

# The Image of the Ukrainian Teacher: Historical and Contemporary Aspects

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**Abstract.** The study aims to analyze the portrayal of teachers in the works of Ukrainian writers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The selected literary works include I. Franko's "Emerick Torchinsky", "The Education of Hrytsko", "Schon schreiben", "Father-Humorist"; B. Hrynchenko's "Exam", "Rebellious", "Brother against brother", "Stolen"; and G. Tyutyunnik's "Upon the ashes". These works condemn the use of corporal punishment, rudeness, and ignorance on the part of teachers. They also emphasize the role of teachers as bearers of knowledge, culture, and spirituality. In contemporary society, the focus is on the teacher's ability to facilitate the learning and self-improvement of students, to help develop their personalities, and instil moral ideals and spiritual values. Teachers are expected to be lifelong learners and continuously develop competencies in various areas. This includes acquiring knowledge in their subject matter, mastering pedagogical techniques, and cultivating strong interpersonal skills in order to effectively navigate relationships with their students and colleagues. (Kim & Reichmuth, 2021). Modern Ukrainian teachers need to organize themselves in a way that enables them to effectively collaborate with their students, foster engagement between educational institutions and society, and create an atmosphere of trust, transparency, and moral integrity. In order to achieve this, teachers must organize teaching and learning activities based on ethical principles and promote tolerance.

Keywords: The image of the teacher, Ukrainian literature, spirituality, morality, learning, knowledge, personality.

## INTRODUCTION

The profession of a teacher is one of the oldest and most significant in human history. References to teachers can be found in the works of historians and philosophers from Ancient Greece, as well as in the artefacts of Ancient Egypt, the Babylonian Kingdom, and other highly organized communities and states of the ancient world. The role of a teacher in society is immeasurable. It is the teacher who acts as a bridge between generations, providing children with the opportunity to embrace the culture, science, and ethics that have been developed over centuries and millennia.

In past eras, the image of a teacher was shaped according to specific requirements that were formalized by the state

on behalf of the sovereign, monarch, or people. These requirements were often reflected in significant texts or simply declared and popularized in accordance with certain national perspectives and the ideal image of the future. As a result, the work of a teacher became a crucial state and public mission, with teachers being the bearers and shapers of knowledge, social values, and ideals, as well as the educators of future citizens.

Thanks to this vital role, teachers have traditionally received special social status, material benefits, and moral encouragement, which have further stimulated their professional activity and ensured their importance in society.

## Materials and Methods

The study analyzes the portrayal of teachers in the literary works of Ukrainian writers and conducts a comparative analysis of the qualities and expectations that contemporary society has of teachers. The data collected from the survey of parents and teachers are also used. The methods of the present study are as follows: literature review, comparative analysis, survey, data analysis, and qualitative analysis.

## Literature Review

The role and image of teachers have been a recurring theme in world literature and art. Ukrainian literature, in particular, is exceptionally rich in depictions of teachers, owing to the fact that many writers in the XIX and early XX centuries were educators themselves. This phenomenon of the "writer-educator" or "teacher-writer" was widespread during this period (Zelinska, 2001). It gave rise to a subgenre of literature called "teacher's prose" - works that revolve around the theme of school childhood, the process of learning and education, and the crucial role of the teacher in this process.

Numerous writers contributed to this genre, such as I. Blazhkevich, S. Vasylchenko, B. Hrynchenko, Dnyprova Chayka, U. Kravchenko, A. Makovey, D. Makogon, I. Filipchak, I. Franko, and E. Yaroshinskaya. Some of these works delve into the educational process and highlight the differences between teachers who are creators and those who are destroyers. For instance, M. Vovchok, A. Svidnitsky, I. Nechuya-Levitsky, O. Konissky, and O. Kobrinska wrote about these aspects.

One notable Ukrainian writer who explored the role of teachers in fostering national consciousness was Ivan Sadovyi (Ivan Fedorak). His "teacher" prose, which includes works such as "Nameless Ploughshares," "Dance of Death," and "Spring Noise," is a lesser-known phenomenon of the literary process in the twentieth century. In contrast, D. Dimarov's story "On the Horse and Under the Horse" and G. Tyutyunnik's "Upon the Ashes" depict a more generalized image of teachers in the post-war era (Zharkova, 2017).

In modern times, the image of the teacher and their role in society is a topic of great interest to educators, writers, and researchers. Many Ukrainian contemporary thinkers such as V. Andruschenko, V. Zhuravsky, I. Zyazyun, L. Kostenko, L. Lukyanova, V. Oleynyk, I. Osadchy, N. Paltyshev, A. Pometun, A. Savchenko, P. Sauha, O. Serdyuk, V. Sukhomlinsky, and others, have examined the personal and professional qualities of today's teachers. In Ukraine, the modern teacher is not only responsible for imparting knowledge in their specific field but also for fostering the development of a complete human being, imbued with the spiritual values and eternal truths that define the Ukrainian people. As such, the teacher holds

a special place of respect in Ukrainian culture and literature.

However, globalization processes have brought significant changes to the role and image of the modern teacher. The implementation of a competence-based approach to learning and the rise of distance education has led to a more unified and regulated image of the teacher. This shift has minimized the opportunities for live communication between the teacher and the student, which may have an impact on the personal qualities and characteristics of the teacher. Despite these changes, the role of the teacher remains crucial in shaping the future of our society, and its importance cannot be overstated.

The aim of the study is to analyze the portrayal of teachers in the literary works of Ukrainian writers and to perform a comparative analysis of the qualities and expectations that contemporary society has of teachers.

Throughout different periods of social development, attitudes towards teachers and the expectations placed on them have varied. However, in general, they can be summarized in a few key points. The teacher is seen as a source of knowledge, goodness, and culture, as well as being strict, sympathetic, disciplined, and fair (Kolesnyk, 2014). When referring to a teacher, it is important to add the phrase "as character educator" to emphasize their role in shaping the values, competencies, and organizational foundations of their work. This highlights both their personal and professional stance and underscores the significance of the teacher's value-based approach in their work. (Selivanova *et al.*, 2019). The image of the teacher in Ukrainian literature from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century provides vivid examples of both positive and negative aspects of their character and behavior. In some works, teachers are portrayed as overbearing autocrats, tyrants, and ignorant individuals who resort to physical punishment and moral humiliation of their students (I. Franko's "The Education of Hrytsko", "Schon schreiben", "Father Humorist"; A. Svidnitsky's "Lyuboratsky"). However, there are also many works in which teachers are depicted as educators, intellectuals, and bearers of spirituality, who introduce children to science and moral values (P. Grabowsky's "Trudovnitza"; A. Teslenko's "Schoolboy"; I. Franko's "Emeric Turchinsky"; B. Hrynchenko's "Exam", "Rebellious", "Brother against brother", "Stolen"; G. Tyutyunnik's "Upon the ashes").

## The image of the teacher in the prose of Ivan Franko

The image of the teacher in the prose of Ivan Franko takes a unique place in Ukrainian literature. The writer paid significant attention to issues related to education and the upbringing of the younger generation, perceiving them as a potent tool in the fight for national liberation and the creation of an independent Ukrainian state. Pedagogical problems were explored in over a hundred artistic,

publicistic, scientific, and philosophical works. He famously stated that "the school is the teacher," comparing pedagogical skills to the artistry of a master of words. Through his works, Franko illustrated the attributes of what makes a teacher effective or ineffective. He drew upon various positive and negative examples of teachers from real life. In the preface to his collection "Little Myron and Other Stories," Franko explained that the stories were based on "personal memories, which, in the case of "Father Humorist" and "Mustard Seed," turn almost entirely into memoirs (Chepil, 2010).

The teacher-writer ideal that Ivan Franko developed in his publicist works was based solely on documentary material. For instance, in an article titled "Emerick Torchinsky" dedicated to the memory of one of his best teachers at the Drogobych gymnasium, he wrote, "There are teachers with an innate pedagogical talent who are able to immerse themselves in the life of the whole class during their lessons, forgetting about themselves, their worries, joys, and anxieties. Every lesson of such a teacher expands the mental horizons of the students, satisfying their natural curiosity awakened by previous successes, and is a pleasure rather than a torment" (Franko, 2021).

In the story "Schon schreiben," Ivan Franko portrayed a typical school (an elementary urban school in Austria-Hungary) in Drogobych. All subjects were taught by monks, and only calligraphy in the second grade, with 85 pupils, was taught by the former housekeeper Valko (Franko, 2021). Valko was a tyrant and ignoramus without even basic pedagogical training, who turned his teaching into a continuous chain of beatings and abuse of children. A cane, an instrument of punishment, was always next to the chalk and pen. The teaching process was limited to writing something incomprehensible on the blackboard, and for most of the lesson, Valko hunted down his victims.

In his story "Father Humorist," I. Franko continues to criticize the autocratic teachers and the oppressive school system of the time. The class counsellor and teacher of multiple subjects in the third grade of the Drogobych Basilian Normal School, Father Sofron Telesnitsky, was described as a cruel tyrant with a cynical attitude. From the moment he entered the classroom, the students were intimidated by his tall, thin figure, elongated horse-like face, low forehead, and broad mouth. Father Sofron greeted his students with the words, "I am the master of the class here! Remember. In my class you should only laugh when I tell you to, and cry when I tell you to" (Franko, 2021). He lacked appropriate pedagogical training and knowledge, but managed to gain a reputation as a "humorist" by tormenting children and deriving pleasure from their physical and mental suffering. The story illustrates the negative consequences of the teacher's abuse of power and the lack of accountability in the school system.

In his observations, I. Franko demonstrates his keen understanding of the damaging effects of such a harsh

upbringing on children's personalities. He recounts how his own inclination towards destructive behaviour was born as a result of his experiences, describing how he would take a rod and destroy everything in his path. The exhausted schoolchildren, starved for any relief, even found solace in death. In one instance, when a classmate died as a result of a severe beating, the students could not help but feel a sense of relief knowing that they would be free from science that day. (Franko, 2021).

I. Franko recognized the importance of pedagogical work and the need for specialized training and education in this field. He believed that good teachers must be well-educated themselves, but lamented that this was often not the case due to the inadequate training provided by teachers' seminaries. (Zelinska, 2001).

### **The image of the teacher in the works by B. Hrynchenko**

Boris Hrynchenko's literary works include a notable series of stories that revolve around schools, teachers, and students. Among them, "Exam," "Rebellious," and "Brother against Brother" stand out as significant contributions to his literary legacy. In "Exam," Hrynchenko masterfully blends humour and tragedy to create a compelling narrative. The story exposes the unfair treatment of a hardworking teacher who is unfairly judged by ignorant individuals. The students, who have been intimidated by their authority figures since childhood, also play a significant role in the story. Reading "Exam" can be a deeply emotional experience that evokes feelings of pain and resentment in the reader. The story highlights the injustice and ignorance that often surrounds educational systems, making it a poignant commentary on the societal issues of Hrynchenko's time. Overall, the stories of Boris Hrynchenko provide a vivid and insightful look into the complex dynamics of schools, teachers, and students. Through his works, he sheds light on important societal issues and advocates for change and progress. (Pogrebnoy, 1988).

The main character in B. Hrynchenko's story "Rebellious," Vasily Dmitrievich, faces a difficult life filled with suspicion and wariness from the village authorities. The township head Pastushenko, police constable Shvydkov, volost clerk Levshin, village chief Guban, and postman Tsupchenko all view him with scepticism due to his behaviour. Vasily Dmitrievich's actions are considered "outrageous" by the local officials. He refuses to communicate with them and instead dresses and speaks in a simple way. He cooks food, plays ball with children, and collects "flowers, stones, and all sorts of nonsense" in the woods and meadows, which raises suspicion among the authorities. The worst thing, however, is that he is disobedient and disrespectful to his superiors. This only serves to increase their suspicion and dislike towards him. (Hrynchenko). Hrynchenko's portrayal of Vasily

Dmitrievich's life highlights the challenges faced by individuals who dare to challenge the norms and expectations of society. It demonstrates the importance of conformity and obedience to authority in a society where dissent and rebellion are often met with hostility. Ultimately, the story shows that those who stand up for what they believe in, even in the face of adversity, can inspire change and bring about a better future. Despite the difficulties he faced, Vasily Dmitrievich remained true to his beliefs and continued to fight for what he believed was right, making him a true rebel.

In his story "Brother against Brother," B. Hrynchenko provides a vivid description of the challenging work that rural teachers endure. The main character, Eugene Koretsky, along with his wife Natalia, worked tirelessly at the school in the village of Ladyinka for nine years. They put in all their efforts to provide education and culture to the peasants in the region. Hrynchenko's portrayal of the Koretsky couple's tireless spiritual work is deeply personal and touching. He writes that they have loved several generations of young people, enlightening them with a small world of knowledge and civic consciousness. They always tried to practice what they preached and helped those in need whenever possible, not out of ideological duty, but out of their love for the people. They loved the dark and depressed individuals who were struggling with hard fates and tried to show their love in the best way possible. Koretsky believed that the national and political consciousness that he and his wife instilled in their pupils could never be destroyed. However, the story ends tragically when Koretsky becomes a victim of a pogrom, which included some of his former students.

B. Hrynchenko depicts the victimhood of Koretsky very finely. The reader can feel the pain and sorrow of a man who dedicated his life to education and to the betterment of his community. Hrynchenko's story reminds us of the valuable work that teachers do in rural areas and how important it is to support them in their efforts.

In the story "Stolen," the writer beautifully portrays the image of a compassionate and empathetic teacher. The protagonist of the story, Alexandra, the daughter of an alcoholic village clerk, steals bread from her friend and is caught red-handed. The schoolchildren, outraged by her actions, demand that she be expelled from school. However, the teacher's tact and profound humanity help everyone find a way out of the difficult situation. Alexandra admits to the theft and explains that her family has nothing to eat as her father drinks away all their money. Struck by the bitter truth of Alexandra's life, the children understand the cruelty of their initial judgment. The teacher looks at the children, and some of the girls are in tears. The children then offer Alexandra their own breakfast, and they learn a valuable lesson about kindness and humanity that will stay with them forever. The story highlights the idea that a teacher is not just a giver of knowledge but a crucial figure in developing national consciousness and identity.

The teacher is an enlightened and humanist who

teaches the values of compassion, empathy, and understanding.

Overall, B. Hrynchenko's work emphasizes the importance of teachers in shaping the future of their students by instilling in them the values of kindness, compassion, and empathy.

### **The image of the teacher in the story "Upon the ashes" by G. Tyutyunnik**

The story "Upon the ashes" by Grigory Tyutyunnik portrays the image of a teacher as a psychologically motivated man with a strong character, exemplified by Fedor Nesterovich. Fedor Nesterovich is a war veteran who returned to the village on crutches with a prosthesis, and as there were no surviving relatives, he stayed with Odarka, "a beautiful woman with hands black from working on the ground" (Tyutyunnik). Later, he became a schoolteacher.

The story features a deeply moving description of Fedor Nesterovich's decision to visit his parents' burned-down home and wander in places filled with memories. His yearning for his father's home and the memory of his ancestors, combined with gratitude and respect for them, reveals the spiritual richness of the teacher's character. He has the desire to preserve and transmit the memory of ordinary people's lives and traditions. Fedor Nesterovich remembers his young days in the fondest of colours: "Life then seemed eternally happy" (Tyutyunnik).

Fedor Nesterovich is portrayed as a strong, courageous man and a patriot who does not allow his students to distance themselves from their history or forget the horrors of war. He did not reprimand the student who failed to answer a question in class about the beginning of the war. Instead, he moved his leg under the table and knocked down the stick, which "rattled on the floor like a carbine," reminding the children of the injuries and losses caused by the war. Fedor Nesterovich is a true embodiment of the values of education and the role of the teacher in society.

### **The image of the teacher in modern Ukraine**

The images of teachers portrayed in classic Ukrainian literature differ greatly from the image of the modern teacher. This difference can be attributed to the era of globalization, which has unified the image of the teacher, making it supranational, and standardized the requirements for teaching in different countries. One such requirement is the competency-based approach to teaching. In contrast to the past, the teacher is no longer viewed as the sole possessor of knowledge and the primary source of information. Instead, they are considered to be an ordinary specialist or professional who performs specific activities, meets specific requirements such as education and experience, and earns a salary for their services.

In the current age of digital technology, the process of learning and acquiring knowledge and skills can be conducted remotely and anonymously, without any personal influence from the author of the training course on the student-listener (Navrotska, 2014). The modern era has given rise to continuous learning, which is based on the frequent change of activities resulting from the rapid development of technology, economic and social relations. Consequently, the role of the teacher has transformed from that of a traditional educator to that of a trainer, facilitator, moderator, and tutor. They are carriers of their own competencies, which enable them to teach how to earn a living by shaping and fostering knowledge, abilities, skills, competencies, motives, and behaviour patterns necessary for the life or professional activity of their students.

The notion of a teacher-mentor has evolved to encompass that of a professional mediator who bridges the gap between the curriculum and the outcomes of its mastery. As non-formal, informal, and informational education continue to gain prominence, there is a growing belief that teachers can be replaced by digital resources or specialists from other professional spheres such as engineering, management, entrepreneurship, and so on (Schleicher, 2018) to impart specific skills or knowledge. However, we believe that this approach is fundamentally flawed as education and the development of personal qualities and abilities can only be effectively facilitated by a competent teacher, not solely through a prescribed lesson or training program.

The image of the modern teacher appears differently in various systems of value coordinates: the teacher himself, children, parents, school administration, educational authorities, legislation, etc. Different points of view, expectations, and different requirements make it difficult to create a unified image of the modern teacher, ideal, or at least approved by all participants in the educational process.

At the end of 2021, we conducted a survey of teachers and parents (groups of 100 people each) to select the most important qualities, competencies, roles, abilities and skills that a modern Ukrainian teacher should have. As a result, we got the following data: parents expect from the teacher respect for students and equal requirements (80% of respondents); the ability to interest, and inspire (73%); understanding children, the ability to find a common language with them (64%); the ability to reveal the potential of students (60%); sociability, openness and willingness to communicate (52%); self-control and patience (50%); care of the students' health (mental, physical and emotional) - 43%; ability to resolve conflicts (35%); knowledge of the subject (20%); demanding attitude towards students (20%).

Teachers see their portrait somewhat differently: the ability to interest and inspire children in the first place – 85% of respondents; the ability to reveal the potential of students (78%); the ability to resolve conflicts (75%);

knowledge of their subject (72%); self-control and patience (60%); respect for students and equal demands (56%); understanding children, the ability to find common ground with them (54%); care for the health of students (45%); communication skills, openness to communication (37%); demanding of students (30%).

Summing up the results of the survey, it can be inferred that parents place greater emphasis on ensuring their child's comfort and safety at school under the supervision of their teacher. Additionally, parents are concerned about their child's psychological and emotional development, including their acceptance of learning, socialization, civil competencies, and potential for self-improvement. On the other hand, teachers prioritize their student's intellectual growth, mastery of subject matter, and formation of subject knowledge. Nevertheless, the survey reveals a significant overlap in priorities between teachers and parents.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing war in Ukraine have created unprecedented challenges for teachers in the country. While according to the study that draws data from full-time public-school teachers in Massachusetts, teachers felt that the way they and their profession were portrayed in the news, media, and public was often inaccurate and unfair: they were portrayed as lazy and difficult, and their work was oversimplified and not fully understood (Nerlino, 2023), in the face of the crises, Ukrainian teachers have exhibited remarkable resilience, adaptability, and dedication. The pandemic has forced teachers to quickly adapt to new technologies and shift their teaching methods to online platforms. Despite the many challenges this has presented, Ukrainian teachers have risen to the occasion, working tirelessly to ensure their students continue to receive an education. Many teachers have gone above and beyond their normal duties to check in on students' well-being and provide emotional support during these difficult times. So, the understanding of what it means to be a professional teacher in the 21st century has been expanded (Engeness, 2021).

One year after the war broke out, we conducted another survey to find out what has changed in the ranking of the most important qualities teachers should possess. There appeared two more important things from the teachers' point of view: crisis management: teachers must be able to recognize and respond to crises quickly and effectively, providing students and parents with clear guidance and support during difficult times (85% of the respondents marked this quality as the necessary one) and resilience: teachers must be able to adapt to sudden changes in the educational landscape and remain focused on student success despite challenges (78% of the respondents). Parents pointed out the necessity of effective communication: they expect teachers to maintain clear and consistent communication with them about their child's progress, any changes to the curriculum or schedule, and any concerns or issues that may arise during a crisis (81% of the respondents); commitment to student success: teachers should be committed to their child's academic

success, even during times of crisis, and to provide the necessary support and resources to help children achieve their educational goals (76% of the respondents).

## Results and Discussion

The evolution of the teacher's image over the past two hundred years has been significant. Initially, teachers were viewed as carriers of knowledge, culture, and spiritual beginning, and their primary role was to impart information to their students. However, with the advent of the progressive society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, writers began to condemn the use of corporal punishment, rudeness, and ignorance by teachers. This shift in perspective led to a greater emphasis on the teacher's ability to teach children to learn and improve themselves, develop their personalities, and form spiritual values and moral ideals.

In the modern era, teachers are expected to be able to establish partnerships with their students and other participants in the educational process, ensure the interaction of the educational institution with society, create an atmosphere of trust, transparency, and observance of moral norms, and organize pedagogical activities and teaching on the basis of ethics and tolerance. Ukrainian teachers must possess a diverse set of qualities, competencies, roles, abilities, and skills to effectively support their students during times of crisis such as the pandemic and war.

One of the most critical attributes of a modern teacher is their ability to be resilient, flexible, and creative. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of these qualities, as teachers had to rapidly adapt to online and hybrid teaching models. Additionally, teachers need to possess strong communication and emotional intelligence skills to navigate challenging situations and build positive relationships with their students.

Collaboration and crisis management skills are also essential for modern teachers. The pandemic has highlighted the need for teachers to work together to support their students, and effective crisis management is essential to ensure that the educational process continues smoothly in times of crisis.

Finally, modern teachers must remain committed to ongoing learning and professional development to ensure that they are well-prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing educational landscape. By staying up-to-date with the latest teaching methods and technologies, teachers can better equip their students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the 21st century.

In conclusion, the evolution of the teacher's image over the past two hundred years has been significant, and modern teachers must possess a diverse set of qualities, competencies, roles, abilities, and skills to effectively support their students. By being resilient, flexible, and creative while possessing strong communication.

Emotional intelligence, collaboration, and crisis management skills, teachers can create a positive and supportive learning environment that empowers their students to succeed.

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