

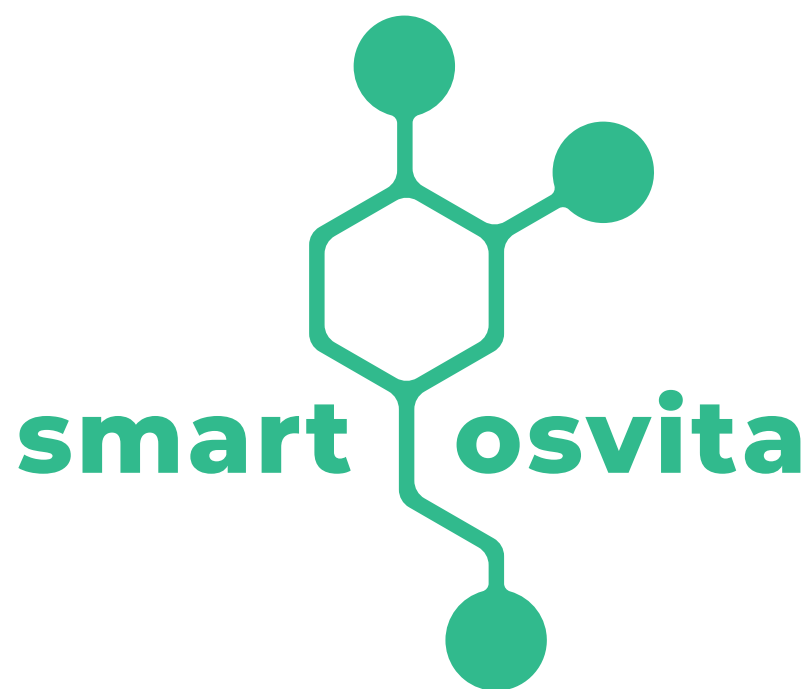
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«NEW UKRAINIAN SCHOOL»

Grades 5 — 6: implementation challenges

Key conclusions and recommendations following the study's findings







ABOUT THE STUDY

The study was initiated and conducted by the “Smart Osvita” NGO in partnership with the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the Center for Political Sociology involving the Institute of Educational Analytics, the NGO Re:Osvita, and the OsvitAnalytika Think Tank from Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University.

This study was conducted with the support of International Renaissance Foundation. The writing team developed this document intending to consider the “New Ukrainian School” reform implementation status within the adaptation cycle in basic secondary education (grades 5-6), current key problems and needs, and possible ways of addressing them.

This report presents the views of the writing team and does not necessarily imply the same views of the International Renaissance Foundation.

This study was presented by the “Smart Osvita” NGO as part of the ENGAGE public activity promotion program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Pact in Ukraine. The study content is the sole responsibility of Pact and its partners and does not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the US Government.

BACKGROUND

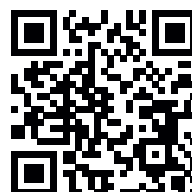
Since 2020, various external factors have been affecting the New Ukrainian School's reform and significantly complicating its implementation. For example, primary school students have spent a lot of time on distance learning, affecting their results to a great extent. However, NUS implementation in basic secondary school then faced even greater challenges: students began entering fifth grade under the new State Standard of Basic Secondary Education just six months after Russia's invasion.

Stress from threats posed by shelling and anxiety for relatives fighting on the front or in Russian-occupied areas have become a common context of the educational process in Ukraine. Some educational institutions – along with their teaching staff – have ended up in occupied areas, other education specialists have enlisted to defend Ukraine, and those left have had to manage their hours between airstrikes and blackouts. Sequestration in favor of the military budget has deprived education of funds allocated for textbooks – in 2022, there was no subvention targeted for the NUS.

That said, the above-mentioned objective factors adversely affecting reform implementation for grades 5-6 are not the only ones.

The author's team carried out a desk review of the reform implementation calendar and found backlogs that had been accumulating since even before the 2022 invasion. Furthermore, some important changes to the educational legislation have not yet been adopted.

The lack of published textbooks for grade 5 for almost the entirety of the 2022/2023 academic year added to educational losses. Unlike for primary school, there were no funds allocated for training resources in secondary school, and the teachers did not receive bonuses for the NUS implementation. Moreover, there were reasons to assume that the training of teachers to work in certain subjects in grades 5-6 under NUS was not properly implemented due to a lack of funding and comprehensive in-person courses. While headed by Serhiy Shkarlet in 2022 and the beginning of 2023, the MESU regularly posted positive messages about “continuing reform,” which did not quite line up with reality, and beyond that distorting the actual situation for the public.



Analysis of the reform
implementation calendar

STUDY METHODOLOGY

To learn the real situation with grades 5-6 under NUS, the study team decided to survey subject teachers working in basic secondary schools.

We focused on the following topics:



advanced training



curricula and textbooks



teaching methods



factors hindering reform implementation



problems related to the evaluation of students' educational achievements under the new system



the mental condition of the educational process participants



educational losses

Along with the sociological survey, the team conducted a desk study by analyzing regulatory documents, data from public sources, and responses to information requests sent to various institutions.

SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

In-depth interviews

During the study field stage, on October 9–22, 2023, and January 8–15, 2024, the analytics of the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation conducted **30 structured interviews involving teachers of grades 5–6** (15 interviews during the first round and 15 during the second). The sample of teachers involved in the interview as respondents differed from those involved as respondents to the survey.

Foundation analysts independently contacted teachers and offered participating in interviews, and found future respondents using the “**snowball**” method (new respondents could invite even more people – thus, the sample was expanded and diversified due to cooperation between study participants). None of the teachers contacted by the Foundation refused to participate in the interview.

The saturation point was reached on the ninth interview respondent during the first round; on the eighth during the second round. Interviews were conducted via phone call at a time convenient for the respondents. The conversations were recorded.



28

women took part in the interview

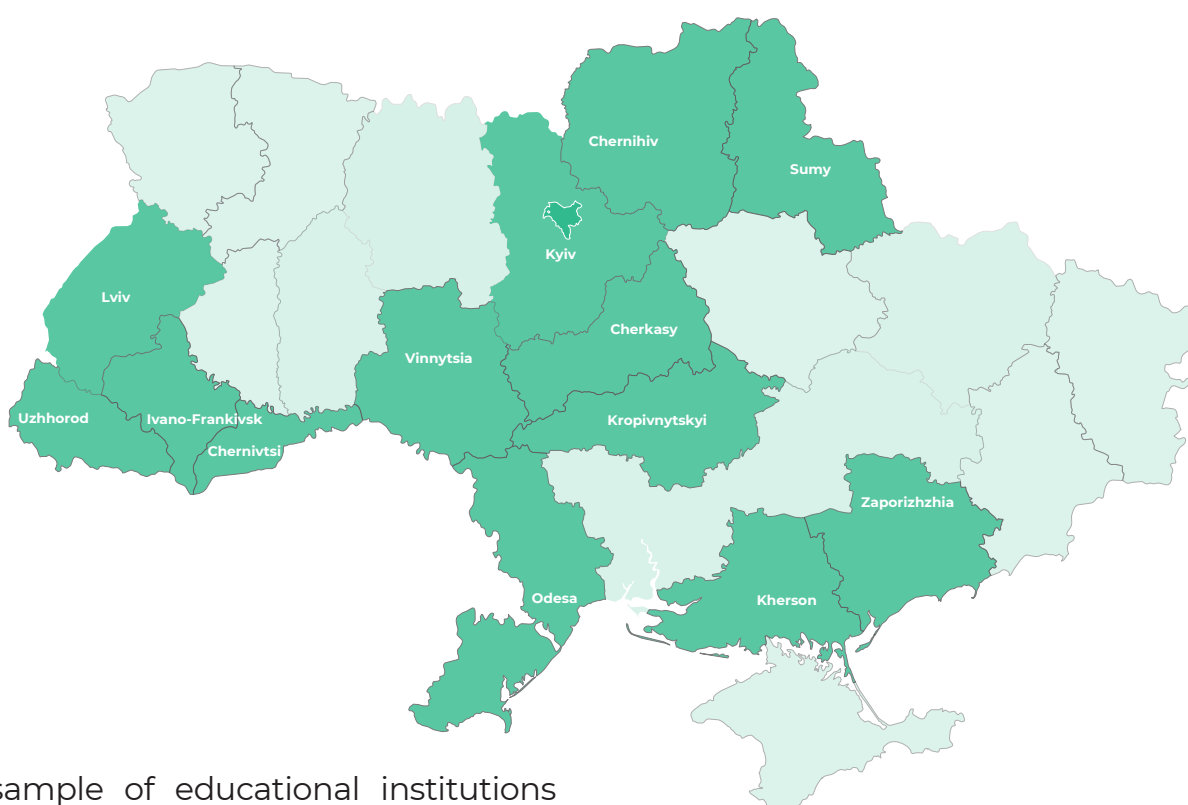


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men (only women took part in the first round interviews)

*The gender imbalance is due to an uneven distribution of men and women in the field.**

Geography of the respondents' residence and employment



The sample of educational institutions features their location distributed by residential classification: capital city, oblast capitals, other towns, and villages.

At the time of the interview, the respondents were grade 5-6 NUS teachers of the following subjects: Ukrainian language and literature, mathematics, English, foreign literature, history, natural sciences, geography, and art.

On average, each interview lasted about 45–60 minutes, including the interviewer's introduction.

* According to the data on the educational indicators dashboard, Ukraine's gender distribution of teachers is: women – 85.2%; men – 14.8%.

The guide for the first round included **five sections comprised of 15 open-ended questions**. The guide was intended to review the following topics:

- respondents' experience during advanced training;
- training selection criteria;
- experience in developing curricula based on the model;
- curriculum selection criteria;
- assessing textbooks used by respondents;
- challenges faced during distance education;
- emotional and mental condition of the respondent;
- experience in supporting students in a vulnerable emotional or mental condition;
- the respondent's experience in compensating for educational losses of students;

The guide for the second round included **four sections comprised of 23 questions: 16 general open-ended questions, 3 open-ended questions that were asked only to respondents with experience teaching under a non-standard curriculum, and 4 general closed-type questions**.

The guide for the second round was aimed to review and clarify (based on a representative study) the **following topics**:

- motivation to teach integrated courses or individual subjects;
- clear differences between textbooks under the new and old State Standards of Basic Secondary Education;
- request for instructional packages;
- respondents' understanding of the "feedback" concept;
- attitude to formative, point-based, and level-based assessment;
- attitude to the NUS reform;
- desired job conditions;
- desired conditions for assessing the teachers' qualifications and competencies;
- advantages and disadvantages of non-standard curricula (this data will be the basis for a separate future study).

A potential limitation of the first field stage of the study was **the imbalance caused by the selection of volunteers** (individuals who strongly opposed the survey and who could probably have opinions differing from those expressed by the respondents were not included in the sample). However, this effect is weakened by the sociologists having turned to the teachers rather than vice versa. To expand the respondents' experiences, we covered different regions of Ukraine, residential types, and teaching subjects.

That said, **teachers who left the country** due to military operations were not included in samples in all study stages. During the interview, respondents did not show any signs of self-censoring their answers. To this end, the interview did not include any questions an educational institution's management might be able to use in pressuring the respondents, or other sensitive questions. Respondents were not asked their name, surname, age, or place of employment, although they could voluntarily provide this information during the interview. Communication with education professionals was direct, not involving the management of educational institutions.

The results of the first round of interviews with teachers were used to finalize the questionnaire for the representative survey, the results of which were then used to refine the guide questions for the second round of in-depth interviews. The second round of interviews was intended to clarify certain data from the previous stages of the study and verify the hypotheses made by the study team.

Quantitative representative survey

Empirical data for the second stage of the study was collected via quantitative survey and conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in cooperation with the Center for Political Sociology from October 23 to November 15, 2023.

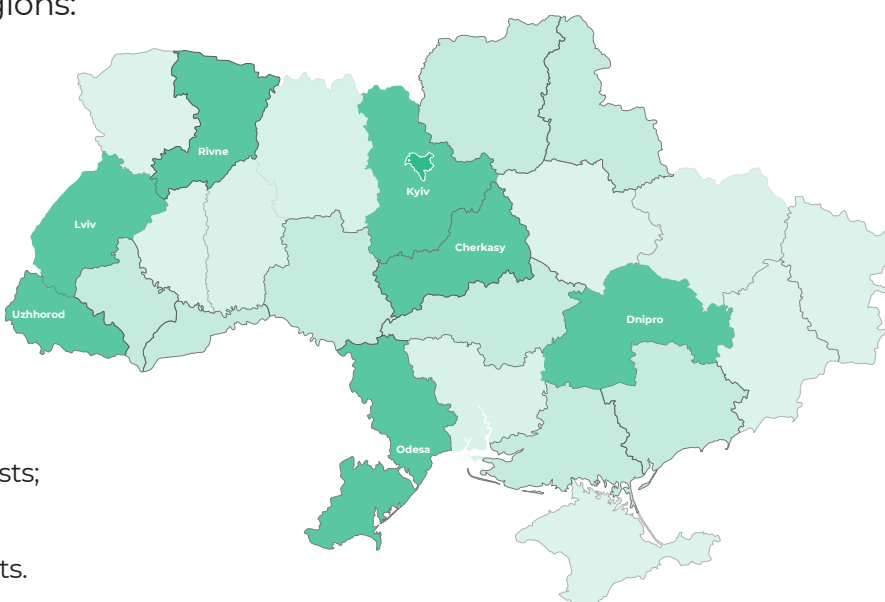
600 teachers of grades 5 and 6 were interviewed by the **face-to-face** method using **multi-stage sampling with random selection** of locations and schools (first stages) and quota selection of respondents (final stage).

The questionnaire included **44 questions**. Teachers filled it out independently in front of interviewers, in educational institutions and their premises, without any third parties beyond the interviewer and respondent.

The **sample frame** reflects the demographic structure of teachers by **macro-region** and **residential type** according to the data of the Institute of Educational Analytics of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine as of September 2022. The sample did not include teachers who were not in the same location as their educational institution when the survey was conducted.

The number of teachers interviewed in each of the macro-regions of Ukraine is proportional to their share in the general totality within the country.

In the second stage, the **key oblasts** of each macro-region were selected. Given the teachers' proportion, three oblasts were selected in the Western (34.19%) and Central (38.09%) macro-regions:



Western macro-region:
Zakarpattia, Lviv, and Rivne oblasts;

Central macro-region:
m. Kyiv, Kyiv and Cherkasy oblasts.

With fewer teachers in the Southern (13.1%) and Eastern (14.62%) macro-regions, one oblast each was selected:

Southern macro-region: Odesa oblast,
Eastern macro-region: Dnipropetrovsk oblast.

In the third stage, questionnaires were distributed in each macro-region between **urban and rural teachers in proportion** to their total number in the relevant location classifications. In each macro-region, cities and villages were randomly selected; and their schools with NUS grades 5-6, respectively.

The maximum random survey error (excluding design effect) does not exceed 4% with a probability of 0.95 (our respondents (NUS teachers of grades 5-6) reflect the views of the general totality with a probability of 95%).

The share of respondents who completed the questionnaire is 100%. The share of refusals to participate in the survey is 0%.

The share of **women** in the sample was 91.5%; **men** – 7%. The rest did not state their gender.



The sample mostly includes teachers of the **following subjects**:



At the time of the survey conduct, most (51%) respondents were **teaching in-person**. 47% of teachers were working in a mixed format, and 2% in a distance format.

55% of respondents had a higher professional grade, and 20% had a first-level professional grade. There were 10% of specialists of the second-level professional degree in the sample/ The remaining teachers – 15% – had a professional level of specialist.

56% of the surveyed teachers did not have any pedagogic rating. A quarter had the senior teacher grade. 19% of respondents had a resource teacher rating.

DESK STUDY METHODOLOGY

The desk study was conducted in the period from September to December 2023 by representatives of the “Smart Osvita” NGO (main part), Volodymyr Bozhynskiy, a researcher at the OsvitAnalytika Think Tank from Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University (analysis of the legislative framework), and NGO Re:Osvita.

In this part of the study, the team intended to clarify the **following questions**:

- whether there is a current backlog compared to the initial reform implementation plan, and if so, in what areas;
- which regulations should be adopted for more efficient reform implementation;
- according to statistical data, how many teachers have undergone advanced training to work in the secondary school adaptation cycle under the new State Standard;
- how did IPPE and ACE address the issue in 2022 given the lack of targeted subvention;
- how the general situation with funding, namely regarding printing textbooks, has affected the already introduced reforms;
- whether the ATC compensated for the lack of subvention on NUS from local budgets, sponsors, or grant funds;
- how the Standard Educational Program for grades 5–9 differs from the one designed in line with the old State Standard in terms of quantity (hours) and content (subjects);
- whether there are any content differences in basic secondary education designed in line with the new State Standard (exemplified by individual curricula and textbooks).



The following approaches were used to review **these issues**:

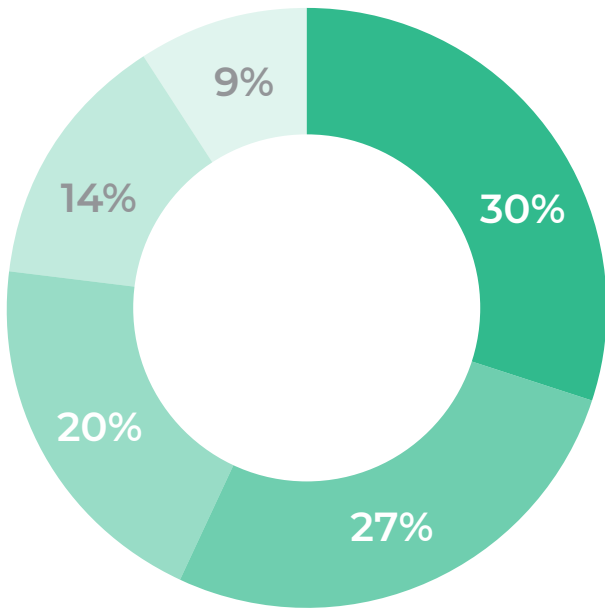
- collection and analysis of public data (legislation, State Standard of Basic Secondary Education, old and new Standard Educational Programs, standard curricula, model programs, pdf versions of textbooks, etc.);
- data collection via requests to field-specific institutions and organizations (MESU, IECM, RMA, IPPE/ACE, SSEQ, UCEQA);
- collected data comparison.

We hope that the study results and the developed recommendations will be useful in the current situation when the NUS reform requires strong state support.

The background is a solid teal color. It features several large, overlapping, semi-transparent white shapes that resemble stylized human figures or abstract organic forms. These shapes are positioned in the upper and lower right areas of the page, creating a modern, minimalist aesthetic.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

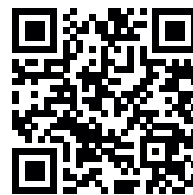
Implications of the teachers' demographic sample



Out of 600 respondents:

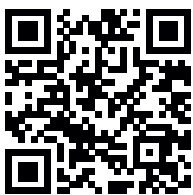
- 30 % are aged 40–49;
- 27 % – 50–59;
- 20 % – 30–39;
- 14 % – over 60;
- 9 % – 18–29.

These data generally coincide with the educational indicators presented on the **dashboard** (the average age of a teacher in Ukraine is 46.1).



Dashboard

According to the “Monitoring study on NUS reform implementation by teaching staff” (SSI Institute of Educational Analytics, 2022), as of the 2021/2022 academic year, the share of teachers under 30 has decreased to 11.7% of the total number of secondary school staff. By contrast, it was 15.5% in the 2017/2018 academic year. One can thereby assume that the government's measures aimed at improving the occupation's prestige are insufficient.



Monitoring study on the NUS reform implementation by teaching staff

Addressing the “occupational aging” problem requires momentous decisions at the level of the state. The situation can be improved by:

- a campaign to create a positive public opinion about the key role of the teacher in the community;

- Reforming the pedagogical education system (practical training of future teachers for the real challenges of school work: the gap between the knowledge acquired at university versus practice, the lack of support in the educational institution later frustrates young teachers);
- wider introduction and financing of mentoring activities in schools, introducing pedagogical internships. Despite the current related regulatory framework, there has been no practical implementation due to total war;
- a significant increase in salaries and a detailed definition of a teacher's job duties in order to improve the educational process quality;
- introducing a new pay system for teachers aimed at their support both in the conditions of the NUS reform and in the difficult conditions of martial law and post-war reconstruction – in particular, through benefits. Such benefits could become an additional factor in making the job attractive and partially compensate for the salary, which is insufficient from the point of view of education specialists.



Problems and needs of young teachers

Advanced training

When initiating the study, the writing team assumed that secondary school teachers did not have sufficient knowledge to work in grades 5-6 of NUS. The following facts supported such a hypothesis:

- lack of funding in 2022 (due to the budget sequestration, it was impossible to hire practical coaches from among the IPPE/ACE employees);
- the mostly remote format of advanced training, making it impossible to review certain practical cases of classroom activities;
- lost time preparing for the reform implementation in grades 5-6 due to the previous MESU leadership's general attitude to NUS.

Given this assumption, we included certain questions in the sociological survey and in-depth interview guides so that we could clarify the situation with advanced training.

We learned that there was a general advanced training related to NUS for most teachers working in grades 5-6:

96% of respondents had undergone training.

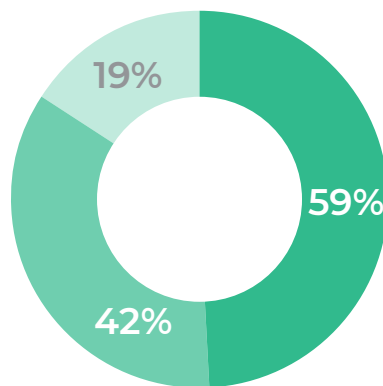
The top 3 organizations providing advanced training related to the new State Standard implementation in basic secondary schools:

- Institutes of Postgraduate Pedagogical Education or Academies of Continuing Education – 85%;
- Civil society organizations (for example, Osvitoria PU, School for Democracy program, etc.) – 22%;
- Institute of Education Content Modernization – 18%.

Teachers are ready to recommend these courses to their colleagues.

Despite the lack of targeted funding from the state, 22% of teachers underwent courses offered by NGOs, which can be considered a successful case.

According to the respondents, the main factors determining course selection are as follows:



- course practical focus – 59%,
- availability of necessary content modules – 42%,
- previous experience of attending courses offered by the particular organizer – 19%.

According to the teachers, other factors are of less importance:

- colleagues' feedback about the course – 13%,
- feedback on the internet – 6%,
- attitude of the principle – 5%,
- course cost – 4%.

We've observed a strong demand for practical training, for the capability to immediately use the acquired knowledge at work.

Teachers most often named the following skills/competencies as mastered:

- methods for evaluation of educational achievements – 45%,
- key competencies development – 39%,
- organizing group work in the classroom – 37%.

At least 6% of teachers admitted that they paid to get a certificate without any training,

however, this number may be as high as 16% because another 10% chose the "Not sure" option when answering a question about the purchase of certificates.

At that, the survey revealed some contradictory facts.

Importantly, **86% of teachers** believe that the knowledge acquired during advanced training is **sufficient**. Still, the answers to other questions indicate that the knowledge acquired by teachers is insufficient and non-systematic.

For example, survey respondents **were asked to choose from 13 skills, methods, and competencies** they were mastering at the advanced training or they were learning to use. Still, **none of the proposed options were chosen by more than half of the respondents** – even though any number of options could be marked.

The problem of the non-systematic and shallow nature of the acquired knowledge is particularly clear in the example of evaluation methods: on one hand, 45% chose evaluation of their students' educational achievements as the best mastered one, while on the other hand, it was named among the **top topics to be studied** in advanced training:

- modern approaches to teaching under NUS – 55%,
- digital technologies for teaching activities – 45%,
- evaluation of students' educational achievements – 42%.

The teachers deem the said three topics (as well as the NUS concept implementation in basic secondary school) to be the most relevant for advanced training, therefore, they are not mastered. Despite the alleged “sufficient knowledge,” these topics require additional attention. We assume that the training of subject teachers, despite its general character in 2023, is still lacking the appropriate quality level. However, teachers almost never directly admit that they lack

knowledge from being too tired and exhausted to attend additional training during off-work time. Data presented in the section “Teachers' mental condition” support this assumption.

According to in-depth interviews, teachers **lacked**:

- practical cases;
- ready-made tools to teach specific subjects;
- time to study the material;
- manuals with course materials;
- training in modern approaches to teaching under NUS;
- training in digital technologies, specific features of online activities;
- information about the specific features of NUS evaluation.



It would be appreciated if there were some specific mentors to turn to at any time, some kind of support. Methodological support, especially when teachers are just beginners. Because there are a lot of such questions. You start asking your colleagues, try to read out any information, or search for it. It's nice they offer seminars, but when you undertake activities, you may need certain answers right here and right now.

(Respondent 7 of the second round, a teacher of mathematics)

The fact that most education specialists underwent targeted advanced training to work with grades 5-6 of NUS offered by IPPE/ACE may be evidence not of the popularity or high level of quality of services provided by these institutions, but of a **systemic problem with the funds' allocation on advanced training**.

Despite the implementation of the “money follows the teacher” mechanism, it rarely applies in practice. More details are available in relevant publications on the NUS website.



On problems and changes
in the advanced training
system for teachers

The study team offers the following possible solutions:

- involve practical coaches, namely, subject teachers from pilot schools, when conducting advanced training based on IPPE;
- review the approximate allocation of hours in the Standard Advanced Training Program for Teachers related to the new State Standard of Basic Secondary Education Implementation and add topics more relevant for education specialists; a similar program for the IGSE principals also requires revision;
- suggest the institutions involved in advanced training reduce the volume of the course material, make it more detailed, and issue a manual with these materials also in digital form.

Collecting data from IPPEs from different regions allowed us to draw up a **comprehensive list of categories of people** engaged as coaches there (subject to funding availability). In our opinion, recommending this list as a reference would cover most of the teachers' needs – both in methodological and practical knowledge of the subject, development of critical thinking, civic consciousness, etc.:

- teachers of pilot schools;
- teachers of regional schools, known for introducing advanced teaching methods (candidates must be submitted by ATCs);
- developers of model programs;
- authors of textbooks;
- employees of CPDTS and inclusive resource centers;

- representatives of civil society organizations;
- teachers of higher education institutions, namely the pedagogical field (this option is mutually beneficial given that their representatives will be able to introduce new approaches to future teachers' training at the place of primary employment based on their experience).

Moreover, the **following measures** should be taken:

- regulate the advanced training market. One relevant tool can be a state platform consolidating all advanced training services providers with the option of collecting feedback from participants, quality control mechanisms, and integrity of the advanced training process for teachers;
- after regulating the advanced training market, launch the “money follows the teacher” mechanism, beyond just on paper, so that this already fair market becomes available to teachers;
- promote partnerships between civil society organizations and IPPE/ACE in the field of advanced training related to NUS introduction in secondary schools. IPPE and ACE can adopt and implement the experience of online courses offered by civil society organizations to improve their solutions;
- apply the successful practice of mass advanced training for teachers working in NUS primary school, namely:
 - completing an online course presenting subject teachers with the philosophy of NUS and the differences between the old and new educational systems; delivering teaching methods in specific educational fields under the new state standard of basic secondary education; introducing modern teaching methods and tools;
 - work with trained coaches locally to consolidate theoretical and practical skills.

Wherever applicable given the security situation, renew an **in-person or mixed format** in advanced training, in particular by NUS coaches working with teachers.

It is also necessary to **improve supervision within NUS**: supporting education specialists to solve their problems and requests.

The said task can be undertaken by CPDTS, **Centers for Professional Development of Teaching Staff**. MESU should motivate communities to establish a CPD or enter into service agreements with CPDs of other communities.

NUS evaluation issues

Based on the survey and in-depth interviews, we can assume that teachers have not mastered formative assessment to an acceptable level.

The in-depth interviews include answers proving that teachers see formative assessment as a purely formal activity – a mandatory written document describing their student's achievements in all subjects including key competencies and cross-cutting skills.

The assumption that teachers do not understand the “feedback” concept is related to the formative assessment: 67% of respondents stated that they usually provide it through personal interaction with a student, which is quite doubtful given the real amount of time available for such communication, especially in an online format. The results of the second round of in-depth interviews proved that teachers see “feedback” as more of students reviewing the education material while having scant ideas about their feedback.

When describing the formative assessment process, teacher-respondents often say they tell children “well done” or “you could do better” during the lesson, stick smileys in workbooks, and give stickers for correct answers. The respondents emphasized that this type of evaluation requires reasoning and focus on the positive aspects of the child's educational achievements.



Formative assessment is about encouragement and praise. For example, “you were at your best today” or “you should work a bit more to have an excellent result.” Or “you were not at your best today” In the NUS classes, we generally try not to evaluate publicly. If there is any formative assessment, it is private.

(Respondent 6 of the second round, a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature)

Some respondents were also highly interested in the compliance of “levels” (level-based assessment) and “points” (12-point scale). Point-based assessment remains important for teachers and parents who need a clear correlation between the knowledge level and points. On the other hand, the respondents of the in-depth interviews claim that NUS students do not deem their grades important.

Therefore, we offer the following solutions:

- pay increased attention to various types of evaluation, in particular, formative assessment, in methodological recommendations when undertaking courses and advanced training;
- teachers note they do not have enough time to conduct formative assessments, therefore, it is worth providing recommendations on an “express format,” for example;
- it will be important to analyze (within a separate study) the professional standards and curricula of higher education institutions in the pedagogical field, to find out whether their programs contain the philosophy of the “New Ukrainian School” reform, specific aspects of its implementation, namely, assessment (formative, level-based, etc.), as well as to examine the readiness of graduates of such higher education institutions to work in NUS. Use the results to recommend such higher education institutions the following: add program modules directly dedicated to NUS, among other things, evaluation issues;
- pay more attention to the “feedback” concept in advanced training, in communication via field-specific media, in methodological explanations, etc.

Integrated courses and individual subjects

Integrated courses within NUS were supposed to decrease the load on students, but the survey showed that most teachers – about

70 %

– still work with individual subjects, not integrated courses.

This may show a reluctance to change the usual work patterns, particularly due to overload and insufficient financial motivation.

Moreover, even given the desire to switch to an integration system, teachers may feel insecure with new material and have insufficient methodological tools or subject knowledge to start integrated courses, therefore being afraid of switching to this format or practicing new methods and techniques in general.



Games, project activities, and other similar creative tasks cannot be the basis of every lesson. In my opinion, there should also be the usual study process, and material consolidation, as well as the acquisition of some basic knowledge.

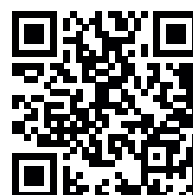
(Respondent 4 of the first round, a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature)

In such a situation, **some solutions** can be applied:

- recommend IPPE/ACE to develop field-specific advanced training courses dedicated to integrated subjects;
improve cooperation with higher education institutions in the pedagogical field on expanding the list of subjects aimed at mastering the content and methods of teaching integrated courses;
- initiate public discussions on the need to reform higher pedagogical education in general: in particular, higher education institutions in the pedagogical field should be more focused on the NUS reform, thereby also developing recommendations, as well as being involved in training and retraining of education specialists for the implementation of the new State standard of basic secondary education;
- additionally, study foreign experience (for example, “reference” textbooks on integrated courses), identify solutions to be used in Ukrainian educational realities;
- recommend that higher education institutions in the pedagogical field teach students to evaluate the quality of educational content and create their materials. Such training can involve all stakeholders, particularly NGOs, authors of textbooks, and so on.

Model programs and textbooks

To learn whether the programs for grades 5-6 based on the new State Standard of Basic Secondary Education contain less study load than the previous ones, we conducted a selective analysis of model programs of Ukrainian language and literature.



Content
of educational
programs
in Ukrainian
language and
literature

The study revealed that the content, the learning goals, and the general approach to studying the Ukrainian language have **almost no differences from those determined in the program developed based on the previous State Standard**. The approach remains “academic” and “theoretical,” while the “linguistic” component of the program prevails over the “speech competence.”

Of the three model programs in Ukrainian literature available for grades 5-6, **teachers most often choose the one that is almost 70% similar to the “old program.”**

The “compromise-based” recommendation to read large texts in their shortened version is still a serious problem, as it has created the illusion that the volume of material has decreased, although there has been no reduction, either in terms of texts to be studied or in terms of theoretical literary material. For example, according to the old curriculum, there were 31 compulsory texts of various genres to be studied in grade 5, while in the new ones, this number is 28, 38, and 44, respectively. If we take, for example, Yatsenko's program in Ukrainian literature for grades 7-9, **interdisciplinary relationships here are broken** as it suggests studying literature of the 20th and 21st centuries chronologically in express mode, while the Ukrainian history and world history programs do not yet include these periods.

We assume that “commitment” to old approaches to learning and specific texts in the case of the Ukrainian language and literature is caused by several factors, namely:

- lack of understanding of how and why to teach “in a new way”;
- fear of making a mistake, of not knowing something (it is safer to teach the “old” way);
- lack of time to master new material in a quality manner;
- inability to master new material due to its inaccessibility (some texts included in the programs are not available, even in bookstores).

This literature and language subject is only one example proving that **approaches to educational content development should be revised**. Therefore, the following measures are required:

- current programs must be reviewed for compliance with the State Standard followed by the adoption of further decisions on their validity until being approved indefinitely, that is, they will be applied and used for textbook compilation unless officially canceled;
- a valuable resource for teachers can be alternative programs focused on practical goals (for example, in the literature and language area – compliance with the principles of reading competence under PISA) or recommendations on ways on more effectively using existing content (modifying programs, using textbook material, etc.);
- the process of improvement and re-approval of programs should be started as soon as possible, better yet even as you read this, so that by 2027, when new textbooks for grade 5 are to be printed, updated programs and educational literature will already be available.

As to the **tailored program development**, the following trend has been observed: even salary bonuses do not motivate teachers to design curricula in contrast to the availability of free time (50% of teachers could be motivated to make a tailored curriculum for a subject by free time, and only 35% by bonuses). At that, 14% of respondents do not plan to design tailored curricula even if given additional incentives or motivations.

As with advanced training, we assume that the teachers' fatigue and exhaustion have reached the point where they require **ready-made (out-of-the-box) solutions**, as they do not have the resources to implement a creative approach to teaching and pedagogical autonomy constantly. Moreover, teachers may lack knowledge on how to develop a program “from scratch” or adapt a model to the needs of one of their students.

On one hand, teachers need ready-made solutions providing them with materials at a minimum sufficient level. On the other hand, this approach does not hinder creative solutions, should a teacher have the time, the will, and the desire.

To support teachers who wish to develop tailored programs but do not have the necessary knowledge, **it is worth:**

- recommending IPPE/ACE to introduce individual courses on curriculum development;
- recommending that higher education institutions in the pedagogical field introduce relevant topics into their curricula.

Teachers have comments on the textbook content (it should be noted that the textbooks are developed based on model programs). The survey results revealed teachers' opinions about textbooks in mathematics, Ukrainian language, Ukrainian literature, and foreign languages.

Comments are mostly related to **the following:**

- **interconnection of educational material with real requests and children's lives** (the indicators are similar for the four subjects listed above: from 29.3% in English to 33% in mathematics);
- **tasks for schoolchildren** (36.7% of the respondents mostly commented on textbooks for Ukrainian literature; less in mathematics – 27.7%; Ukrainian language – 33.1%, and foreign languages – 30.3%);
- **theoretical material content** (in particular, its complexity for children of a certain age – here the least comments were made by teachers of foreign language and mathematics (19.2% and 21.4%, respectively), higher dissatisfaction was observed among teachers of Ukrainian language and literature (30.6% and 28.6%);
- **consistency of theoretical material presentation** (the largest number of comments – from teachers of foreign languages (32.2%), mathematics and Ukrainian literature – 17% and 17.3%, respectively, and Ukrainian language – 24.8%);
- **dissatisfaction with links to electronic resources** ranges from 17.2% to 20.4%, **the presentation style** is the most unsatisfactory for teachers of foreign (18.2%) and Ukrainian (14.9%) languages, and **illustrative material** – for teachers of foreign language (15.2%) and mathematics (17%);
- moreover, during in-depth interviews, teachers mentioned drawbacks of textbooks such as the **discrepancy between material to be covered and lesson duration**.

No comments on textbooks were expressed by:

21,4 % teachers of mathematics

20,4 % Ukrainian literature

19 % Ukrainian language

17,2 % foreign language

Analyzing **several textbooks in Ukrainian literature for grade 5** (based on the most popular program by Arkhypova) and all model programs on this subject for grades 5-9 has revealed that certain **content** does not correspond to the target audience's age (texts with detailed descriptions of death, cruelty, etc.), contains uncommented discriminatory statements (in terms of gender or people with disabilities), and “depressive” narratives in the context of patriotic upbringing. Large arrays of texts in books are available by QR codes, and most stories are shortened, which directly contradicts the global goal defined in programs in literature: to learn to understand a literary work in its stylistic harmony.

We assume that:

- the short cycle of textbook development based on the model program had a drastic effect on the educational content quality;
- the scientific conclusions of textbooks and examinations of the programs, even when properly presented, have not been taken into account by the developers and authors in full;
- teachers are highly dependent on textbooks: they lack time, energy, and knowledge to not teach “by the book,” and given the current situation, this is another reason to increase attention to educational content quality.

Recommendations for improving the situation include the following:

1. Start developing textbooks to be republished in the next cycle and encourage compilation of high-quality **methodological kits** (textbook, workbook for students, and teacher's guide) – **solutions that work out of the box**.
2. Change the competition procedure (in particular, the part related to the presentation of the educational materials to teachers) and the terms for textbook development (to be extended).
3. To **re-examine textbooks**, which are the most complained about in the public space, and to develop methodological guidelines on the proper use of the existing published textbooks following the examination results.
4. Change the general textbook **examination** procedure: extend examination terms; increase responsibility for scores; ensure the anonymity of writing teams; assess with clearly defined criteria rather than express the subjective expert opinion as a justification for conclusions.
5. Change the system of textbook development: currently, given the educational specialists' request to “work as we are used to” (it is always difficult to change things, especially in the conditions of lack of motivation, exhaustion, and war), publishers often do not care about the compliance of textbook materials to the NUS philosophy. Moreover, according to the study, “familiar” textbooks are ordered more often.
6. Give **more time to choose textbooks**, as well as motivate discussion of textbooks by an expert environment to facilitate the selection process for teachers.
7. Review the work of the institution responsible for the textbook examinations (IECM) and decentralize the functions of textbook examination and procurement.
8. On the same note, consider the **likely cost of a published workbook** (to be reprinted every year) to completely replace a student's textbook, and the full cost of a methodical kit, which could include ongoing comprehensive teacher's support by the publisher (for example, advanced training courses).

Teaching online

As to the specific features of **teaching online**:

- 44.3% of respondents noted that this issue was considered in detail in **advanced training courses**;
- 40.4% – was considered, but briefly;
- the rest, that is a total of 15.3% – issue was either not considered at all, or they cannot recall such an experience.

At that, answers to the question about the materials teachers **use when working online** were distributed as follows

- curricula adapted for online – 25.2%;
- special methods of online teaching – 15.2%;
- learning support materials for online teaching – 51.9%;
- digital tools (Radlet, Miro, etc.) – 34.5%;
- none of the above/teaching face-to-face – 23%

According to in-depth interviews, preparation for lessons in grades 5-6, online lessons in particular, takes a lot of time and adds to the exhaustion of education specialists.



To be honest, it's more like a nightmare. Because preparing for a standard lesson takes a lot of time, and preparing for a remote lesson takes even more, indeed much more time than a face-to-face lesson. First, tasks must be selected, then everything has to be assembled, such as videos, presentations, images, and tasks, all put together. For the children to like the lesson, it needs to be prepared, with the teacher not just logging on to Zoom and talking at them.

(Respondent 12 of the first round, a teacher of Ukrainian language and literature)

We would like to note that the way teachers assess their **mental condition** proves that since the 2022 invasion, 78% of the respondents have felt an increase in anxiety, fear, sadness, or anger. It is not surprising that such a condition affects cognitive abilities, namely, the ability to create educational content.

Teachers require ready-made solutions, especially for **online lessons in NUS classes**, in particular:

- programs adapted for remote format;
- a more detailed review of the online learning methods and techniques presented in advanced training courses;
- ready-made learning support materials (presentations, tasks, etc.).

Therefore, we deem the **following measures** necessary:

- create a large database of ready-made materials for teachers to use when compiling lessons, thus adapting curricula to online format with minimal effort;
- create more high-quality courses in general computer literacy and specific tools for efficient online work (by NGOs, IPPE/ACE, and other providers of relevant services).

Teachers' mental condition

It's not surprising that teachers' mental condition worsened after a horrific war broke out. In particular, apart from the above data on increased anxiety, fear, sadness, or anger, teachers also reported:



Almost 70% of teachers requested advanced training related to psychological support for themselves and/or their children.

The greatest demand for school psychologists is observed in the eastern regions (52% of respondents as compared to 21% in other macro-regions).

22% of respondents in villages and towns do not receive sufficient support from school psychologists, as compared to 12% in cities.

The most popular answer to the question about ways to improve psychological support services is the following: "It is necessary to develop a clear algorithm for teachers to deal with difficult cases." We assume that this also proves the need for solutions that work out of the box, and ready-made instructions for crisis management.

We suggest the following ways to improve the situation:

- improve work with practical psychologists during advanced training;
- at least partially satisfy the need for school psychologists in rural areas and eastern Ukraine – for example, via online consultations with volunteers;
- ensure additional advanced training courses in the relevant field for school psychologists; in cooperation with practical psychologists, develop the maximum number of algorithms to respond to various crises, in particular for dealing with parents, so that teachers could use recommendations as a basis for making decisions and taking actions;
- introduce monitoring of teachers' and children's mental conditions and make management decisions based on it.

Reform communication

The quantitative survey revealed that, despite the general awareness of the NUS philosophy,

40 %

of teachers cannot tell the differences between NUS and previous approaches to secondary education.

Some of the respondents' answers in the in-depth interviews, however, indicate that they confuse even basic concepts (for example, “textbook content” and “curriculum”).

Therefore, the **following measures** should be taken:

- provide for additional explanations of the reform essence in the media/on websites popular among teachers (such data are available in the survey – in particular, the page of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the website of the New Ukrainian School);
- revive the idea of creating public (and teachers, in particular) awareness of the essence of the NUS reform, its purpose, and philosophy. Presenting examples of successful implementation can be useful in this;
- create a system for collecting and processing feedback on the reform progress from teachers: reviews would help to find out primary needs requiring centralized support.

Obstacles to the reform implementation



According to the teachers, the main obstacle to the NUS implementation is exhaustion due to the war

(53.5% of respondents answered yes to the related survey question).

Other reasons include:

- **outdated pay system (51%);**
- **reduction of school hours (due to air alerts and blackouts – 41.1%);**
- **insufficient equipment and material support for the reform (37.6%);**
- **lack of quality learning support materials (35.6%);**
- **low motivation to implement NUS (27.4%);**
- **lack of qualitative methodical support for the reform (24.4%).**

The factors that can be influenced by the MESU and other decision-making stakeholders at the central and local levels are highlighted in bold. Of course, it is impossible to “remove war” from the educational process, however, the pay system updating has already begun; the NUS subvention has been reallocated, covering the need for material and equipment support.

The latter seems to be of particular importance, given that during the in-depth interviews, teachers often talked about the fact that the “NUS children,” who in primary school were provided with equipment, means, materials for learning, etc., are demotivated by the lack of the same in grades 5-6.



The latter seems to be of particular importance, given that during the in-depth interviews, teachers often talked about the fact that the “NUS children,” who in primary school were provided with equipment, means, materials for learning, etc., are demotivated by the lack of the same in grades 5-6.

(Respondent 3 of the first round, teacher of geography and natural sciences)

Many teachers have to buy equipment or print materials at their own expense, which not only becomes an additional burden on their family budgets but also contributes to rapid burnout and demotivation to implement NUS.

Therefore, we recommend the following measures:

1. Reallocate the NUS subvention (done).
2. Assign bonuses to subject teachers who implement NUS in basic secondary school (similar to primary school practice).
3. Revise the pay system (the process has been initiated – there is at least a corresponding political will and plans for the 2024 budget).
4. Teach representatives of school administrations to search for grant opportunities, write applications, etc.
5. To improve the teachers' mental condition, major management decisions are required. Specifically, teachers' days off on public holidays, which were canceled during martial law, must be returned. Also, it is recommended not to assign (and not to offer) advanced training courses during summer vacations, etc. Currently, the teachers' working hours are **not regulated** in any way, which results in overwork – which is another marker that the teachers' pay system needs immediate changes.
6. Improve methodological support for the reform (development of detailed instructions and free learning support materials, in particular for online lessons).



Comparison of teachers' workload in Ukraine and Europe

Reform legal framework

Successful continuation of the reform implementation requires certain **legislative changes**. In particular, the following should be introduced:

1. Unblock the National Educational Electronic Platform and review the **Regulation on the National Digital Educational Platform**, approved by Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 523 dated May 22, 2018, and ensure that changes are introduced to it if necessary.
2. Review the **List of teaching and academic staff**, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 963 dated June 14, 2000, and if necessary, develop and duly submit to the Government a draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on amendments to it or approve a new List.
3. Change the **pay system of teaching staff**, for which, in particular:
 - a) review the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1298 dated August 30, 2002, and if necessary, develop and duly submit a draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the new pay system introduction;
 - b) review the **List of professional grades and pedagogical ranks**, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1109 dated December 23, 2015, and if necessary, develop and duly submit to the Government a draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on amendments to it;
 - c) approve the new **Procedure for calculating the salary of teaching staff in state and municipal educational institutions** and to recognize as invalid the Instruction on the procedure for calculating the salary of educational staff, approved by Order of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine No. 102 dated April 15, 1993.
4. Develop and duly submit a draft resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on the **approval of the formula to determine the financial standard of budgetary provision** for one child.
5. Review the **Standard staffing standards of institutions of general secondary education**, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1205 dated December 6, 2010, and if necessary, introduce amendments to it.
6. Review the **Orders of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine** No. 811 dated December 10, 2003, and No. 939 dated December 15, 2004, and ensure the adoption of the related order of MESU on approval of new Procedures for the development, issuance, and accounting of documents on basic secondary education and full general secondary education.
7. Review the **Procedure for dividing classes into groups when studying individual subjects in general educational institutions**, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 128 dated February 20, 2002, and if necessary, introduce amendments to it.
8. Review the **Procedure for the creation of extended day groups in state and municipal institutions of general secondary education**, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 677 dated June 25, 2018, and if necessary, introduce amendments to it.

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10. Review the **Procedure for conducting State Final Attestation**, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1369 dated December 7, 2018, and introduce amendments to it. If necessary, develop and duly submit for state registration an individual order of MESU on the attestation of students of scientific lyceums.
11. Review the **Criteria for evaluation of educational achievements of students (students) in the system of general secondary education**, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth, and Sports of Ukraine No. 329 dated April 13, 2011, and ensure the adoption of the related order of MESU.
12. Review the **Regulations on Departmental Incentive Awards** of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, approved by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 1047 dated July 30, 2013, and introduce amendments to it.
13. Approve the **Procedure for providing professional support and assistance to teaching staff (supervision)** – develop and duly submit the related order of MESU for review.

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent organic shapes in a slightly darker shade of teal. These shapes are reminiscent of cells or molecular structures, with rounded edges and some internal indentations.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- The current statistics collection system does not allow us to obtain accurate data on the number of teachers implementing NUS in basic secondary schools. It is necessary to improve statistics collection – in particular, regarding the number of teachers implementing NUS every year, as this number will continue to grow.
- The factors **hindering the NUS implementation** are exhaustion due to the war, an outdated pay system, a reduction in teaching time, insufficient equipment and material support, and a lack of ready-made learning support materials.

During the in-depth interviews, the problem of equipment and material support was in the spotlight as the lack of technical means and textbooks created an additional financial burden on teachers and students.

- Even without funding for grade 5 of NUS, some communities and schools managed to provide students with equipment and technical means of education, furniture, etc. To do this, they used both international and Ukrainian sponsorship, as well as fundraising opportunities. Given the complex security and economic situation, we should consider the possibility of scaling up positive cases of self-reliance (exchange of methodological findings, in particular, related to evaluation; holding training sessions on writing grant applications) for local educational managers (teams of education departments, village and city councils, etc.).
- Compared with the statistics prior to the 2022 invasion, 78% of the teachers reported an **increase in anxiety, fear, sadness, or anger**.
- Such a mental condition of the respondents can partially explain their reluctance to create tailored programs, the demand for “ready-made solutions,” commitment to model programs that are mostly copies of the “old” ones, as well as difficulties in mastering new methods of working with students of grades 5-6.

In particular, most teachers (76%) do not create tailored **programs** but use model ones, and half (!) of the respondents could not even be motivated to develop curricula by additional payments or bonuses, but by the availability of **free time** – teachers are overloaded with preparing for lessons and other duties.

- Most teachers (70%) are working with **individual subjects** and not integrated courses. This may indicate both a psychological unwillingness to adopt new forms of work and a lack of necessary knowledge (and accordingly, insufficient advanced training and faults of higher education institutions in the pedagogical field).
- Most teachers (96%) who work with grades 5–6 have undergone the relevant advanced training, despite the lack of state funding.

However, the quality of this training seems quite doubtful: **86% of teachers** believe that the knowledge acquired during it is **sufficient**, but none of the 13 skills and competencies offered within the survey was chosen by more than half of the respondents. The same topics, in particular, the evaluation issues within NUS, were chosen by teachers both as mastered and to be further mastered.

- The fact that, despite the lack of targeted funding, the majority underwent advanced training with IPPE/ACE, bears evidence not so much the quality of services provided by these institutions, but rather that the “money follows the teacher” mechanism does not work in practice.
- The main comment of teachers on advanced training – **more practical material**, exchange of experiences, cases, examples, etc. According to respondents of the in-depth interviews, they also need more time to master certain topics, manuals with a brief content of courses, as well as methodical support when introducing new approaches at school.


- The approximate allocation of hours in the Standard Advanced Training Program for Teachers is not in line with their demand for practice-oriented courses. Therefore, the Standard Advanced Training Program should be revised in terms of the practical hours, in particular in the aspect of hours distribution.
- Given the strong demand by educational specialists for practice-oriented training, we offer IPPE to regularly collect requests from teachers and involve as many coaches as possible, especially those recommended by communities.
- The fact that 40% of respondents cannot explain the difference between NUS and the previous system of secondary education attests to the irrelevance of advanced training course content.
- **Online teaching** requires special attention: ready-made adapted materials, adding specific content to advanced training courses, and in some cases electronics are required. Preparing for online lessons takes longer than for in-person classes, and therefore increases exhaustion and contributes to rapid burnout.
- **Formative assessment** remains the most problematic aspect of the NUS evaluation system, which requires increased attention. Most of those who refuse to use it explain that such an assessment **takes too much time**.

At that, 42% of the interviewed teachers seek to undergo additional training in methods of evaluation of educational achievements within NUS. The answers of the respondents during the in-depth interviews show that they mostly see the formative assessment as an “intermediate stage” before moving on to the “real,” point-based assessment. This problem may be caused by the fact that not all respondents properly understand the “feedback” concept or realize its importance. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to this concept analysis during advanced training courses and in higher education institutions in the pedagogical field.

- Analysis of Ukrainian language and literature programs revealed that the most popular ones are up to 70% identical to those developed under the old State Standard of Basic Secondary Education. They have not been expanded and do not always

correspond to the general NUS goals at the content level. Therefore, it is necessary to review the programs for the basic secondary school in terms of workload and content (since they are adopted indefinitely), to create recommendations to harmonize them with the NUS principles (interdisciplinary integration, development of competencies and skills, etc.).

- Writing, examination, publishing, and approval of textbooks require much more time than is actually available. Given the fact that the programs for grades 7-9 have already been approved, this experience can be taken into account – and textbook development for grades 8-9 should be started as early as possible.
- The content of the analyzed textbooks (Ukrainian literature, grade 5) proves that, for example, they do not fully comply with anti-discrimination standards and the goals of patriotic education. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine the textbooks, at least in terms of anti-discrimination content.
- According to the teachers, such **textbook** features as compliance of the educational material with real requests and children's lives, tasks, content, and consistency of theoretical material presentation drastically need improvement.
- Programs and textbooks should be simplified and expanded as per student age characteristics.
- It is necessary to pay attention to the qualifications (their availability) of **psychologists in rural schools** as 22% of respondents there do not get the necessary support.
- The analysis of the legislative framework revealed the need for certain laws and regulations to be adopted and the current ones to be amended to bring the legislation in line with the NUS reform. For example, it is necessary to make changes to the Action Plan for 2017–2029 on the Concept of State Policy Implementation within the “New Ukrainian School” Reform of General Secondary Education, namely to add the task of publishing textbooks for grades 4, 8, and 9.



International Renaissance Foundation is one of the largest charitable foundations in Ukraine, which has been helping develop an open society based on democratic values in Ukraine since 1990.

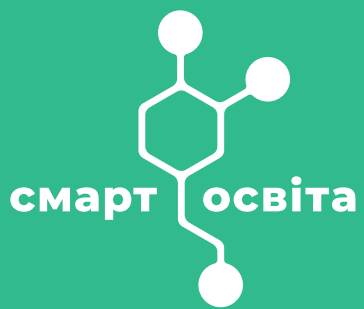
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