

REVIEW

International legal and theoretical perspectives on general secondary education

Perspectivas jurídicas y teóricas internacionales sobre la enseñanza secundaria general

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the article addresses the problem of defining the conceptual and categorical framework and systematic features of the definition of the term “general secondary education”.

Objective: the article examines the level of informational-psychological safety and psychological safety indicators and their relationship with resilience indicators have been studied.

Method: general scientific methods were employed, such as analysing scientific sources, systematisation, generalisation method, survey.

Results: it has been determined that interpreting the aspects of achieving educational outcomes in the general secondary education system through the prism of the legislative framework has a conceptual appropriation. However, it requires expansion in matters of subject-practical regulation at the level of the corresponding educational environment, such as general secondary education and other previously mentioned educational clusters. The necessity of introducing an integration approach to intra-educational equality by each educational institution has been established. This may cause inconsistencies in implementing national legislative provisions at the local level.

Conclusions: thus, a set of proposals by the educational sector’s legislator aimed at improving the gender-social components of acquiring professional knowledge in general educational institutions could serve as a mechanism for resolving such situational conflicts. These proposals could subsequently be incorporated by general secondary education institutions into their statutory and regulatory programmatic documentation, proportionally reflecting the peculiarities of their functioning.

Keywords: Education; Legislative Educational Framework; General Secondary Education; Educational Programme; Scientific Community; Educational-Social Inclusion.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el artículo aborda el problema de definir el marco conceptual y categorial y las características sistemáticas de la definición del término «educación secundaria general».

Objetivo: el artículo examina el nivel de seguridad informativa-psicológica y se han estudiado los indicadores de seguridad psicológica y su relación con los indicadores de resiliencia.

Método: se emplearon métodos científicos generales, como el análisis de fuentes científicas, la sistematización, el método de generalización y la encuesta.

Resultados: se ha determinado que interpretar los aspectos del logro de los resultados educativos en el sistema de educación secundaria general bajo el prisma del marco legislativo tiene una apropiación conceptual. Sin embargo, requiere una ampliación en materia de regulación sujeto-práctica a nivel del entorno educativo correspondiente, como es la educación secundaria general y otros clusters educativos anteriormente mencionados. Se ha establecido la necesidad de introducir un enfoque integrador de la igualdad intra-educativa por parte de cada institución educativa. Esto puede causar incoherencias en la aplicación de las disposiciones legislativas nacionales a nivel local.

Conclusiones: así pues, un conjunto de propuestas del legislador del sector educativo dirigidas a mejorar los componentes de género-sociales de la adquisición de conocimientos profesionales en los centros de enseñanza general podría servir como mecanismo de resolución de tales conflictos situacionales. Estas propuestas podrían ser incorporadas posteriormente por los centros de enseñanza secundaria general a su documentación programática estatutaria y reglamentaria, reflejando proporcionalmente las peculiaridades de su funcionamiento.

Palabras clave: Educación; Marco Educativo Legislativo; Enseñanza Secundaria General; Programa Educativo; Comunidad Científica; Inclusión Educativo-Social.

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical and, consequently, practical understanding of the conceptual and categorical framework, as well as the systematic features of the definition of the term “general secondary education,” has a particular level of academic applicability in the context of further conceptualisation of the research tools in this study.

The article aims to explore the conceptual and categorical features of general secondary education and to outline the author’s approaches and positions on improving the conceptual framework of this research area, considering the above-mentioned scientific iterations.

Literature Review

To reveal the systematic features of the conceptual arrangement of the term “general secondary education” and to define its characteristics, we propose to conditionally divide the analysis into foreign and scientific appropriations on this topic. This is done in proportion to the definition of the following terms: “educational programme,” “scientific community,” “social-educational accessibility,” “educational-social inclusion,” “pedagogical management,” “pedagogical development,” and others.

The concept of general secondary education has been most comprehensively defined by ISCED, which divided the period between primary education and university into lower and upper secondary education.⁽¹⁾ In E. E. Brown’s work, general secondary education is viewed as a stage of formal education that complements primary education, preparing students, mainly those aged 14 to 18, for entry into higher education institutions, though it requires a sufficient educational foundation.⁽²⁾ Provided that students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills during secondary education, Middeldorp⁽³⁾ highlights the possibility of easing the transition from school to work and obtaining higher-quality vocational and technical education in the future.

During general secondary education, teachers’ duties include implementing the educational programme to achieve high-quality learning outcomes within a specific discipline,⁽⁴⁾ designing the educational process,⁽⁵⁾ involving students in the learning process,⁽⁶⁾ assessing the knowledge acquired by students,⁽⁷⁾ and ensuring equality and inclusivity in the educational environment.⁽⁸⁾

Within the theoretical and legal framework of the concept of general secondary education, it is essential to note that its essence can vary depending on internal characteristics; for example, in countries where general secondary education is compulsory, legislation imposes strict requirements on educational programmes, the quality of education, and the financing of schools.^(9,10,11,12,13) However, there are several countries where general secondary education is not mandatory but is still available to a broad range of students, resulting in less pronounced regulation of the educational sector by the government and the Ministry of Education.^(14,15,16)

Thus, the theoretical and legal justification of the concept of general secondary education requires a comprehensive approach that includes an analysis of current literature in education and the examination of specific aspects of educational functioning in a global context, considering the effectiveness of international practices and models.

METHOD

General scientific methods were employed, such as analysing scientific sources to determine the essence of general secondary education. In contrast, systematisation was used to classify theoretical approaches to understanding critical aspects of modern general secondary education. The generalisation method was used

to form integrated conclusions about the impact of general secondary education on forming a foundation for students' academic and social development.

During the study of the current state of general secondary education, a survey was conducted among 34 respondents, including 17 Ukrainian, 8 Polish, 5 Slovak, and 4 Czech secondary school teachers, who responded on a scale from 0 to 100 points. The main limitation of this study is not only the relatively small sample size but also the restricted scope of the respondents, as the research mainly focuses on schools in Eastern Europe. However, it aims to achieve global representativeness in the future. Further interpretation of the results was based on calculating the weighted average indicator for each evaluation criterion, variation coefficients, consistency and relevance indices. This helped form conclusions about the effectiveness of several aspects and the need to address problematic issues in general secondary education.

Presentation of the Primary Material

The generalisation of the conceptual and categorical as well as essential features of general secondary education as an object of legal regulation and an ideological construct within the framework of a foreign doctrinal structure (foreign researchers and domestic researchers published in foreign scientometric databases - author's note), was carried out by Brown⁽²⁾, Steele⁽⁴⁾, Kushnir⁽¹⁷⁾, Viarengo⁽¹⁸⁾ and others.

For this research and spatial conceptualisation of the defined problematic circle of issues concerning general secondary education, we propose focusing on the scholars' theoretical positions above.

In our opinion, the research of American scholar Brown⁽²⁾ holds a leading place among the analytical outlines of the concept and features of general secondary education, particularly in terms of its specific co-generation within the foreign scientific community.

When considering the term "general secondary education" (which is referred to in the study as secondary education), the scholar insists on classifying this educational stage as a part of the formal education process that ideologically and informationally complements primary education, forming a sort of academic *carte blanche* for the further integration of general secondary education graduates into higher education.

According to the scholar's observations, the age range for integration into the general education environment in the United States is 14-18 years, depending on the academic-developmental goals of the educational institution, which determines the sequence of the educational process. Thus, general secondary education (secondary education), in Brown's view,⁽²⁾ can only be pursued by individuals who have received a sufficient informational and educational springboard before entering this system-spatial educational phase - this cluster can be attributed to the peculiarities of the general education environment generated by this researcher at the theoretical level.

In our view, the above approach to understanding the concept and features of general secondary education is primarily aimed at identifying general secondary education (secondary education) as a compulsory stage in providing a foundation of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the academic and psychological (social) intellectual development of the individual - the general education student.

At the same time, teachers and educators, as providers of educational services, have several obligations towards students, including integrating them into the educational space and creating the prerequisites for their subsequent successful higher education.

It should also be noted that defining the features of general secondary education as an instrument and platform for developing essential skills for further academic understanding of the facts of objective reality can be seen as an innovative definition of general secondary education (secondary education). However, depending on the level of education, it simultaneously requires supplementation according to the criteria of interval distribution and the stylistic content of specific basic educational narratives.

For example, we propose defining general secondary education as a set of theoretical developments that form the foundational basis for further education. Its feature is the fundamental processing of available materials as a stimulus and mechanism for the social formation of the individual.

Another representative of the American doctrinal discourse, Steele⁽⁴⁾ proposed a conceptually distinct and definitionally rich approach to understanding the issues of the conceptual comprehension of general secondary education and its features as a phenomenon of educational, scientific, and social reality.

In his study of the developmental retrospective of higher schools in the USA in the 20th century, he provided categorical definitions for such terms as "general secondary education" (secondary education), "educational programme," and "scientific community," which together determine the author's approach to understanding this phenomenon.

Thus, in Steele's study,⁽⁴⁾ the concept of "general secondary education" (secondary education) is defined as the educational, social, and cultural foundation for the formation of future societal clusters. The success of this foundation is determined by a combination of factors of academic and non-academic origin.

The scholar names, first and foremost, the level of teaching preparedness of educational service providers (i.e., teachers and instructors, depending on the form of academic activity and the organisational-legal

affiliation of the general educational institution) and, secondly, the degree of social orientation of the students toward comprehensive individual development, which is determined by the capacity of family institutions, educational institutions, and state institutions (social, social security, legislative regulation) to normalise everyday life according to needs.

At the same time, the theoretical understanding of the term “educational programme,” as complementary to the central terminological construct (“general secondary education” as defined in the study mentioned above),⁽⁴⁾ is primarily identified with an appropriated and compiled system of materials from theory and practice, which is subject to internal statutory and regulatory arrangements and verified for compliance with the national legislative, educational framework.

The purpose of this approach is to ensure the critical tasks of general secondary education - grouping and stimulating existing, detected, and potentially detectable educational opportunities for a student in a general education institution with the aim of their further stratification in adult life - particularly during the pursuit of higher education, obtaining academic degrees, and entering employment in proportion to their competence and profile.

The scientific interpretation of the term “scientific community,” proposed by Steele⁽⁴⁾ in the study above, also becomes crucial for understanding and identifying the characteristic features of general secondary education as an ideological and regulatory construct.

According to him, the scientific community can be understood as the collective of providers and recipients of educational services, regardless of their level, whose orientation is determined by the complexity, specificity, and levels of knowledge and skills acquired.

Thus, about the general education level, this position allows the author to speak about teachers (instructors) and students (learners) as equal subjects in the educational process who, at the same time, are in vertical legal relationships from the perspective of legal theory (since the learner has obligations towards the provider of education to fulfil the educational programme in order to master the corresponding educational structure systematically).

The combination of the above theoretical positions on the terminological comprehension of the conceptual and categorical framework of general secondary education and related definitions has allowed the formulation of several authorial connotative perspectives.

First, it should be noted that identifying the term “general secondary education” with the educational, social, and cultural spectra of development is considered appropriate and comprehensive conceptually, theoretically, and in terms of definition.

The general education cluster of schooling allows for forming personal (individual) narratives of worldviews, resulting in the distribution of its spheres of influence, which will serve as an element of expanding the functional role of general secondary education as an enlightening ideology.

At the same time, such an interpretation of general secondary education is not fully adapted to the normative orientation of this phenomenon, as state legislative frameworks typically define education solely as a factor in individuals’ academic (and sometimes social) development. However, the combination of education and culture at the level of state regulation is more of an exception than the rule.

Given the existence of the issue above, it is appropriate to discuss the need to amend national legislative frameworks with a clear definition of education as a process, regardless of its level or sequence, aimed at instilling nationally oriented, socially valuable, and civically proactive positions in the individual learner, including at the general education level.

Next, we propose to conduct a focused review and analysis of scientific positions and academic proposals regarding the definition of “general secondary education” and related definitions. We also propose to distinguish the features of general secondary education through the lens of Kushnir’s work,⁽¹⁷⁾ which was published on the official Cambridge University Press website in 2022.

In analysing the specifics and role of the European educational space as a factor and generator of social, academic, and economic development, the researcher noted that the general education level is primarily aimed at guiding the learner towards further conscious academic activity, as during the process of obtaining general secondary education “the learner independently comes to conclusions about the subject area of their scientific interest”.⁽¹⁷⁾

Moreover, the researcher concludes that the networked and sequential division of general secondary education into classes (clusters) allows for its proportional definition according to its purposes, such as the transition from primary education, development, adaptation within the general education environment, and preparation for transitioning to the higher education system.

According to Kushnir,⁽¹⁷⁾ the systemic feature and distinctive characteristic of general secondary education as a process and legal phenomenon, focuses on achieving the appropriate educational outcome. Most often, achieving the educational result is defined at the regulatory and legal level in the state’s education legislation (generally), which usually includes the legislative framework for primary education, general secondary education, and higher education.

At the same time, the approach mentioned above is, in our opinion, characterised by inherent nonlinearities in discursive interpretation. For instance, the legislative regulation of educational purposes is often static and declarative, meaning that it sets the standards for carrying out the educational process at the legislative level in a framework manner.

Therefore, we believe that interpreting aspects related to achieving educational outcomes in the general secondary education system through the prism of the legislative apparatus has conceptual appropriation. However, it requires expansion in terms of subject-practical regulation at the level of the corresponding educational environment, such as general secondary education and other aforementioned educational clusters.

This will directly determine the interdependence and conceptual integration of the elements of educational systems.

In the context of a segmented review of standards and concepts for the conceptual and categorical identification of general secondary education as an element of the educational system within the structure of the European doctrinal system, the work of Viarengo⁽¹⁸⁾ is considered both in demand and ideologically necessary. In her research on aspects of gender inequality in education for the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE), she outlined the critical measures for the functioning of the general education environment in ensuring equality between men and women.

Thus, the study mentioned above notes that general secondary education is not only a source of academic standards but also social standards of self-awareness and social consciousness of the individual.⁽¹⁸⁾ Consequently, the orientation of general secondary education towards achieving results in the form of comprehensive personal development is fulfilling its essential political and economic role, as determined by the national legislator at the level of legislative regulation.

It is worth noting that the economic component of general secondary education, according to the scholar, originates from its regulatory and legal interpretation, which primarily implies the planned, sequential development of the individual. The “dividends” from this can benefit both the individual (the learner) and the state (de facto, the provider of education) in direct terms.⁽¹⁸⁾

The above-mentioned scientific developments are endowed with positive and controversial scientific appropriations in their organic combination of components.

Among the favourable scientific appropriations highlighted in the study mentioned above, we note the direct aspect of structuring the general educational environment based on gender and personal equality. At the same time, these provisions can correlate with such terminological constructs of the educational space as educational-social inclusion and social-educational accessibility.

Under such conditions, the structure of the potential expansion of existing and forecasted measures based on educational equality will be directly conceptualised.

At the same time, the negative dynamics of the construct logical elements discussed in the study mentioned above concerning the provision of gender-social equality manifest in the positioning of the regulatory and legal declaration of these standards at the level of state legal regulation - which, however, does not extend to practical regulatory proposals at the level of implementation by general secondary education institutions.

This situation dictates the need for each educational institution to integrate approaches to intra-educational equality individually, which may ultimately result in discrepancies in the implementation of national legislative prescriptions locally.

A way (a mechanism) to resolve such situational conflict, in our opinion, could be a set of proposals from the educational sector’s legislator to improve the gender-social components of the process of obtaining professional knowledge in general education institutions, which general secondary education institutions could subsequently incorporate into their statutory and regulatory programmatic documentation proportionally to their operational specifics.

RESULTS

In the course of reviewing relevant scientific literature, the following criteria were identified for analysing the modern context of general secondary education: compliance of programmes with modern educational standards; the material and technical base of educational institutions; the level of teacher qualifications; the clarity and effectiveness of regulatory and legal support for education; inclusivity and accessibility of education for different social groups. To form personal conclusions regarding the current development of general secondary education, data were collected from 34 general education school teachers, who evaluated the criteria above on a scale from 0 to 100 points.

The results obtained were interpreted by calculating the weighted average (WA) for each criterion according to the formula:

$$W = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i X_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- W is the weighted average indicator.
- w_i is the weight of the i-th criterion.
- X_i is the score for the i-th criterion.
- n is the - number of criteria.

Calculating coefficients of variation (CV) is also essential in this analysis, which allows one to analyse the variability of the data obtained relative to the average value.

$$CV = \frac{\sigma}{\mu} \quad (2)$$

Where:

- CV is the coefficient of variation.
- σ is the standard deviation.
- μ is the average value of expert opinions.

The next step in the analysis is to determine the consistency (Consistency Index, CI) between the original data,^(19,20) which is calculated as follows:

$$CI = \frac{\lambda_{max} - n}{n - 1} \quad (3)$$

Where:

- CI is the consistency index.
- λ_{max} is the largest eigenvalue of the pairwise comparison matrix.

The last stage of the analysis is the calculation of the Relevance Index (RI),⁽²¹⁾ i.e. the assessment of the importance of each criterion using the following formula:

$$RI = \frac{w_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i} \quad (4)$$

Where:

- RI is the relevance index for the i-th criterion.
- The results of these calculations are shown in table 1.

Criteria	WA	CV	CI	RI
Compliance of programmes with modern educational standards	81,76	12,87	15,74	0,03
Material and technical base of educational institutions	73,68	20,18	27,38	0,03
Qualification level of teachers	77,03	15,13	19,65	0,03
Clarity and effectiveness of regulatory and legal support for education	65,68	20,17	30,72	0,03
Inclusiveness and accessibility of education for different social groups	62,82	19,04	30,31	0,03

A visual representation of the study results is shown in figure 1.

The conducted analysis primarily indicates a high level of compliance of programmes with modern educational standards (81,76), which demonstrates the alignment of this criterion with contemporary educational requirements. However, the results also point to significant discrepancies in the evaluation of criteria such as the material-technical base of educational institutions (27,38), accessibility of education for different social groups (30,31), and the clarity of regulatory and legal support (30,72), which indicates ambiguity in the assessment of these aspects among experts. Thus, to improve the overall state of the education system, it is necessary to focus on improving the material-technical base, increasing the clarity of regulatory and legal support, and addressing issues of inclusivity and accessibility of education for different social groups.

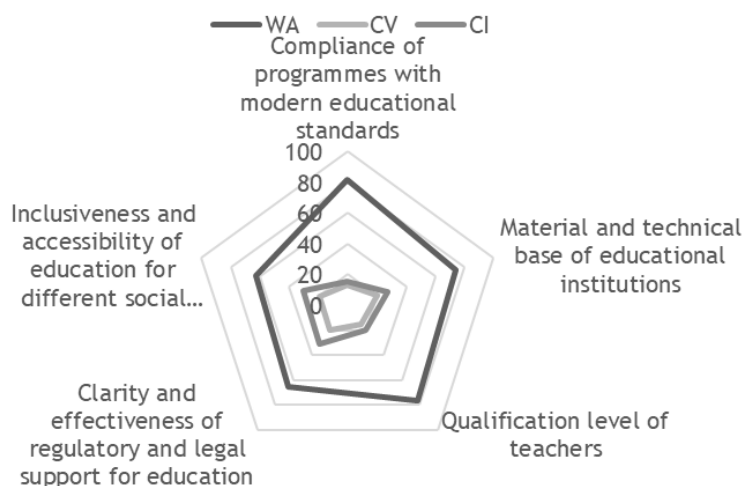


Figure 1. Results of analysing the current state of general secondary education

DISCUSSION

As part of the assessment of the current state of general secondary education, an analysis was conducted, which provides the opportunity to substantiate the positive and negative aspects of the development of the field of general secondary education. Thus, the calculation of weighted average indicators shows that the highest weighted average indicator is observed for the compliance of programmes with modern educational standards. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with the conclusions of Steele⁽⁴⁾ and Casanova et al.⁽⁵⁾ which point to the orientation of modern educational institutions and individual teachers towards designing and improving secondary school curricula.

High values of variation coefficients, especially for the material-technical base of educational institutions and the clarity of regulatory and legal support, indicate significant discrepancies in the assessments among experts, which necessitates further analysis of these aspects of secondary education and education in general. However, the conclusions of modern authors^(11,12,13) point to the insufficient funding of educational institutions, particularly given the need to integrate new technologies into the learning process.

In turn, the relevance index has the same value for all evaluated aspects, which means an even distribution of the significance of criteria for general secondary education. The results of the conducted analysis highlight the problem of ensuring equal access to education for students from different social and material backgrounds, as well as the need to improve the regulatory and legal framework that governs both general secondary education as whole and specific issues of interaction between participants in the educational process and the provision of appropriate knowledge to form a sufficient educational foundation.

CONCLUSIONS

This necessitates a comprehensive examination and revision of the present legal framework to guarantee equal educational opportunities, as well as to promote policies that foster inclusivity and equity in educational institutions. In addition, there is a need to strengthen mechanisms for cooperation between different stakeholders in the education system, such as educators, policymakers, and community members, to create a more responsive and effective educational environment. Legislative provisions should not only protect the right to education but also ensure the efficient allocation of resources to meet the diverse needs of learners. In this context, theoretical perspectives on education should be aligned with practical legal reforms to create a robust system that can adapt to changing societal and educational demands. Ultimately, such an approach will contribute to the development of an education system that supports both individual and collective advancement within a socially responsible framework.

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