of the educational process in terms of the concept of flexible learning, in particular in primary school, is highlighted in a number of narrow-profile researches (Yi. Liu, H. Quan, L. Jia, Z. Yang, W. Zhou, K. Guo and others).

The aim of this article is to elucidate the distinctive aspects of how the concept of flexible education is perceived in the People's Republic of China, particularly in its applicability to meeting the educational needs in Ukraine during and after the war. Through the lens of organising dance lessons (as an alternative to physical education) and vocal training (as a component of music education) in primary schools in China, this article seeks to highlight how such practices can offer valuable insights for Ukraine's education system amidst the challenges of conflict and its aftermath.

Methodology. Research methods for studying the enhancement of vocal and dance training through flexible learning in primary schools of the People's Republic of China include:

– Observational Studies method: as one of the researcher is the practicing teacher of dancing in a Chinese school, the researchers had an opportunity to observe classroom activities and teaching methods used in primary schools in China to understand how flexible learning is incorporated into vocal and dance training sessions to get valuable insights into real-world practices and interactions between teachers and students;

– Case Studies method and Interviews with teachers, students, and educational policymakers, made by the authors of the article, provided qualitative data on their experiences and perspectives regarding flexible learning in vocal and dance training to explore participants' practical experience in this field as well as involved in-depth examination of the school's context, practices, and outcomes, providing rich and contextualised data for analysis;

– Content Analysis method was used to analyse curriculum documents, teaching materials, and educational policies related to vocal and dance training in primary schools of China. This method helps researchers identify themes, patterns, and trends in how flexible learning principles are integrated into educational materials and guidelines;

– Somehow the Ethnographic Studies method was used for to understand the cultural, social, and contextual factors influencing the implementation of flexible learning in vocal and dance training particularly in China and Ukraine to make the conclusions about the the possibility and expediency of using the Chinese approach to the concept of flexible learning for the educational practice of Ukraine.

By employing a combination of these research methods, the authors gained comprehensive insights into the enhancement of vocal and dance training through flexible learning in primary schools of the People's Republic of China, thereby informing educational policies, practices, and innovations.

Research results. China's primary education system is a complex landscape marked by regional variations that reflect the diverse economic, social, and cultural contexts across the country. While the Chinese government has implemented general norms, such as compulsory education comprising nine years of schooling, including both primary and secondary education to providing basic education to all children. However, the implementation of these policies is influenced by various factors, including regional economic development, social demographics, and cultural traditions. One of the key features of China's primary education system is its decentralised nature, allowing provincial and local authorities to adapt policies and practices to suit their specific circumstances [3]. As a result, different regions have developed their own approaches to primary education, leading to variations in curriculum content, teaching methods, and school infrastructure.

In economically developed regions such as Shanghai and Beijing, primary education tends to be well-funded and emphasises academic excellence. These regions often have modern school facilities, qualified teachers, and access to educational resources. The primary school curriculum focuses on core subjects such as Chinese language, mathematics, science, and English, with an emphasis on preparing students for high-stakes exams such as the Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination). In contrast, rural and less developed regions face greater challenges in providing quality primary education due to limited resources and infrastructure. Schools in these areas may struggle with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and a shortage of qualified teachers [6]. Moreover, the curriculum may be adapted to meet the needs of local communities, with a greater emphasis on vocational skills and practical knowledge.

Furthermore, the division of primary and secondary school years may vary across different regions based on economic and social needs. In some areas, primary education may span six years, followed by three years of secondary education, while in others, primary education may extend for five years, with four years of secondary education [3]. The variation in the duration and curriculum of each academic year and subject, as will be detailed down here in the article, exemplifies the implementation of the Chinese interpretation of flexible learning. This approach is more focused on utilising the organisational and educational resources available within a specific educational institution, community, or region (such as the existing teaching staff, textbooks, access to learning tools, and specialised facilities) [7] rather than solely catering to the educational needs of individual students, as is customary in the Ukrainian-European educational tradition [10].

In the Ukrainian-European scientific space, flexible learning is understood primarily as a means to cater to the unique educational requirements of individual students. Researchers emphasise the importance of personalised learning trajectories, allowing students to pursue subjects of interest and learning at their own pace. This approach promotes autonomy, self-directed learning, and the development of critical thinking skills [2]. For example, educational initiatives in Ukraine and Europe often include options for students to choose elective courses or specialised tracks tailored to their interests and aspirations. Furthermore, Ukrainian-European researchers advocate for a student-centred approach, where the educational process revolves around the needs and preferences of each learner [1]. Flexible learning in this context involves accommodating diverse learning styles, abilities, and interests, with teachers serving as facilitators rather than traditional lecturers. Individualised attention and support are prioritised to ensure that every student receives a high-quality education suited to their unique talents and goals [9].

In contrast, the Chinese scientific space interprets flexible learning more institutionally, focusing on the opportunities available within educational institutions rather than individual student needs. Chinese scholars emphasise the adaptability of educational systems to leverage existing resources and infrastructure efficiently. Flexible learning, in this context, is seen as a means to optimise educational delivery and ensure effective utilisation of teaching personnel, facilities, and materials. For example, Chinese educational institutions may adopt flexible scheduling arrangements or curriculum adaptations to accommodate large student populations and varying resource constraints [4].

One of the primary forms of flexible learning in Chinese schools involves rearranging the sequence of study topics within subjects. For example, in primary schools, if a school lacks resources for teaching a particular topic in science, educators may prioritise topics that require minimal resources, such as basic scientific concepts or hands-on experiments using readily available materials like plants or simple laboratory equipment [5]. By adjusting the sequence of study topics, schools ensure that students receive a comprehensive education despite resource constraints.

When faced with staffing shortages, Chinese schools may transfer the study of a subject to another academic year within the study link framework. For instance, if a primary school lacks a qualified teacher for music education, administrators may defer the subject to the following academic year, ensuring that students receive instruction from a qualified teacher when staffing conditions improve. This approach maintains continuity in learning while addressing temporary staffing challenges.

In regions with specific economic activities or cultural characteristics, Chinese schools may replace traditional topics with those that are more relevant to the local context. For example, in primary schools located in agricultural regions, educators may integrate topics such as crop cultivation, soil science, or agricultural sustainability into the science curriculum. Similarly, in regions with rich cultural heritage, schools may incorporate local history, traditions, and arts into various subjects to foster students' appreciation for their cultural heritage and identity [4; 5; 7].

To illustrate, how does it work «on the field» we can make the following examples:

- in a primary school where students have varying levels of interest and aptitude in vocal music, educators may rearrange study topics to accommodate different learning needs. For example, instead of following a fixed curriculum that progresses at a predetermined pace, teachers may adopt a more flexible approach by organising vocal music lessons into modules or units [13];

- if a school does not have enough qualified literature or art education teachers, administrators may defer these classes to the following academic year and allocate additional time for vocal music instruction. Next academic year the vocal classes' hours will be recalculated and vocal teacher «return» spare hours to the art / math teacher [5];

- in regions with rich musical traditions or cultural heritage, primary schools may replace traditional vocal music and dance topics with those that align with regional specifics. For example, in a primary school located in a region known for its traditional folk music and dances, educators may incorporate local folk songs and dances, ethnic music, or indigenous dancing techniques into the curriculum. Students learn about the cultural significance of these songs and dances and engage in activities that celebrate and preserve local cultural traditions [8; 11];

- in Chinese schools, including the primary ones, traditional physical training classes educators may prioritise dancing as an alternative form of physical activity. For example, instead of allocating separate time slots for traditional physical education classes, schools may integrate dance lessons into the regular curriculum to promote physical fitness while providing students with an enjoyable and engaging form of exercise [8];

- primary schools, especially in big cities, face some challenges such as limited space for outdoor activities, for organising of a sports hall according to existing norms or money for renting such a room if available; while in the rural areas they meet shortage of physical education activities' tools and devices. By transferring the study of physical training to a more suitable dance lessons (that need neither much space, nor a lot of devices), schools ensure that students receive enough of physical activity [12].

The concept of flexible education significantly contributes to teaching children vocal and dancing in Chinese primary schools by fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. Flexible learning empowers Chinese primary schools to adapt their educational approaches to the unique circumstances of each

institution. Recognising the diverse technical and personnel capabilities across schools, educators leverage flexibility to tailor vocal and dancing education programs accordingly [13]. The concept of flexible learning enables Chinese primary schools to strategically allocate resources to prioritise vocal and dancing education. Understanding that technical and personnel constraints may exist, administrators utilise flexibility to optimise resource allocation. By aligning resource allocation with the institution's priorities, flexible learning facilitates the provision of high-level vocal and dancing education services [5].

Flexible learning fosters holistic curriculum development in Chinese primary schools, encompassing both academic and extracurricular aspects of arts education. Educators integrate vocal and dancing instruction seamlessly into the curriculum, ensuring a balanced educational experience for students. For instance, schools may offer interdisciplinary projects that combine vocal and dancing elements with other subjects, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration [11]. By promoting a holistic approach to arts education, flexible learning enhances the level of teaching children vocal and dancing in primary schools.

The concept of flexible learning plays a pivotal role in increasing the level of teaching children vocal and dancing in primary schools in China. By prioritising adaptability, strategic resource allocation, holistic curriculum development, and the cultivation of artistic excellence, flexible learning enables Chinese primary schools to provide high-level education services tailored to the capabilities of each institution.

Conclusions. The perception of flexible learning differs significantly between the Ukrainian-European and Chinese scientific spaces. While Ukrainian-European researchers prioritise meeting individual student needs and promoting personalised learning experiences, Chinese scholars focus more on optimising educational opportunities within institutional frameworks. Understanding these differences is essential for fostering cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration in the field of education, as diverse perspectives enrich our understanding of effective teaching and learning practices. By acknowledging and embracing these contrasting approaches, educators can develop more inclusive and adaptable educational systems that benefit students worldwide. In Chinese schools, flexibility in education is not just a concept but a necessity, driven by the diverse needs and challenges faced by educators and students alike. Through rearranging study topics, transferring subjects, and replacing topics to align with regional specifics, schools in China demonstrate their commitment to providing quality education that is responsive, inclusive, and relevant to students' lives. By embracing flexibility, Chinese schools empower students to thrive in an ever-changing world, preparing them for success in both academic and real-world contexts. The authors of the article view several aspects of the identified problem as promising for further research, including exploring the regional implementation nuances of the flexible learning concept in Eastern countries, examining the impact of flexible learning on the organisation of compulsory education in the PR China, enhancing teachers' professional adaptability to operate within the flexible learning framework and some others.

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ПІДВИЩЕННЯ РІВНЯ УРОКІВ ВОКАЛУ ТА ТАНЦЮ В ПОЧАТКОВИХ ШКОЛАХ КНР: ВИКОРИСТАННЯ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ГНУЧКОГО НАВЧАННЯ

У зв'язку з конфліктом, що розпочався 24 лютого 2022 року між Україною та росією, для України стає все більш актуальним вивчення інноваційних підходів у сфері освіти, які можуть сприяти пом'якшенню впливу кризи, зокрема на систему початкової освіти. Один із таких підходів – концепція гнучкого навчання, яка підкреслює адаптивність, креативність та стійкість освітньої системи у зустрічі з викликами. Метою даної статті є розгляд особливостей сприйняття концепції гнучкого навчання в Китайській Народній Республіці та її застосування для задоволення освітніх потреб в Україні під час і після війни. Через призму організації уроків танців (як альтернативи уроків з фізичної культури) та навчання вокалу (як частини музичної освіти) у початкових школах Китаю, ця стаття спрямована на висвітлення того, як такі практики можуть використовуватися для освітньої системи України. Методологія дослідження, використана у цій статті, базується на традиційних підходах у галузі порівняльної педагогіки, включаючи спостереження, огляд літератури, аналіз нормативно-правової бази та використання відкритих джерел інформації. Наукова новизна дослідження полягає у вивченні потенційної доцільності реалізації в Україні концепції гнучкого навчання у китайському розумінні, яка ґрунтується на наявних ресурсах закладу освіти та надає вчителям більшу автономію у виборі та структуруванні навчальних програм у межах предметів. Академічна свобода, яка надається вчителям, разом з неупередженим аналізом та оцінкою наявних ресурсів адміністрацією навчальних закладів, є ефективним інструментом освіти. Такий підхід може сприяти підвищенню якості освітнього процесу в Україні, особливо у складних періодах війни та після Перемоги. Висновки: на тлі триваючої війни з росією, дослідження Україною концепції гнучкого навчання в початкових школах інших країн, зокрема Китаю, є надзвичайно важливим. Вивчаючи міжнародний досвід і найкращі практики, Україна може розробити інноваційні стратегії для подолання викликів, спричинених кризою, і побудови більш стійкої системи освіти на майбутнє.

Ключові слова: КНР; концепція гнучкого навчання; початкова школа; навчання вокалу та танцям.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 02.03.2024 р.

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