

**OUR GUEST****INTERVIEW WITH  
SEAN PATRICK  
HARTY**

*The Founder and Head of the International Education Centre  
PEARSON-Dinternal and International group  
of language schools — The London School of English*

“Born in London to an Irish family I graduated as a Chartered Surveyor working for 5 years in construction. A change of career in 1991 led me to take the CELTA certificate which was followed by two years working in Italy as an English language teacher. In 1994 I arrived at Kyiv Mohyla Academy as a teacher. Within two years I had established my own school ‘*The London School of English*’. Over the next 19 years I set up and operated many businesses connected with education and leisure within Ukraine. The hugely popular Baboon Club in Kyiv, Faros English Summer school and the network of Globe Bookstores as well. I am also proud that together with Collins Publishing we produced the first Global series of Ukrainian — English dictionaries.”



— *What inspired you to set up PEARSON-Dinternal?*

— Having created these language schools, it was necessary to provide the students with high-quality authentic coursebooks. This led to the creation of Pearson-Dinternal, which then evolved into Ukraine’s leading development training centre for English teachers.

— *How long have you been in Ukraine and what has attracted you to this country for so many years? What was your first impression of Ukraine when you first came here?*

— I arrived here quite by chance. It wasn’t until I started working and living here that I understood the enormity of the potential in Ukraine. Ukraine was and still is a bit of an enigma. My first impression? Incredibly cold winters and surprisingly hot summers! We didn’t realize in the West that it could be so hot here.

— *What are the benefits of using authentic coursebooks in the classroom, and what is unique about Pearson coursebooks?*

— Authentic coursebooks give students the opportunity to experience and use real, modern English and develop all four skills. As well as learning English, students can sometimes learn interesting facts about the world from listening or reading tasks in the coursebooks. Pearson books? One of their major strengths is their flexibility of use, and the fact that they are supplemented by Ukrainian language, cultural and methodological components.

— *Is PEARSON-Dinternal the largest creative project in your life or will the biggest one be in the future?*

— Pearson Dinternal isn’t my biggest project. I suppose that would be the network of private language schools I set up over the years. At one point we had 9 schools with over

6000 students. To date we operate 3 brands: The London School of English, The Language Academy and The First Steps Schools. The future? I have been fortunate enough to work with some very talented teachers in the Montessori sphere of pre-school education so our next project is the implementation of a country-wide Montessori franchise — First Steps.

**— Not many people invest all of their time and effort in the sector of education, especially in a foreign country. How did you become interested in educational projects in Ukraine?**

— When I first arrived in Kyiv, the Soviet Union was still a close memory. Years of exclusion from the wider world had led to a desire for English. With a country so large and diverse it would take a lifetime of work to meet all the demands I have encountered since.

**— Why do you think it's worth investing in education in Ukraine?**

— Ukraine is a very large country, with a population of close to 47 million people!

**— How has education changed in Ukraine since you first arrived here? If you were the Minister of education and science in Ukraine, what would you change first?**

— There have been big changes in the Primary and Secondary sectors. Teachers and parents have pushed

for a progressive approach to teaching, especially with regard to syllabi and materials. Higher Education less so. That's why I applaud Minister Kvit in his efforts in reforming universities and other higher education institutes. If I were the minister, I would look at restructuring a streamlined INSET. To modernize its approach together with improving the distribution of information is coming from the ministry. The current INSET structure is in my opinion outdated and a bit unwieldy, lacking a consistency of quality throughout the country. There are some excellent methodologists but youth must be given a chance too.

**— What do you think the future holds for Ukrainian education?**

— Bright! The reforms in place are a start. The Go Global campaign is an added benefit. If the ministry together with its foreign partners can finish what they have started then the country should comply with international norms within 10 years. Education is a slow process — there are no quick fixes.

**— Which reforms in the education system of Ukraine can bring international standards of teaching and assessment to our country?**

— Ukraine has to balance its approach to working towards international standards of education without losing its identity. Therefore, educators must retain some of the excellent aspects of instruction that exist in Ukraine.



Sean Harty's meeting with the Ministry of Education and Mark Couchman from Pearson's Head Office in London



At a recent event at the National Parliamentary Library, this teacher won a fantastic prize

Reforms should start at the beginning, at Teacher Training Colleges with more practical instruction, and less theory.

— *School leavers don't always see why they should study English and take an international exam. What are the benefits of learning English and getting international certification?*

— If students at this stage do not realize that English is important, then we need to look at what their teachers / parents are saying! English (or another foreign language) is the MOST important element of any student's education. International relations and inclusion within the wider world's structures is the only way forward for the country and its people.

— *What advice could you give to Ukrainian school leavers?*

— Study hard, study smart and don't give up. Through application and perseverance, you can realize your dreams.

— *Are there any Ukrainian traditions you admire or have adopted yourself? Which features of Ukrainian culture do*

*you like most? Is there anything you would like to "export" back to Ireland?*

— In Ukraine there does exist an essential spirit of free will not found in all of its immediate neighbours. That is something to be cherished and held dear. To export? Only 5 % of school leavers in Ireland can speak a foreign language up to B2 level. Can we have some Ukrainian teachers in Ireland, please!

— *A great number of our readers are teachers of English. What would you like to wish them?*

— Firstly, I want to thank them for their hard work. Ukrainian teachers especially in the Primary and Secondary sectors should be proud of the progress and efforts they have made in the past 20 years in educating their pupils, often under very difficult conditions. For many, it's not a job it's a vocation. In the future I would like them to become more vocal and demanding in what they want to see and have in their classrooms — to find their voice as a group and profession.

— *Thank you very much for finding the time for this interview! I hope for our further cooperation! Good Luck!*

— Thank you!



The winner of the prize: a month of free study at the London School of English

*The interview was taken by Olena DONNYK*