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**Natural approach in the concept of individual education by Herbert Spencer**  
**ПРИРОДНИЙ ПІДХІД У КОНЦЕПЦІЇ ІНДИВІДУАЛЬНОГО ВИХОВАННЯ**  
**ГЕРБЕРТА СПЕНСЕРА**

В статті представлено аналіз педагогічних поглядів англійського філософа Герберта Спенсера та його концепції індивідуального підходу у розумовому, моральному та фізичному вихованні. Було проаналізовано та систематизовано теоретичний та практичний внесок Г. Спенсера у вирішення проблеми індивідуального виховання дітей в рамках громадської та сімейної освіти.

**Ключові слова:** *індивідуальний підхід, розумове, моральне та фізичне виховання, наука, знання, самостійність.*

В статье представлен анализ педагогических взглядов английского философа Герберта Спенсера и его концепции индивидуального подхода в умственном, нравственном и физическом воспитании. Были проанализированы и систематизированы теоретический и практический вклад Г. Спенсера в решение проблемы индивидуального воспитания детей в рамках общественного и семейного воспитания.

**Ключевые слова:** *индивидуальный подход, умственное, нравственное и физическое воспитание, наука, знания, самостоятельность.*

During the XIX century the European society had profound changes in the philosophy of life. Instead of schematic overall world-view like the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, Shelling and others, there came a new philosophical thinking which tended to avoid common "metaphysical" assertions as unfounded and to focus on "positive" data of specific sciences.

That was the development of individualism: the new social conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution formed a new type of a personality that outlined his/her contacts with society on the basis of goods and money relations. All social associations, primarily the state and staff (and a family to some extent) were acknowledged as a whole which ultimately is nothing more than the sum of individuals (as well as philosophical knowledge to positivists was only association of specific private facts).

**Problem statement.** The positivists considered education to be one of the most important kinds of influence on the individual and society. Focusing on individual cultural goals and radical response to the conditions dictated by public opinion were realized in the works of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

Spencer's works were extremely popular in the second half of the XIX century. It is enough to say that by 1896 his pedagogical articles had 58 editions in England and were

published in other European countries. The influence of Herbert Spencer's views was particularly significant on the educational theory and practice of the USA in the late XIX – early XX centuries.

The world popularity of Herbert Spencer as a scientist that connected in his theory of individual education data of many sciences is the subject of discussion of many theorists and practitioners of early childhood education during the XX and beginning of the XXI century. The pedagogy of H. Spencer consists of the following problems which are: the problem of self-development of a child; establishment of the successful system of self-education and training which is based on the "natural method of education" [6] and training of parents for their duties; thirdly, changes in educational programmes abandoning old forms of work and study; fourth, teachers and parents have to discover a child in order to contribute to its successful physical and moral development.

**Analysis of research and publications.** The meaning and the concept of individual approach to children were studied by Y.I. Kovalchuk, V.V. Kyon, G.Z. Skirko, O. Doroshenkova, N. Lubenets, E. Malytska, S. Rusova. Foreign scholars that studied the works of H. Spencer were D. Duncon, W. Hudson, J. Peel, M. Taylor.

**The objective** of the article is to systematise and analyse the educational views of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer and to show his theoretical and practical contribution to solving the problem of individual education of children in public and family education.

**Main material.** Based on the method of natural education, Herbert Spencer's pedagogical concept gained considerable popularity worldwide due to two main theses – freedom and independence. The freedom in the system of Herbert Spencer is not lawlessness in actions but discipline. The main objective of education by H. Spencer is the fact "that a person is able to control his/her actions in all areas of activity and at all possible circumstances; that he/she knows how to deal with body, how to develop mind, how to bring up children, how to be a good citizen, how to use the benefits given to us by nature and how to use our abilities to make most benefit of themselves and other people. These issues are extremely important, so their study should be the main goal of education" [6].

According to Spencer's concept a teacher has outwardly passive but inwardly very active, responsible role. This role is that the teacher should develop in children self-sufficiency and direct them to their own ability to find solutions to a particular problem. Herbert Spencer confirms that it is impossible to burden the mind with abstract conclusions until the child learns for himself the facts which formed those conclusions.

An important factor, according to Herbert Spencer, is the didactic material which helps exercising physical and mental functions of a child and enabling him for self-control of mistakes and maximum self-sufficiency. The didactic material is a unique tool for the development of creativity, intelligence, attention, motivation, reading and writing, mathematics and other basic principles of science. But in this case the teacher himself should go through academic school to get the ability to observe, think logically and make decisions.

The famous book by Herbert Spencer "Education: intellectual, moral, and physical" seemed to be the key to the regeneration of society. The author skilfully contrasted natural laws to the necessity to adhere to the old traditional beliefs in education. It is known that Herbert Spencer advised major Japanese diplomats and ministers on general policy and reorganization of education.

The tone of the book was aggressive and the ideas were revolutionary. The basic doctrine that permeated the entire book had the question: "What knowledge is of most worth?" [6]. In his work H. Spencer divided basic human activities to those that "govern" self-preservation, education of good citizens, development of tastes etc. And then, after the analysis of all the

knowledge which is necessary for a productive human life, he concluded that science is the supreme and universal knowledge that can train a person for a fully productive life. He then continued that any science is worth more than any knowledge, which is necessary for education. Only science can develop thinking, memory, influence morality and discipline. So the answer to the question what knowledge should we cherish most, was science.

This doctrine was highly unacceptable for the educational system in England at that time because for many generations it was based on Mathematics, Latin and Greek languages and the idea was that for any sphere of activity and success in society an intelligent person should master this knowledge. Offering and developing this doctrine, giving a lot of examples and practical advice Herbert Spencer became a pioneer of his time in the issues of education and training. Firstly, he criticised the existing belief that education and training must be authoritarian which do not take into consideration the abilities and inclinations of a child. Secondly, he was convinced that to teach means to tell children and to show them what they have to see in order to stimulate discussion and, ultimately, they then believe in it. Thirdly, the training method used by a teacher should be correct and progressive. The ideas put forward by Herbert Spencer were slowly implemented in practice, especially in England, but now they prevail in all civilized countries. Herbert Spencer was also able to show the world and develop the ideas of such thinkers and educators as Comenius, Montaigne, Locke, Milton, Rousseau and Pestalozzi.

Herbert Spencer's ideas may be of particular interest to the teachers who could analyze his ideas, step by step, especially the doctrine of science as the uppermost knowledge. Basically, the development of those ideas happened due to considerable changes in political, social and economic spheres over the past hundred years. The first practical step was the introduction of laboratory classes and teaching one or several sciences at schools and colleges. Chemistry and Physics were most spread subjects. Although those subjects had been studied before, they only were studied by memorizing the texts. But this kind of science could only develop with the help of laboratory classes. So, the majority agreed with H. Spencer that science is a universal and main element at all stages of human development.

The basis of Spencer's theory contained the ideas that many scientists and pedagogues did not want to notice. The main idea of it was that all tasks and explanations should be interesting and bring joy. A hundred years ago most teachers were convinced that school classes could not be made interesting. It was believed that a pupil should "absorb" all necessary knowledge. And only proposed methods by Spencer and practical experience of teachers showed that any task, even very complex, can be performed by pupils happily and with interest. Many schools adapted Spencer's ideas. Primarily, it refers to laboratory classes which are based on his doctrine of the development of feelings and the ability to relate theory to practice with the help of laboratory experiments.

The diversity of courses where you can learn something deeper or even change the profession is also one of the ideas of Herbert Spencer that people always need to develop and "train" their feelings and be ready for any changes in life. His ideas were developed in time of industrial development, reforming education and re-evaluation of many concepts which were considered perfect and unalterable.

So, H. Spencer grounded that for the full livelihood there should be the following kinds of activity in the order of priority:

- activity directed on self-preservation;
- activity that provides all necessary things for life and helps self-preservation (in other words professional job);
- activity directed on bringing up and educating generation;
- activity directed on development of the right social and political relations;

- activity directed on enjoyment in all its forms and leisure [6].

By Spencer science is not only the basis of five key areas of human activity: it has also a powerful effect on the development of personal abilities. The study of science is such a "mental exercise that most promotes mental abilities" [6]. Spencer argued that in nature abilities develop by performing the functions for which they are intended, and not artificial exercises purposely invented for the preparation of these functions. So, anything which is the most useful for human activity is the best mental gymnastics.

Finally, science has a favourable effect on the religious development of a person. Herbert Spencer wrote: "Science is hostile to the superstitions which are presented in the form of religion, but not to the true religion which only obscures the superstitions... Not the science is anti-religious but neglect for science and unwillingness to discover the world around us" [6].

But not only this is the reason that science leads to religion, "it is religious because forms a deep respect for uniformity of actions and makes one believe in the uniformity... Instead of rewards and punishments of traditional belief that people vaguely hope of, despite their disobedience to get or avoid, a person of science sees the rewards and punishments in the established order of things... He sees that the laws we must obey, at one and the same time are uncompromising and charitable. Finally, only science can give us a true notion about ourselves and about the attitude to the mysteries of life. Science opens to us all that we may know but at the same time it points the limits of which we can not know" [1].

This is essence of the content of the first, most original part of the work by Herbert Spencer, which has the headline: "What knowledge is of most worth?" It turns out that in all respects of all five human activities such as intellectual, moral and religious, the most efficient study is science.

The second chapter of his book "Education: intellectual, moral and physical" Herbert Spencer devotes to intellectual education, the third chapter to moral and the fourth one to physical education. In these chapters Spencer further complements and develops the principles which were elaborated by Locke, Rousseau and Pestalozzi.

In the second chapter we find commitment to "natural" methods of teaching: the principles of visualization, transition from simple to complex, from identical to various, from indefinite to definite, from concrete to abstract, from the empirical to rational, etc. Specifically, Herbert Spencer supported the idea that "education of a child by its means and order should repeat the human development" [6]. Spencer makes a lot of successful and correct remarks about the importance of self-education, motivation, object lessons, teaching drawing techniques, etc.

The third chapter is devoted to the issue of moral discipline. Spencer believed that the success of educational reform depends on the reform of social system: "local reform should go hand in hand with other reforms" [6]. The most important reform in moral education for H. Spencer is to replace teacher tyranny by "the system of natural discipline" which is the discipline of natural consequences of a child's activity. Therefore, the issue of moral education by H. Spencer has not lost its relevance today. On the basis of the principles of education, which is one of the components of child development, we believe it is appropriate to study the works of Herbert Spencer, single out all positive ideas that can be helpful in education of children. His works have many interesting and original solutions to problems that often arise in the process of education. The pedagogical works of H. Spencer help us to deeper understand the inner world of a child and once again rethink the place of parents and children in the process of education, their mutual relations.

In the fourth chapter about physical education Spencer developed the idea of confidence in the nature and its voice that speaks in the instincts. He rightly outraged the disdain from the

side of parents relating to physical education of their children... He is against "fattening" children and thinks the food should be nutritious and insists on the need of physical exercises (in the form of games) not only for boys but for girls as well, he is also against excessive intellectual and mental exhaustion and early education of children, and ends with the statement that "the preservation of health is not only our duty, but an obligation and any violation of the laws of health is a physical sin" [6].

Another important and interesting issue is the development of behaviour, its good and bad characteristics, culture, morality, the rights for life and personal freedom, women's rights and children's rights.

Herbert Spencer believed that the behaviour that provides preservation of race and is similar to the behaviour of self-preservation can gradually appear from such actions, which can not be named the behaviour: that adapted actions are always preceded by non-adapted. With the improved adaptation of actions to the goals in the development of behaviour gains improvement, that leads to an increase of life expectancy. The ultimate sign of progress in behaviour according to Herbert Spencer is the behaviour by which everyone reaches their goals without preventing others to achieve theirs.

The next step in the development of behaviour H. Spencer sees in the division of the behaviour on bad and good. And before he gives the definition of these two types of behaviour, he draws attention to the meaning of "bad" and "good." According to him, these words are used to describe the success or failure of adaptation of actions to the goals. The behaviour which is called "good" is a sign of more advanced behaviour and the behaviour called "bad" is always a sign of less developed behaviour. The development is constantly striving for self-preservation and reaches its limits when personal life gets the largest size in completeness and duration; and people believe that good behaviour leads to self-preservation and the bad one leads to self-destruction.

Considering culture in a broad concept Herbert Spencer believed that it was "preparation for a quite advanced life." This concept includes, firstly, all the training and all the knowledge that we need to maintain our lives and the lives of our families. Secondly, this concept includes the entire development of human abilities in general that "prepares them to use various sources of pleasure that obtained sensitive souls from nature and humanity" [2].

Herbert Spencer paid much attention to the unity of physical and intellectual culture. According to him, a person who did exercises to use their muscles and senses is less risked to stumble in any accident than someone who did not do these exercises. He underlined that the development of abilities to manage the body should be acquired in the process of achieving other desirable goals. Each rational education should provide countless cases to exercise these abilities. The culture which we pointed out above is associated with intellectual culture in its original form, because if we developed the ability to use the body and senses, then we are training to have direct relations with the surrounding objects, the mind is the developing factor that controls indirect ratios, increasing in its complexity" [2].

We see that development of skills to deal with the objects around us and to satisfy our needs was the first goal of intellectual culture which preceded all others. Intellectual culture is not unattainable. With proper education each basic truth of science can be clearly laid out and well learned. When the basic truth of every science is understood so that the main findings of which will become clear, then, according to Spencer, it will be possible to reach rational concepts of any group of phenomena and adequate preparation for any special classes.

**Conclusion.** We may find interesting propositions in the works of Spencer, particularly he writes about the necessity to teach pedagogics at school as future parents should know basic principles of educating and upbringing children.

Another interesting thought of H. Spencer is if a child got accustomed to immediate response of the parents to his actions and having become an adult is incapable independently assess the results of his actions. Perhaps the philosopher is right when indicates that the method of education with the help of "natural consequences" teaches the educators to analyze their own motives more seriously.

Herbert Spencer followed democratic and progressive views. He singled out the following general tasks of education as full development of a child, specifying the full description of intellectual, moral and physical development.

So, the formulated by H. Spencer educational principles are quite actual for modern school as they are focused on comprehensive process of education for personal development; unity of training and education; the link of academic excellence with nature; consideration of the age and individual characteristics of children in the learning process; clearness; independence; availability of training.

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## Abstract

During the XIX century the European society had profound changes in the philosophy of life. That was the development of individualism: the new social conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution formed a new type of a personality that outlined his/her contacts with society on the basis of goods and money relations. Focusing on individual cultural goals and radical response to the conditions dictated by public opinion were realized in the works of the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).

The pedagogy of H. Spencer consists of the following problems which are: the problem of self-development of a child; establishment of the successful system of self-education and training which is based on the "natural method of education" [8] and training of parents for their duties; thirdly, changes in educational programmes abandoning old forms of work and study; fourth, teachers and parents have to discover a child in order to contribute to its successful physical and moral development.

The famous book by Herbert Spencer "Education: intellectual, moral, and physical" seemed to be the key to the regeneration of society. The author skilfully contrasted natural laws to the necessity to adhere to the old traditional beliefs in education. It is known that Herbert Spencer advised major Japanese diplomats and ministers on general policy and reorganization of education.

We may find interesting propositions in the works of Spencer, particularly he writes about the necessity to teach pedagogy at school as future parents should know basic principles of educating and upbringing children.

Another interesting thought of H. Spencer is if a child got accustomed to immediate response of the parents to his actions and having become an adult is incapable independently assess the results of his actions. Perhaps the philosopher is right when indicates that the method of education with the help of "natural consequences" teaches the educators to analyze their own motives more seriously.

Herbert Spencer followed democratic and progressive views. He singled out the following general tasks of education as full development of a child, specifying the full description of intellectual, moral and physical development.

The educational views of H. Spencer and his theoretical and practical contribution to solving the problem of individual education of children in public and family education were systematised and analysed. General tasks of education as full development of a child, specifying the full description of intellectual, moral and physical development were singled out.