



**Natalia Bohdanets-Biloskalenko** – Doctor of Pedagogical sciences, Head of the scientific subsection of Languages of Other Ethnic Minorities and Foreign Literature Teaching Department of the Institute of Pedagogy of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine; Izmail State University of Humanities, Professor.

**Research interests:** historical and methodological aspects of Children's Literature; study on the heritage of distinguished persons of the past; methodology of teaching reading in primary school, textbooks development in Ukraine, integrated teaching of language and literature of ethnic minorities

**e-mail:** [nataliabogdanets@gmail.com](mailto:nataliabogdanets@gmail.com)

**ORCID iD:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6793-8018>



**Tetiana Havrylenko** –

Doctor of Pedagogical sciences; Social work and Pedagogical Sciences Department, Professor; Chernihiv T.H. Shevchenko National Teachers' Training University

**Research interests:** history of primary education in Ukraine, methodology of historical and pedagogical research, pedagogical source studies, bibliography

**e-mail:** [leonida13@ukr.net](mailto:leonida13@ukr.net)

**ORCID iD:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9412-5805>

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## THE RELEVANCE OF Y.F. CHEPIHA'S IDEAS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW UKRAINIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

*(to the 145th anniversary of the pedagogue)*

In the article, the issue of actualization of cultural and educational heritage of the prominent Ukrainian scholar and educator, psychologist and public figure of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Yakov Feofanovych Chepiha (1875-1938) in the contemporary education of Ukraine is addressed; the scientist's thoughts concerning training and education of children in primary school, which are deemed to be significant and relevant at the current stage of development of primary education in Ukraine are ascertained, notably the issues of national education of a learner (a child), the unique role of a native language in harmonious-and-spiritual development and formation of a personality, and the basic principles of the national school, an image of an ideal teacher, and methodological aspects of teaching children reading using the method of whole words, etc.

It is established that the scholar attached great importance to personality development as well as to the activities of a teacher himself and made demands on him. A teacher was expected to be creative, energetic, proactive, and enhance inclinations of talented and gifted children. The scientist encouraged pedagogues to abandon obsolete and inefficient methods of the educational system. In the educational field, this message remains relevant thus far in the context of the New Ukrainian School.

Exploratory work of the scholar is able to enrich the scientific foundations of teaching and education of children in primary school and, meanwhile, induce a discussion, new scientific studies and research.

**Keywords:** primary education; national education; teacher; junior pupils; Y.F. Chepiha, Ukraine.

**Problem statement.** Nowadays, in order to study the changes occurring in the primary education system and the introduction of the New Ukrainian School it is necessary to study historical and pedagogical experience of the past to identify achievements, understand contemporary transformations and define prognostic vectors of its development. In this context we consider it important to study the pedagogical oeuvre of the famous Ukrainian scientist, teacher, psychologist, publicist, statesman and public figure Yakiv Feofanovych Chepiha (1875-1938), whose name was not acknowledged in Ukraine for a long period of time. This year marks his 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

During his life, Yakov Chepiha (his real name was Zelenkevych) wrote 150 scientific papers on the theory and practice of pedagogy, history, psychology, formation and development of education. He wrote meaningful and topical manuals, books and textbooks for children and adults.

However, the problem of primary education development is a central one in his pedagogical oeuvre. And no wonder, because Yakiv Feofanovych finished Teachers training seminary in Novyi Buh, where he acquired a thorough professional knowledge as well as his first practical experience of teaching in primary school; he worked as a teacher in primary schools; he was an expert in primary schools in Kiev; he taught Methodology of primary education [1, pp. 89, 93, 95] at the Kiev Institute of National Education. Considerable practical experience became a basis for writing a number of works concerning junior pupils training and education; Ukrainian-language textbooks in literacy, reading, mathematics for junior pupils; teaching manuals for primary school teachers.

**Analysis of the recent research and publications on the problem under research and definition of the aspects of the problem under consideration.** Scientific and pedagogical oeuvre of Y.F. Chepiha, in particular his scientific views on the theory and practice of teaching and educating children in primary school, is studied by such Ukrainian historians of pedagogics as L.D. Berezhivska, N.I. Bohdanets-Biloskalenko, L.T. Nikolenko, H.M. Chernenko, et. al. The main aim is to determine the relevance of Y.F. Chepiha's ideas in the context of the development of modern primary education in Ukraine.

**Presentation of the main material.** We should mention that the article deals with the scientist's works published during the Imperial period, i.e. at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We consider the early period of his pedagogical creativity to be the most fruitful one, and his ideas expressed at this time to be quite innovative and science-based at the same time. Probably that is why most of his works written during the mentioned period were published once more after 1917.

Study and analysis of his early works show that their main idea was national education of younger generation, as well as in the works of many other prominent cultural and public figures of that time in the contest of oppression of everything connected with Ukraine. It is striking that under conditions of severe oppression and persecution of Ukrainians by the Russian autocracy, Yakiv Feofanovych was working for the Ukrainian national revival, the creation of a Ukrainian primary school, teaching children in their native language. In his articles "Nationality and national school" (1910), "Fundamental principles of normal school" (1911), "National teacher and national question" (1912), "Project of the Ukrainian school" (1913) and others he argued that due to the national education an individual is developed, his national character and worldview are formed [8]; [6]; [7]; [10]. He mentioned that a school as well as a family played an important role in solving this problem. Y.F. Chepiha wrote that a teacher should teach the history, culture, traditions, customs of his nation starting from the first days of a child's education in school; to develop patriotic features [6, p. 4]. So, according to the prominent teacher's ideas the task of a school is to educate children on a national basis who are conscious patriots and "useful" citizens of their country "with the extensive self-knowledge and self-determination" and would become real members of their society and in the future would take an active part in the process of the state formation [7, p. 23]. The national and patriotic education of primary school pupils is an urgent one and especially important and evident under conditions when Ukraine needs to maintain its independence and integrity.

Ya. Chepiha puts forward the main requirement for the national school, i.e. teaching in the native language. In the works "Nationality and National School", "National Education", the scholar would turn to the demonstration of the connection between the native language, the speech of an individual and the development of thinking, imagination and activities of a child. He believed that the world was grounded on indisputable laws of consistency. This is particularly true for a language and a thought, which are closely connected with the speech. The law of consistency integrates a language with imagination, verbal expression and a sentence: "Firstly, the child absorbs with his senses words-ideas that have a specific ground, absorbs them physiologically, and then combines them by association and assimilation, and forms the complex meaning that adults indicate by words" [10, p. 18]. And this is possible in the native language. The teacher thoroughly and consistently observes how difficult it is for a child to study in a foreign (Russian) language. He offers concepts to be used the mother tongue in the national Ukrainian school:

- the native language is a treasure of the nation;
- in the native language, the most precious and the best foundations of culture are hidden, which enable a person to attain the highest levels of comprehension of spirit and mind;
- a language is a spiritual, moral and ethical basis, the past and the present of the people, an individual and the whole nation.

These generalized hypotheses addressed the child in the national context of the personality formation in educational institutions by Ya. Chepiha. Now we should turn back once again to the comparison with the work by Yakov Feofanovich "Nationality and the national school": "The native language is a national treasure; it contains and preserves the most precious, dearest and most valuable - everything that is able to raise a person to the highest stages of the cultural level, everything that the developmental, moral and cultural life is based on - the past and the future. The language is the work of the people's spirit and its living activity. That is why it becomes a vivid expression of an individual and the entire nation" [10, p. 21].

No less important problem at the present stage of primary education development in Ukraine is the formation of healthy lifestyle among primary school pupils, because modern society needs physically, mentally and socially healthy citizens able to give birth to healthy offsprings, to save the genefond of the nation. Y.F. Chepiha paid special attention to this problem. Its actualization was due to the low level of physical state of primary school pupils. The majority of children had health problems, they were weak and feeble. In his article "Physical education" (1913) the teacher stated that there were no healthy pupils in his school among those who were examined by a doctor [9]. He mentioned that one of the reasons of the low level of physical health of children was such organization of the educational process which did not correspond to the physiological and psychological characteristics of a child. Pupils had to sit for a long time, they suffered from mental strain and organs of vision intensive work, etc., whereas the muscular system was not active, which negatively influenced functional systems of a child's organism. Monotonous work without any movements and changes tired child's organism very quickly. Therefore, such organization of educational process resulted in weakening of pupils' health, caused so-called school diseases, mental disabilities. In addition, the scientist noted that teachers and parents were focused on "mental education" of their children, and as a result they did not pay great attention to their physical education and development [9, p. 38]. Yakiv Feofanovych considered balanced feeding, fresh air, healthy sleep as well as manual labour, outdoor games and gymnastic exercises to be important means of improving the general health of children and their physical development.

Let us focus our attention on the fact that the scientist considered physical education to be an important factor in children's mental development as well as a means of improving their health. For instance, on the basis of the results of experimental researches done by such Western scholars as Zakh, Hratsianov, Halton, Porter and others he showed a direct correlation between pupils' achievements and their physical health and development in his article "Physical education". He agreed with the ideas of the founder of a scientific system of physical education P.F. Lesgaft that there are no harmony "in the development of an organism" of a child with poor physical development, but with good mental abilities; and it "leads to negative results: a child is able to think and understand, but there are no energy and strength to realize his ideas in practice. In such cases, the harmony of the activities of the body organs is destroyed

and organism works in a wrong way because some organs are more developed than others” [9, p. 46]. Therefore, the teacher came to the conclusion that “a child should be developed physically and mentally simultaneously and even more physically in order mental side is not delayed” [9, p. 55]. Moreover, he emphasized that pupils’ psychological state as well as intellectual development depends on the physical state of an organism. We consider these ideas to be essential: they should be taken into account while teaching junior pupils in the modern primary school.

As it was mentioned above, today scientists and teachers must solve the problem concerning determination of optimal duration of primary education. The majority of Ukrainian teachers believe that it is necessary to lengthen the duration of primary education from four to five and even six years. In this regard, let us refer to Y.F. Chepiha’s views on this problem. They are reflected in his work “Project of the Ukrainian school” published on the pages of the first in Dnieper Ukraine Ukrainian pedagogical journal “Svitlo” (1910-1914). We should mention that in this work the famous teacher presented an original theoretical model of primary school with a clearly defined aim, structure, content and teaching methods. The scientist considered free, all-round, harmonious development of a person based on the principles of child-centrism, naturality, culturality, nationality, humanism, democracy, etc. to be the main aim of the primary school [12]. It is deemed possible to assert that the scholar’s research results are synergetic with the strategies of the New Ukrainian School.

According to the teacher’s ideas children should start to go to school at the age of six, since at this time they are eager for knowledge and independent activity. At the same time, a six-year-old child does not detest “book science”, he investigates the real world and analyses concrete things. Therefore, the “book teaching” is not a conscious need for a six-year-old child [6, pp. 15-16]. Taking into consideration these ideas Y.F. Chepiha believed that primary education should be carried out in two stages and last for six years. The first or “preparatory” stage was expected to last for two years, during these period children would have been prepared for systematic learning, their consciousness, understanding of the surrounding world would have been developed too. This period significantly differed from a usual school education: free education; absence of strict educational programs, lessons. Great attention is paid to games, amusements, walks, work in the kitchen garden, in the field, pet grooming, modelling, reading fairy tales. Children are taught in the field, meadow, forest, garden, kitchen garden, i.e. there is a direct connection between children and native nature [6, pp. 17-18]. Later the famous Ukrainian teacher V.O. Sukhomlynskyi called it “the school under the sky”.

Y.F. Chepiha considered spring, summer and autumn to be the best time for teaching children during the first two years, because nature returns to life in spring, works during summer and breaks its activity off in autumn. In winter nature rests, and therefore a child from six to eight years should relax. Such organization of the school year, according to the scientist’s ideas, has a physiological basis. It is difficult for a child of this age to stand low temperature, he needs a rest after work, interpretation of experience, etc. [6, pp. 18-19]. However, this approach to organization of education was not supported by the teaching community. But should not we take into consideration the ideas of the famous teacher and adapt training to the needs of a child, its nature?

According to The Project of the Ukrainian School the second or “book” stage of primary education lasts for four years. As the scientist said, “This period of education does not mean the modern system of book education, with all its methods and programs; it is a period when a child learn to read and write” [6, p. 12]. The following subjects are compulsory to be taught at this stage of education: native language, arithmetic, natural history, history, geography, manual labour, painting, singing, etc.; special attention is paid to the development of children’s talent activities and creativity.

The Project of the Ukrainian School was created by Y.F. Chepiha taking into account the achievements of foreign and national pedagogics and psychology of that time, and it was a perspective one. The ideas expressed by the teacher in this work concerning the organizational and pedagogical basis of education in primary school require interpretation and creative use at the modern stage.

One of the spheres of Y.F. Chepiha’s research at the early period of his scientific and pedagogical creativity was the differentiation and individualization of teaching. In his articles “Stepchildren of the school” (1908), “The Russian school and talented children of the nation” (1911), etc. he stressed on the

fact that a teacher should thoroughly examine the individual characteristics of each pupil and take them into account in the process of training and education [3]; [11]. The pedagogue supported K.D. Ushynskiy's ideas that a class should be divided into groups depending on pupils' abilities and each group should be offered differentiated tasks. In his work "Stepchildren of the school" the teacher gave a description of "backward" and "talented" pupils, focusing on the fact that the content, methods and tempo of their training should be different [3].

From the standpoint of the present days Y.F. Chepiha's ideas deserve special attention concerning teacher's work with such categories of children. Thus, working with slow pupils a teacher should understand them as much as possible; look attentively at every detail of a child's life; find hidden abilities, identify positive features of a person and use them in educational process. "Quite attentive analysis of a child's soul is enough to recognize intellect, power of observation and imagination, i.e. intellectual power different from others, but a clever one" [3, № 9, p. 8]. Special attention is paid to "talented" pupils. According to the scientist's ideas there is no need to build separate schools for them, the main thing is that one should not delay their development giving a lot of unnecessary material, but to teach and educate them [3, № 10, p. 10].

Today one of the priority tasks of the primary school is differentiation of education; maintaining of individual educational trajectory of pupils' development taking into consideration their personal needs, interests and abilities; and it is especially important to help pupils lagging behind as well as talented pupils, so they will not become "the stepchildren of the school" as Y.F. Chepiha wrote.

The analysis of the first works which were written by the scientist shows that he also paid attention to the problems of methods of teaching certain subjects in primary school. We consider the teacher's ideas concerning teaching reading and writing methods to be essential in the context of the development of modern Ukrainian language teaching methods in primary school. We should note that the main teaching reading and writing method was phonetic analytical-synthetic one, which was popular at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> – at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and was introduced into the activity of the national school in 1934. At the same time our educational program concerning Ukrainian language contains the idea that while teaching literacy "it is possible to use other methods just as well, in particular a method of full words" [5].

Method of full words or "American method" was suggested by the French teacher Jean-Joseph Jakotot at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was popularized in Ukraine at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Y.F. Chepiha. This method stipulates that pupils (in spite of the fact they do not know letters) memorize by means of visual perception of the image of the word without its division into syllables, sounds, letters. According to Y.F. Chepiha's ideas method of full words is a natural one for children because the whole word/sentence is a basis of perception [13, p. 23]. The teacher preferred methods of full words to phonetic analytical-synthetic one concerning teaching reading and writing in primary school, though he considered it more difficult than the previous one. Moreover, the scientist considered it natural to use these methods in combination. The pedagogue described the peculiarities of teaching reading and writing in primary school according to the "sound-word" method in his articles "Combination of word and phonetic methods in teaching reading and writing" (1909) and "Phonetic-word method in teaching reading and writing" (1910) [4]; [13].

Taking into consideration that such integrated teaching literacy method was tested and scientifically grounded we consider it possible to use it in the process of teaching reading and writing in primary school at the present stage. We agree with the ideas of the specialists in primary education (N.I. Bohdanets-Biloskalenko, M.D. Sahariichuk) that the combination of the full words and phonetic analytical-synthetic methods in teaching literacy "makes the cooperation between pupil and teacher possible in the process of formation of reading skills and development of all kinds of speech activity, especially auding, listening, understanding" [2, p. 27].

Yakiv Chepiha comprehended the principal point that projects and ideas concerning school and practical implementation thereof in education and teaching depends on the personality of the teacher, his influence on a child [2, p. 115]. The aforementioned idea and many other about a teacher and his role in the society are considered in his first monograph "Teacher self-development" (1913) [14].

Ya. Chepiga believes that the noble mission of a teacher is not limited to the educational process. A teacher is “a trustee of the people”, “a trustee of the nation in the course of upbringing and educating of the new generation” [14, p. 13].

We would like to focus our attention on Y.F. Chepiha’s ideas concerning the features a teacher should have. Thus, Yakiv Feofanovych describing the image of a teacher-humanist underlined that a teacher should love children. Of course, it is very difficult for a teacher to love each pupil but he should do everything in order not to spoil a child’s soul. “Cultivate love, – mentioned the scientist, – be kindly hearted, pay attention to the child’s personality, cultivate warmth and tenderness to the child, his/her grief and joy” [12, p. 11].

One of the priority qualities a teacher should cultivate is kindness. Because goodness, kindness, grace unlike evil, gloom and shouting positively influence children, their peace of mind. “The soul of a child under such influence of teacher’s goodness becomes opened, the teacher becomes conscious of secret corners of the child’s feelings, his inner life” [12, p. 18]. Y.F. Chepiha considered fairness to be an integral professional quality of a teacher. In order to care of children the scientist recommended that a teacher should “empathize with them”, “feel their mood” and “support them. And then there will be a natural understanding of fairness” [12, p. 15]. According to the pedagogue’s ideas there are some more features a teacher should have: patience and self-control. In our opinion, these requirements are still important and relevant nowadays.

Ya. Chepiha’s principal thesis concerning the ideal of a teacher is love for children. The scientist argues that it is necessary to foster the virtues of justice, kindness and patience, which preserve one’s soul intact despite occasions, and, of course, try to stay untainted by any anti-moral developments. The pedagogue emphasized the necessity of constant self-improvement of a teacher throughout one’s life, and this remains quite relevant today, especially in the context of introducing the reform of the New Ukrainian School. Ya. Chepiha compares the life in pedagogical activities with the natural phenomena of water. “Stagnant water rots. The running one, while gaining strength and power in the fight against barriers, flows clean and transparent. Constant work on oneself purifies the soul of silt and dirt of life. It gives the forth to carry one’s sincere impulses clean of falsehood until the day” [14, p. 17]. The truthfulness of the approach to self-education goes beyond the scope of pedagogical activities. In fact, it is desirable for every person, despite the position he or she occupies in the society, to have one’s own program of self-improvement.

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** In conclusion we should mention that the ideas of the famous Ukrainian teacher Y.F. Chepiha developed by him 100 years ago concerning national and patriotic education, healthy lifestyle, organization of primary education, differentiation and individualization of teaching junior pupils, approaches to teaching literacy, etc., are still significant at the present stage of primary education development in Ukraine. The comprehensive study of the scientist’s works enriches the scientific basis for education and teaching children in primary school; and at the same time it provokes to discuss such problems, to research new things in the sphere of primary education.

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**Наталья Богданец-Белоскаленко**, доктор педагогических наук, заведующая отделом обучения языкам национальных меньшинств и зарубежной литературы Института педагогики НАПН Украины, г. Киев, Украина.

**Татьяна Гавриленко**, доктор педагогических наук, профессор кафедры социальной работы и образовательных и педагогических наук Национального университета «Черниговский колледж» имени Т. Г. Шевченко, г. Чернигов, Украина.

### АКТУАЛЬНОСТЬ ИДЕЙ Я. Ф. ЧЕПИГИ В КОНТЕКСТЕ НОВОЙ УКРАИНСКОЙ НАЧАЛЬНОЙ ШКОЛЫ (к 145-летию педагога)

В статье затрагивается вопрос актуализации культурно-просветительского наследия известного украинского ученого-педагога, психолога, общественного деятеля начала XX века Якова Феофановича Чепиги (1875–1938) в современном образовании Украины, отражены идеи ученого об обучении и воспитании детей в начальной школе, которые не утратили значимости на современном этапе развития образования в Украине. В частности, в статье освещаются вопросы национального воспитания ученика (ребенка), важной роли родного языка в

гармонично-духовном розвитку и становлении личности, основополагающих принципов национальной школы, образа идеального учителя, методических аспектов обучения детей чтению с помощью метода целых слов и др. Выяснено, что большое внимание ученый уделял вопросам воспитания личности, а также деятельности самого учителя, выдвигая к нему определенные требования. Он должен быть творческим, активным, инициативным, развивать задатки талантливых детей. Ученый призывал педагогов отбрасывать старые, нецелесообразные способы обучения и воспитания. Этот призыв остается актуальным в образовательной сфере до сих пор в условиях реформы Новой украинской школы. Педагогические изыскания Я. Чепиги обогащают научные основы обучения и воспитания детей в начальной школе и одновременно побуждают к дискуссии, к новым поискам и исследованиям. Авторы статьи обращают внимание на актуальность идей Я. Чепиги в практике начальной школы.

**Ключевые слова:** начальное образование; национальное воспитание; учитель; младшие школьники; Я. Ф. Чепига; Украина.

*Наталія Богданець-Білокаленко, доктор педагогічних наук, завідувачка відділу навчання мов національних меншин і зарубіжної літератури Інституту педагогіки НАПН України, м. Київ, Україна.*

*Тетяна Гавриленко, доктор педагогічних наук, професор кафедри соціальної роботи та освітніх і педагогічних наук Національного університету «Чернігівський колегіум» імені Т. Г. Шевченка, м. Чернігів, Україна.*

### АКТУАЛЬНІСТЬ ІДЕЙ Я. Ф. ЧЕПИГИ У КОНТЕКСТІ НОВОЇ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ПОЧАТКОВОЇ ШКОЛИ (до 145-річчя педагога)

У статті порушується питання актуалізації культурно-освітніх надбань відомого українського вченого-педагога, психолога, громадського діяча початку ХХ століття Якова Феофановича Чепіги (1875-1938) в сучасній освіті України, висвітлено ідеї вченого щодо навчання і виховання дітей у початковій школі, які не втратили значущості на сучасному етапі розвитку освіти в Україні. Зокрема питання національного виховання учня (дитини), виняткової ролі рідної мови в гармонійно-духовному розвитку й становленні особистості, основоположним принципам національної школи, образу ідеального вчителя, методичним аспектам навчання дітей читання за методом цілих слів тощо. Цьогоріч виповнюється 145 років з дня народження Я. Чепіги. Педагог є автором 150 наукових праць, присвячених проблемам теорії й методики навчання та виховання, численних підручників і методичних посібників для вчителів. Проте центральне місце у педагогічній спадщині вченого посідали питання розвитку початкової освіти в Україні. У статті проаналізовано праці вченого, опубліковані на початку 10-х рр. ХХ ст. На думку авторів, саме ранній період педагогічної творчості Я. Ф. Чепіги був найпліднішим, а ідеї щодо навчання і виховання дітей у початковій школі, висловлені в цей час, достатньо сміливими, новаторськими й водночас науково обґрунтованими. З'ясовано, що значну увагу вчений звертав на виховання особистості, а також на діяльність самого вчителя, висував вимоги до вчителя. Він повинен бути творчим, активним, ініціативним, підтримувати задатки талановитих дітей. Вчений закликав педагогів відкидати старі, недоцільні способи системи навчання і виховання. Цей заклик залишається актуальним на освітянській ниві й дотепер в умовах реформи Нової української школи. Напрацювання вченого збагачує наукові засади навчання і виховання дітей у початковій школі й водночас спонукає до дискусії, до нових пошуків та досліджень. Автори статті звертають увагу на актуальність ідей Я. Ф. Чепіги у практиці початкової школи.

**Ключові слова:** початкова освіта; національне виховання; учитель; молодші школярі; Я. Ф. Чепига; Україна.