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**373.2:57](438)(091)****ЛІСОВІ ДИТЯЧІ САДКИ В ПОЛЬЩІ: ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ДОСВІДУ В УКРАЇНІ**

**Анотація.** У статті всебічно розглянуто становлення та розвиток лісової дошкільної освіти в Польщі. Виявлено зміст, форми й методи роботи в лісових дитячих садках, особливості їхнього функціонування. Програми лісових садків Польщі відрізняються за своїм змістом; водночас спільною рисою є спрямованість на фізичний, емоційний, соціальний, пізнавальний розвиток.

З'ясовано, що в цих закладах реалізуються ідеї педагогіки М. Монтесорі, Вальдорфської педагогіки, педагогіки пригод, концепція американського педагога, письменника, просвітителя природи Дж. Корнелла, інші прогресивні погляди. Визначено переваги лісових дитячих садків: зміцнення здоров'я, розвиток інтелектуального потенціалу, комунікативних навичок, здатності долати перешкоди. Уміння в дітей переборювати труднощі є особливо важливим за умов нових суспільних викликів.

Функціонування лісових садків у Польщі регламентується Розпорядженням Міністра національної освіти від 28 серпня 2017 р. «Про види інших форм дошкільної освіти, умови їхнього створення та порядок діяльності». Координує їхню діяльність, сприяє обміну досвідом, найкращими практиками в галузі лісової освіти Інститут лісових садків, створений у 2016 р. у Білостоці.

Акцентовано увагу на наукових дослідженнях лісової дошкільної освіти польськими вченими. Вони проаналізували становлення, генезу, концептуальні засади та функції лісових садків.

Виявлено перспективні ідеї польського досвіду лісової дошкільної освіти, що можуть бути використані в дошкільництві України: інтеграції елементів інноваційних систем у лісових закладах для дошкільників; використання результатів ретроспективного аналізу функціонування шкіл і садків, у яких накопичений досвід екологічного виховання та проведення занять на лоні природи; створення інституції, яка б координувала та висвітлювала діяльність лісових садків.

Наголошено, що організація лісової дошкільної освіти в умовах воєнного стану в Україні може бути корисною для дошкільця Польщі як підготовка до діяльності в кризових ситуаціях.

**Ключові слова:** лісова дошкільна освіта Польщі; заклади дошкільної освіти України, лісові дитячі садки, зміст, форми, методи роботи.

**FOREST KINDERGARTENS IN POLAND:  
THE USE OF THE EXPERIENCE IN UKRAINE**

**Abstract.** The article comprehensively studies the formation and the development of forest preschool education in Poland. The content, forms and methods of work in forest kindergartens, the peculiarities of their functioning have been revealed. The programs of forest kindergartens in Poland differ in their content; at the same time, focus on physical, emotional, social, cognitive development is the common feature.

It has been found that the ideas of M. Montessori's pedagogy, Waldorf pedagogy, adventure pedagogy, the concept of the American writer, nature educator J. Cornell, and other progressive views are implemented in these institutions. The advantages of forest kindergartens have been determined: strengthening of health, the development of intellectual potential, communication skills, the ability to overcome obstacles. Children's ability to overcome difficulties is especially important in the face of new social challenges.

The functioning of forest kindergartens in Poland is coordinated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 28, 2017 "On the types of other forms of preschool education, the conditions of their creation and the procedure of operation". The Institute of



Forest Kindergartens, established in 2016 in Białystok, coordinates their work, promotes the exchange of experience and best practices in the field of forest education.

The attention has been focused on scientific studies of forest preschool education by Polish scientists. They analyzed the formation, the development, conceptual foundations and functions of forest kindergartens.

Promising ideas of Polish experience of forest preschool education that can be used in preschool education in Ukraine have been identified. They are the following: integration of elements of innovative systems in forest institutions for preschoolers; using the results of a retrospective analysis of the functioning of schools and kindergartens, which have accumulated the experience in environmental education and conducting classes in the bosom of nature; creation of an institution that would coordinate and highlight the work of forest kindergartens.

It has been emphasized that the organization of forest preschool education in the conditions of martial law in Ukraine can be useful for Polish preschool education as a preparation for work in crisis situations.

**Keywords:** forest preschool education in Poland; preschool educational institutions of Ukraine, forest kindergartens, content, forms, methods of work.

## INTRODUCTION

**The problem formulation.** The processes of urbanization, computerization, and mechanization cause nature deficiency syndrome in people. It is especially dangerous in childhood, because the lack of contact with nature affects the health and the development of the growing personality. The urgency of the problems of upbringing “under the blue sky” prompts us to look for a perfect system of education for children, starting from preschool age, in which the conformity to nature and health saving principles would be implemented.

Positive experience in this context has been accumulated in European countries, in particular Poland. The interest in it is explained by the fact that it is located geographically close to Ukraine, therefore, the mentality of people and approaches to education are similar. In addition, the Polish people became one of the first to help Ukrainians to overcome military threats, giving our children the opportunity to attend preschool institutions and primary schools in Poland. Forest kindergartens have been developing here for more than ten years following the example of Denmark, Germany, the Czech Republic, and other countries.

Forest kindergartens are non-formal educational institutions, in which there is no shortage of connections with nature. Emphasis is placed on health saving, on positive phenomena associated with sufficient contacts with the environment. The lack of contacts with nature causes disorders of cognitive and emotional processes. Diseases of civilization are prevented in forest kindergartens (Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019, p. 18). The experience of forest education is valuable for Ukrainian preschool education, because forest kindergartens in our country are at the stage of their formation. This innovation is attractive to scientists, teachers, children and parents, because nature is a source of health that always needs to be strengthened, and especially now because of the negative consequences of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The formation and the development, conceptual foundations and functions of forest kindergartens are the subject of numerous scientific studies. In Ukraine, the functioning of these institutions was described by O. Hryshko, L. Klevaka (Klevaka, & Hryshko, 2021), N. Oshurkevych (Oshurkevych, 2018), and others. However, such works are rare, despite the popularity of forest education. The attention of these scientists is directed to Denmark, Germany, the Czech Republic, the USA, etc. In the context of the organization and functioning of forest kindergartens, Poland remains poorly studied. At the same time, there are much more scientific works on the topic of forest education in Polish pedagogy than in Ukrainian.

Polish scientists M. Christ (Christ, 2018; Christ, & Preuss, 2018; Christ, 2021), U. Ordon (Ordon, 2019), J. Pietrzak-Zawadka (Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019), A. Preuss (Christ, & Preuss, 2018), J. Romaniak (Romaniak), R. Ryszka (Ryszka, 2016), Ju. Szlaużys (Szlaużys, 2019), etc. study forest kindergartens.

In particular, U. Ordon noted that the term “forest kindergartens” was used in 1954 in Denmark for the first time (Ordon, 2019, p. 114). In the publications of scientists, these institutions have different names: education in nature, experimental education, forest school, etc.

Scientists (M. Christ, J. Pietrzak-Zawadka, A. Preuss, Ju. Szlaużys, etc.) study the conceptual foundations of forest preschool education, pointing out the use of the ideas of M. Montessori’s pedagogy, Waldorf pedagogy, the concept of the American writer, nature educator J. Cornell, adventure pedagogy, other concepts in forest kindergartens.

K. Kimic, K. Kundziewicz reflected the results of the analysis of a number of programs of forest kindergartens in Poland, finding that these programs differ in their content; at the same time, the focus on physical, emotional, social, cognitive development is common (Kimic, & Kundziewicz, p. 361).

Despite the numerous scientific studies on the history, foundations, forms, methods of work in forest kindergartens in European countries, the functioning of these institutions in Poland is poorly researched, and primarily by Ukrainian scientists.

## AIM AND TASKS OF RESEARCH

The aim of the article is to comprehensively analyze the organization of forest kindergartens in Poland, to identify the possibilities of using promising ideas in the modern educational space of Ukraine.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A number of theoretical methods was used to study the topic: comparative-pedagogical (comparison of concepts, content, forms, methods of work of forest kindergartens in Poland); retrospective analysis (for studying the history of forest education in Poland and in the other foreign countries); interpretive-analytical, which involved interpretation, comparison, systematization of scientific literature facts and their generalization, identification of positive ideas that should be used in preschool education of Ukraine.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

There are three types of institutions in Polish preschool educational system: day nursery (żłobek) for children from 1 to 3 years old, kindergarten (przedszkole) – from 2.5 to 5 years old, preparatory group (zerówka) – compulsory “zero class” for 5–6-year-old children who will go to school in a year. There are public and private preschool institutions; among private profile ones – ecological ones.

In an ecological preschool institution, teachers pay special attention to the child’s contacts with nature for personal improvement of health and preservation of the environment. Preschoolers are taught to love the world around them (Luhina, 2012, p. 181).



Forest kindergartens, which are gaining more and more popularity, are close in content and form to ecological ones. Forest kindergartens are alternative educational institutions, in which the form of education differs from that offered in traditional, state institutions. These are establishments "without a ceiling and walls". Children in them are constantly (regardless of the weather, time of year) in the fresh air. Games and fun take place around natural objects (trees, water bodies). Children play with cones, sticks, bird feathers, water and clay, but not with factory-made toys. Teachers in forest kindergartens are assistants, but not the group leaders (Klevaka, Hryshko, 2021, p. 359).

The dissatisfaction of parents and kindergarten teachers with the limitations of traditional preschool education, as well as the desire to introduce innovations, which are attractive to children, were the reasons for the creation of such institutions (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 96).

It is widely believed that the idea of forest preschool education originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s. However, scientists (L. Klevaka, O. Hryshko) determine earlier dates for this innovation appearance, considering that the foundation for creating forest kindergartens was laid by the introduction of the method of living in harmony with nature by the German Catholic priest S. Kneipp in the 1850s–1880s (Christ, 2021, p. 358). The Kneipp's method is based on 5 key approaches: the healing power of water (hydrotherapy), physical activity (alternation of changes in body loads / resting state), healthy nutrition, medicinal plants (phytotherapy), healthy lifestyle – moderation, mental balance and balance in general (Klevaka, Hryshko, 2021, p. 358).

At the same time, V. Sukhomlynskyi's school under the blue sky for six-year-old children, opened in 1951 in the Kirovohrad region, can be considered as the first attempt to organize forest education (Yankovych, 2022, p. 128).

Concepts of education through the direct contact with nature appeared in Poland in the 1920s. In 2016, W. Sonelski and A. Magiera analyzed the texts of M. Rodziewiczówna ("The summer of the forest people" ["Lato leśnych ludzi"]), F. Wyslouch ("Skating rink" ["Ślizgawka"]) and M. Zaruski ("On the off-roads of the Tajan mountains" ["Na bezdrożach tarzańskich"]), proving that they perfectly correspond to the trend of education through experiences and adventures against the background of wild nature.

This idea is also the basis of the Polish scout movement. Returning to nature in preschool education is a continuation of important educational trends. In Poland, unfortunately, they are not as long-lasting and popular and have not received such recognition among theorists and practitioners of education, as, for example, in Germany. There, the tradition of forest kindergartens goes back more than 60 years.

The idea of forest institutions in Poland appeared in 2010 in Kaszuby (the historical region above the Baltic Sea in the north of Poland) – in Brodnica Górna, and in 2014 the first such kindergarten (przedszkola leśne) was organized in Żywiecczyzna. A year later, in October 2015, a forest kindergarten "Puszczyk" was established in Białystok on the parents' initiative. The concept of this institution provides that children spend 80% of their time in the fresh air (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 97).

In 2018, there were already 34 forest preschool institutions in 10 voivodships in Poland (Ordon, 2019, p. 116, Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019, p. 16).

Despite the fact that forest preschool education is gaining supporters with great difficulty, a long-standing tradition of informing the population about the role of the forest as an ecosystem, a component of the environment, and a source of human well-being is Poland's achievement.

Functioning of forest kindergartens in this country is coordinated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 28, 2017 "On the types of other forms of preschool education, the conditions of their creation and the procedure of operation". In this document, they are interpreted as a form of alternative education (Ordon, 2019, p. 115). In the system of forest education, not only the conceptual principles are important, but also the choice of the kindergartens' location, so that children can be in constant contact with nature. Therefore, such institutions are created in the bosom of nature. A forest is chosen the most often. Facilities integrated into the forest landscape are used: houses are built of clay or with thatched roofs.

The group size does not exceed 20 children from 3 to 6 years old. Two (three) Teachers spend most of the day with preschoolers. Children come properly dressed – in waterproof clothes. Teachers have mobile carts in which they store the necessary change of clothes (Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019, p. 16).

The daily schedule of forest kindergartens is significantly different from traditional ones. They work from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The day begins with a morning gathering, conversations and games, discussion of planned activities. Later there is a breakfast. After the meal, it is time for planned events, performing creative tasks. Next is lunch. After lunch there is a rest. Children can lie down, sleep in beds, hammocks, tents. Also, after lunch, the results of the day are summed up.

Children undergo speech therapy diagnostics, study foreign languages, and have rhythm classes. Mathematical education is also interesting. It is implemented thanks to the analysis of daily experience, doing the mathematical measurements and calculations by preschoolers (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 102). But above all, forest kindergartens are full of spontaneous movement and free play (Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019, p. 16).

The children's program maintains a balance between individual and group work.

In forest kindergartens, preschoolers are educated in harmony with nature. In the era of technology, children usually do not have the opportunity to observe picturesque landscapes, flora and fauna, because they grow up in conditions of accelerated pace of life, in which there is no time to stop and admire nature. Moreover, preschoolers better recognize animals and plants from exotic countries than those that live in the immediate nearness, not far from homes, or learn about the animal and plant world from books, collections of fairy tales. The variety of natural phenomena, the richness of colors and forms awakens curiosity about the world. Children willingly look for answers to questions that arise when they are outside (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 103).

M. Christ researched that "children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and they are sick less often" (Christ, 2021, p. 4).

The natural space is favorable for preschoolers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, to form in them a careful attitude to nature, respect for the historical and cultural environment. In forest institutions, children play and learn in a natural environment (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 100).

Organizers and teachers of forest kindergartens draw inspiration from various sources. However, these institutions are united by the following characteristics: spending time in the fresh air, using natural materials and that what children find on the ground and what they build themselves instead of factory-made toys, partnerships with adults.



The ideas of the pedagogy of living events and adventures (pedagogika przeżyć i przygody), M. Montessori, R. Steiner, J. Cornell, and other progressive pedagogical concepts are used in the organization of forest preschool education in Poland. The interpretation of each preschooler as an opener, the recognition of his/her subjectivity, the implementation of a holistic approach, according to which the conditions and space for harmonious development in a natural environment using games and fun should be created for children, are the bases of these pedagogical concepts. Much of what a child must master at an early age cannot be learned; he/she must discover and learn it through games and fun.

Spontaneous games, the choice of which depends on the season and weather, are the basis of the educational program. Children run, jump, overcome natural obstacles such as branches, steep slopes, and puddles. Therefore, wild nature, due to its attractiveness and inherent values, is a good environment for learning. Magnifiers, books, albums with descriptions of plants and animals – all this is “in the arsenal” of children and teachers.

In forest kindergartens, it is relatively easy to simulate situations that require leaving the comfort zone, making physical efforts, for example, to climb a mountain (Pietrzak-Zawadka, 2019, p. 13).

The ability to overcome difficulties is especially valuable in today's environment. More and more often, teachers express concern that modern children are used to living easily, but are not used to resisting obstacles. As evidenced by observations of preschoolers in forest kindergartens, it is wild nature that is a means of forming the ability to overcome difficulties and achieve goals, which is a prerequisite for the formation of a successful personality. This skill is especially important in the conditions of new social challenges. In Ukraine, the war became such a challenge. It became a catalyst for the formation of children's ability to overcome obstacles.

The program of work includes not only mobile games and games using natural materials, but also hikes. Children carry backpacks with lunch and hot drinks. The process of learning about the world is managed by teachers who love nature (Christ, & Preuss, 2018, p. 153; Ordon, 2019, p. 118–119).

It is clear that under such conditions, the safety of life is an urgent problem. In the forest kindergarten, children resort to risky actions: cross a stream on slippery and shaky stones, climb tree branches, etc. Falls, bruises, scratches, mosquito bites are inevitable. However, this is how, overcoming failures, drawing conclusions, children learn to achieve success (Ordon, 2019, p. 119). At the same time, teachers are ready to provide first aid. They have tick removal kits, sunscreen, insect repellent. If necessary, they can call the emergency service.

In forest kindergartens, children learn to take responsibility for their own actions in nature. This is a good school for spiritual and moral development, civic, aesthetic education, the formation of creativity, critical thinking.

In 2016, the Polish Institute of Forest Kindergartens was established in Białystok to integrate the activities of institutions for preschoolers of this type, exchange experience, and best practices in the field of forest education (Ordon, 2019, p. 118). The creation of coordinating and educational bodies is not something essentially new. It should be noted that similar institutions exist in other countries, for example, in the USA there is an Association of Forest Kindergarten Teachers.

The concept of forest kindergartens is studied in Polish pedagogical science, however, research on the topics of forest preschool education is not carried out enough and is in an initial state. Enthusiasts write more often about forest education for preschoolers (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 104). A few works by British scientists L. O'Brien and R. Murray, as well as J. Coates and H. Pimlott-Wilson are popular among scholars in Poland (Szlauzys, 2019, p. 104).

The research of Polish scientists K. Kimic, K. Kundzewicz, who carried out a comparative analysis of forest kindergartens in Warsaw, deserves approval. It was conducted in 2019 (Kimic, & Kundzewicz). The aim of the research was to monitor the programs of these kindergartens. The evaluation was carried out according to the following criteria: their location, proximity and type of natural environment for children, accessibility during the year and week, working hours, age of children, number of groups (Kimic, & Kundzewicz, p. 359).

The research results showed that kindergartens are mostly located in the forest and are easily accessible for children; the average time spent outside is 5–6.5 hours; games, learning, which consists in obtaining knowledge about nature, are the main activities. Children eat and rest here. In all analyzed kindergartens, harmonious development takes place in the natural environment (Kimic, & Kundzewicz, p. 359).

This scientific research motivates similar studies in other regions of Poland and Ukraine, as well as expanding the network of forest kindergartens in Ukraine. The following ideas deserve to be used in the preschool educational space of Ukraine: integration of elements of innovative systems in forest institutions for preschoolers; using the results of a retrospective analysis of the functioning of schools and kindergartens, which have accumulated experience in environmental education and conducting classes in the fresh air; creation of an institution that would coordinate and highlight the activities of forest kindergartens.

At the same time, the organization of forest preschool education in the conditions of martial law in Ukraine can be useful for Polish preschool education as preparation for work in crisis situations.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

Analysis of the theory and practice of forest preschool education gives grounds for drawing conclusions.

- Forest kindergartens in Poland are at the initial stage of their genesis. The ideas for their creation appeared in 2010. In 2014, the first such kindergarten was organized. But now these institutions are gaining more and more popularity in Polish society. Now there are officially more than 30 forest preschool institutions in 10 voivodships.
- Forest kindergartens are non-formal education institutions, their work is coordinated by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education (2017). An institution (Institute of Forest Kindergartens), which coordinates the activities of forest establishments, is created. The need for such coordination also exists in Ukraine.
- M. Montessori's pedagogy, Waldorf pedagogy, adventure pedagogy, J. Cornell's concept and other concepts and systems known in the world are implemented in forest institutions for preschoolers. Preschool education in Ukraine should also integrate progressive retrospective and innovative ideas.
- There are the following common features of all forest preschool institutions: spending up to 80% of time in the fresh air, using natural materials instead of toys, partnerships with adults; implementation of environmental education, the formation of respect for the historical and cultural environment.



- Staying in forest kindergartens has a positive effect on children's education, on their physical, mental, and social development: higher immunity, significantly fewer diseases of the eyes and musculoskeletal system. Children have better abilities, logical thinking, communication skills, the ability to cooperate, make friends, how to compare with traditional preschool institutions.

During the last decade, scientific studies of forest preschool education have been developing, but they need to be intensified, primarily this concerns the principles of organization of forest kindergartens, difficulties arising in their activities and ways to overcome them. This problem is also relevant for Ukraine.

Prospects for further research consist in studying forest preschool education in Ukraine and training future kindergarten teachers to work in such institutions.

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