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Ways to improve algorithmic understanding of sorting methods while studying the “Algorithms and data structures” course by the university students

KOROTENKO GHRYGHORIJ, KOROTENKO LEONID, KHAR ALIONA, SHYRIN ARTEM. **Ways to improve algorithmic understanding of sorting methods while studying the “Algorithms and Data Structures” Course by the university students.** *The paper considers peculiarities of the material teaching while learning algorithms of data sorting in terms of the “Algorithms and Data Structures” course and the ways to reduce possible complexities while its mastering. Active progress of software and information systems towards the formation of their convergent and hyper-convergent modifications results in rapid*



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development of the amount of all types of interconnected data. Along with that, there is still a constantly reported burning problem as for catastrophic lack of high-skilled specialists in all computing spheres including the data processing one. A competence of IT-specialists is based on the ability of solving various algorithmic problems that they have not met before. One of the most widespread problems is the necessity in data sorting. Consequently, it is proposed to consider the ways to improve algorithmic understanding of sorting methods in terms of the "Algorithms and Data Structures" course and possible methods for reducing the complexity while its studying.

Keywords: *sorting algorithm, data structure, data processing, programming, tabular graphical form of algorithm representation, Mind Maps method.*

Statement of the problem. IDC (International Data Corporation), the international company dealing with marketing studies and consultation services in the sphere of information technology, states that currently a process of digitalization, which is often called digital transformation, is changing completely a business form, influencing companies and consumers in all spheres all over the worlds. Digital transformation is not just the evolution of devices (though they will change anyway); it is integration of intellectual data into every aspect of our everyday life [1, p. 2]. Nowadays, the companies are facing great flow of bits and bytes controlled by real-time interferences from large business clusters. Working with digital transformation requires not only new technologies but also new skills [1, p. 2].

Analysis of recent studies and publications. Analysis of electronic resources and literature sources makes it possible to conclude that the "Algorithms and Data Structures" course is one of the foundation stones in the educational programmes in the field of computing. Moreover, it is important not only from the viewpoint of professional basics but also from the viewpoint of preparation for an interview for a position of programmer including large IT-organizations (Google, Microsoft, Apple etc.) or some prospective startup, when an applicant is to answer some questions concerning data sorting [2, p. 145-149]. As a rule, this course differs with great amount of complex data structures and various algorithms of their processing. To ensure proper training of future IT-specialists, the paper describes one of the possible approaches while teaching the materials concerning formation of algorithmic representation of sorting methods

for the university students of Ukraine in terms of the “Algorithm and Data Structures” course.

Formulation of the paper purposes. Basics of information science, supporting all software design processes, are the integral part of computing. Despite constantly growing number of educational programmes and their constituent elements, algorithms are the fundamentals for computer science and software development [3, p. 55-61].

In terms of Standards of Higher Education of Ukraine, determining basic competences included in the training outcomes of bachelors in terms of field 12 “Information Technology”, the latter are implemented while studying the disciplines (courses) being a part of curricula of the educational and professional programmes. As a rule, the curricula for all six specialties of this field of knowledge (121 Software Engineering [4], 122 Computer Science [5], 123 Computer Engineering [6], 124 System Analysis [7], 125 Cybersecurity [8], 126 Information Systems and Technology [9]) include learning algorithms and data structures in terms of three courses: “Algorithmization and Programming”, “Algorithms and Data Structures”, and “Object-Oriented Programming”. The first one usually means solution of educational and practical problems by means of any commonly used programming languages (PL). The second one is implemented as the description of using one of widely used PL (C++, Java, C#, Python etc.) to implement abstract data types basing on various integrated data structures as well as to use them as the basis for designing processing algorithms for data items stored in them with the evaluation of algorithm complexity. The third course considers the concepts of object-oriented programming (incapsulation, inheritance, polymorphism etc.) basing on the formation and use of classes and objects, operator overloading, multiple inheritance of virtual functions and classes as well as abstract classes.

Any course taught at the university functions within the structure of endless limitations and influences. On the one hand, a corresponding course is the component of certain undergraduate programme; it is a block being either inside or beyond the body of knowledge of a specific specialty. On the other hand, this course experiences certain influence of the specialized constituents of certain rapidly growing body of knowledge, for which future specialists are being trained. Thus, methodological support of the course is an important constituent of the academic process; it recommends the most effective rational variants and examples of actions

concerning the type of activity learnt during the course. Consequently, to study data sorting algorithms, the paper proposes tabular graphical representation of the corresponding processes based on the approaches proposed in [10].

Statement of the main material. Stage one of the research involved detalization of the computing field, related to data processing, involving the Mind Maps method [11] (Fig.1). In this context, all possible tendencies and spheres of servicing the data processing execution are taken into consideration including the processes of algorithmization, software design, and programming itself [12, 13, 14].

As a rule, data processing is “data collection and handling to get sensitive information”. In this context, it can be considered as the subset of a “data collection” process, which in its turn is defined as “information altering (processing) by any method identified with the help of an observer” [15].

Data processing includes performing several basic processes.

- Validation – checking accuracy and actuality of the represented data.
- Sorting – “arranging the objects in certain order and / or in different sets (groups)”.
- Generalization – reducing the detailed data to the main general moments.
- Aggregation – uniting several parts of the data.
- Analysis – “data collection, organization, analysis, interpretation, and representation”.
- Reporting – a list of detailed or reduced data or calculated information.
- Classification – data division into different categories.

While considering the components of this representation based on Mind Map, it can be concluded that one of the most important elements of algorithm implementation is a process development of data structures and algorithms of their processing based on the applied PL and their use while sorting and searching for the data required to develop the corresponding software and information systems.

Analysis of Fig.1 helps formulate following range of problems to be solved while forming the approaches to learning the sorting methods:

- selection of the necessary sorting method;

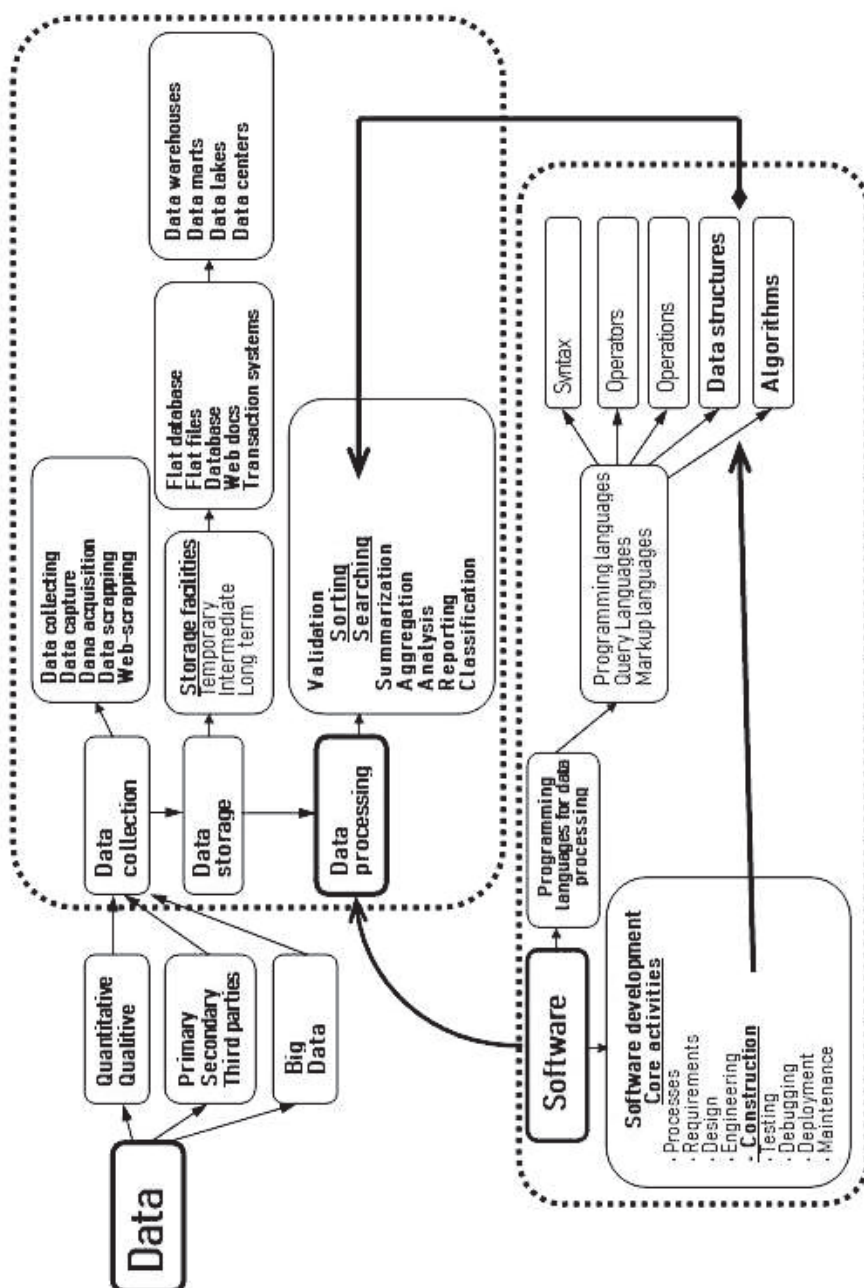


Fig. 1. Mind Map of the data processing domain

- design of an algorithm to implement the selected sorting method;
- selection of the corresponding programming languages for the implementation;
- selection of the built-in data types peculiar for the selected language, which makes it possible to store and process data being in compliance with the problem under solution (purposes, real numbers, text etc.);
- selection of the data structures meant for storage and operation with the elements of the processed elements.

Along with that, the requirement for the first-year students to know different sections of mathematics along with certain experience of mathematical transformations and mastering high-level PL [4-9] are rather problematic as usually students deal with more profound PL learning during their third and further years of study.

While using PL, one should take into account following important factors determining programmer's thinking style and many other additional complexities arising at different stages of implementing algorithms and data structures.

1. The available programming paradigms, with more than 70 names up to now [16].
2. Considerable number of PL, including quite new ones (Rust, Swift, Go etc.) [17].
3. Intra-language features relying on the peculiarities of the paradigms they belong to.
4. Different types of operations and different levels of their execution priorities [18].

Mastering of the "Algorithms and Data Structures" discipline is the complexity of the types of organization of means to represent various data and possible operating and algorithmic capacities of specific PL at different stages of solving the specified problems. In its essence, PL is an intermediate between certain structures of storage of data elements and their application area (development of Web-applications, databases of information systems, e-commerce systems etc.). On the other hand, apart from constantly growing number of PL, we can observe an increasing number of:

- constantly progressing hardware components;
- information-technological and digital platforms.

Thus, it is proposed to form in students the unified approaches to

modelling different algorithms basing on the study of those algorithms in terms of representation in two forms: programme and tabular graphical. Further, the examples of tabular graphical representation for four methods are given [19, p. 243-358]:

1. Bubble sort (Fig. 3).
2. Insertion sort (Fig. 4).
3. Shell sort (Fig. 5).
4. Quick sort (Fig. 6).

Sorting methods 2-4 apply standard sequence of integer numbers (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Standard sequence of integer numbers for sorting

Thus, tabular-graphic representation of sorting stages makes it possible to represent a procedure of applying different sorting methods.

Conclusions. The paper has considered the methods to improve a level of algorithmic understanding of sorting methods in terms of the “Algorithm and Data Structures” course along with the means for reducing the complexity during the studies.

The Mind Maps method was applied to detalize the computing area related to data processing. In this context, all possible tendencies and spheres of servicing of data processing execution were considered including the processes of algorithmization, software design, and the programming itself.

A range of problems was formulated to be solved while forming the approaches to learning the sorting methods. It is proposed to form in students certain unified approaches to modelling different algorithms by their studying not only by a standard method (description with the help of natural language, flowcharts, and pseudo-codes [20]) but also by two more forms: programme and tabular graphical.

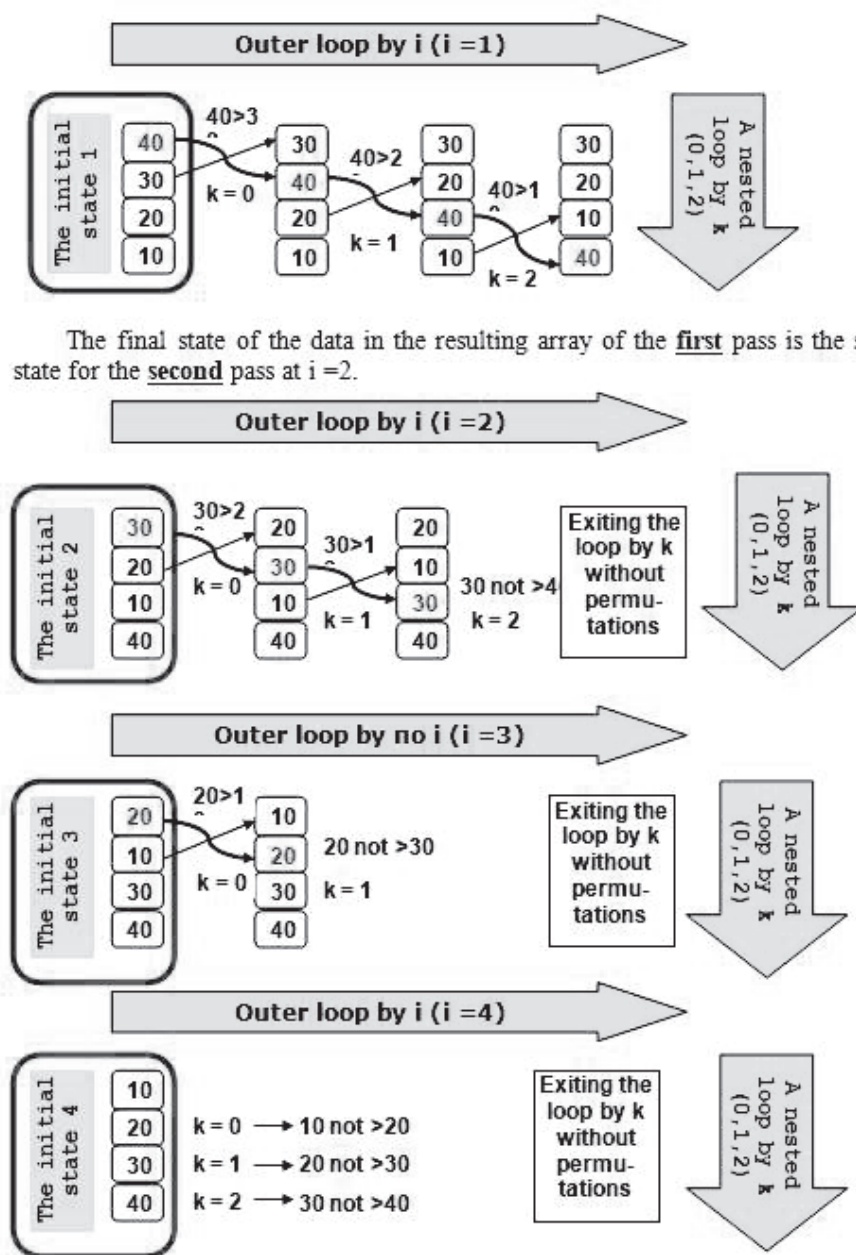
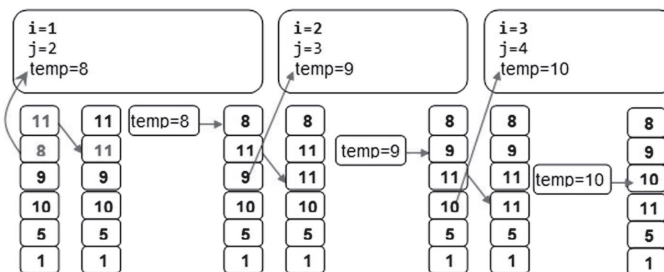


Fig. 3. Tabular graphical scheme of applying a bubble sort method

i =	i=1		i=2		i=3			
nom=i+1	nom=2		nom=3		nom=4			
temp=A[nom]	temp=8		temp=9		temp=10			
j=i+1	j=2		j=3		j=2	j=4	j=3	j=2
temp < A[j-1] A[j] := A[j-1] nom := j-1	8 < 11 A[2] = A[1] nom = 1		9 < 11 A[3] = A[2] nom = 2		9 < 8 false	10 < 11 A[4] = A[3] nom = 3	10 < 9 false	10 < 8 false
	A[nom] = temp		A[nom] = temp					A[nom] = temp



i	i=4				i=5				
nom=i+1	nom=5				nom=6				
temp=A[nom]	temp=5				temp=1				
j=i+1	j=5	j=4	j=3	j=2	j=6	j=5	j=4	j=3	j=2
temp < A[j-1] A[j] := A[j-1] nom := j-1	5 < 11 A[5] = A[4] nom = 4	5 < 10 A[4] = A[3] nom = 3	5 < 9 A[3] = A[2] nom = 2	5 < 8 A[2] = A[1] nom = 1	1 < 11 A[6] = A[5] nom = 5	1 < 10 A[5] = A[4] nom = 5	1 < 9 A[4] = A[3] nom = 5	1 < 8 A[3] = A[2] nom = 5	1 < 5 A[2] = A[1] nom = 5
				A[nom] = temp					A[nom] = temp

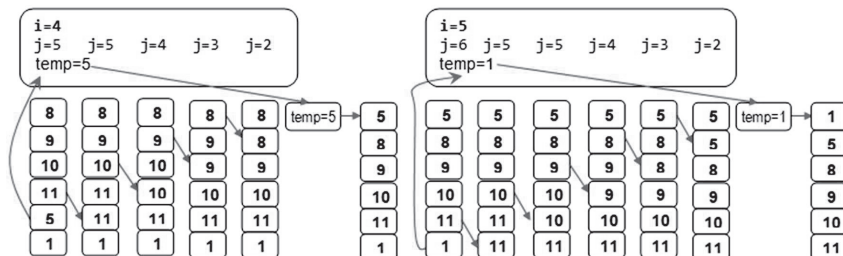
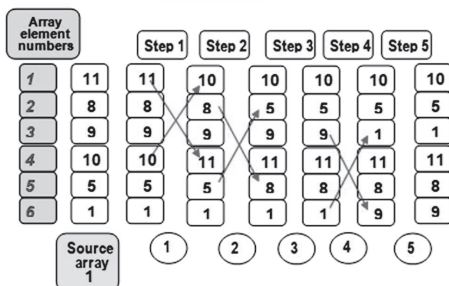


Fig. 4. Tabular graphical scheme of representing the insertion sort stages

step number	1	2	3	4	5		
n=6	n-d=3						
d=6	d=3						
i=	i=1	i=2		i=3			
j=i	j=1	j=2	j=1	j=3	j=2		
j+d	j+d=4	j+d=5	j+d=4	j+d=6	j+d=5		
A[j] > A[j+d]	A[1] > A[4] 11>10	A[2] > A[5] 8>5	A[1] > A[4] 10>11	A[3] > A[6] 9>1	A[2] > A[5] 5>8		
	true	true	false	true	false		
temp=A[j] A[j]=A[j+d] A[j+d]=temp	A[1]=A[4] A[4]=A[1]	A[2]=A[5] A[5]=A[2]	no exchange	A[3]=A[6] A[6]=A[3]	no exchange		
	j=j-1=0	j=j-1=1		j=j-1=2			



step number	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
n=6	n-d=5							
d=6	d=1							
i=	i=1	i=2		i=3	i=4		i=5	
j=i	j=1	j=2	j=j-1=1	j=3	j=4	j=j-1=3	j=j-1=2	j=5
j+d	j+d=2	j+d=3	j+d=2	j+d=4	j+d=5	j+d=4	j+d=3	j+d=6
A[j] > A[j+d]	A[1] > A[2] 10>5	A[2] > A[3] 5>1	A[1] > A[2] 10>5	A[3] > A[4] 10>11	A[4] > A[5] 11>8	A[3] > A[4] 9>8	A[2] > A[3] 5>8	A[5] > A[6] 11>10
	true	true	true	false	true	true	false	true
temp=A[j] A[j]=A[j+d] A[j+d]=temp	A[1]=A[2] A[2]=A[1]	A[2]=A[3] A[3]=A[2]	A[1]=A[2] A[2]=A[1]	no exchange	A[4]=A[5] A[5]=A[4]	A[3]=A[4] A[4]=A[3]	no exchange	A[5]=A[6] A[6]=A[5]
	j=j-1=0	j=j-1=1	j=j-1=0		j=j-1=3	j=j-1=2		j=j-1=4

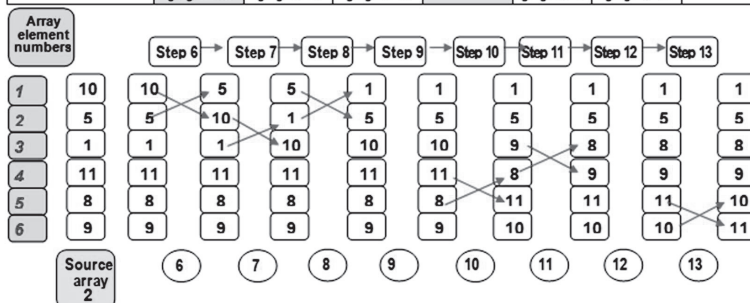


Fig. 5. Sorting by Shell sort

step number	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
first=1	f=1		f=1		f=1		
last=6	t=6		t=4		t=3		
mid = $A[(f+t) \div 2]$	mid=A[3] 9		mid=A[2] 8		mid=A[2] 5		
repeat							
while							
inc	f=1	f=2	f=3	f=1	f=1		
	$A[f] < 9$	$A[f] < 9$	$A[f] < 9$	$A[f] < 8$	$A[f] < 5$		
	$A[1] < 9$	$A[2] < 9$	$A[3] < 9$	$A[1] < 8$	$A[1] < 5$		
	11<9	8<9; f=3	9<9 f=3	1<8; f=2	1<5; f=2		
	false	false	8<8; f=2	f=2	5<5		
while							
dec	t=6	t=5	t=5	t=4	t=3	t=3	
	$A[t] > 9$	$A[t] > 9$	$A[t] > 9$	$A[t] > 8$	$A[t] > 8$	$A[t] > 5$	
	$A[6] > 9$	$A[5] > 9$	$A[4] > 8$	$A[3] > 8$	$A[3] > 5$		
	1 > 9	5 > 9	10 > 8; t=3	5 > 8	5 > 5		
	false	false		false	false		
if f<=t	1<=6	3<=5	1<=6	2<=3	2<=3		
temp=A[f] $A[f]=A[t]$ $A[t]=temp$	$A[1]=A[6]$ $A[6]=A[1]$	$A[3]=A[5]$ $A[5]=A[3]$		$A[3]=A[2]$ $A[2]=A[3]$	$A[3]=A[2]$ $A[2]=A[3]$		
inc	f=2	f=4		f=3			
dec	t=5	t=4		t=3			
first < t		1 < 4		1 < 3			
f < last							

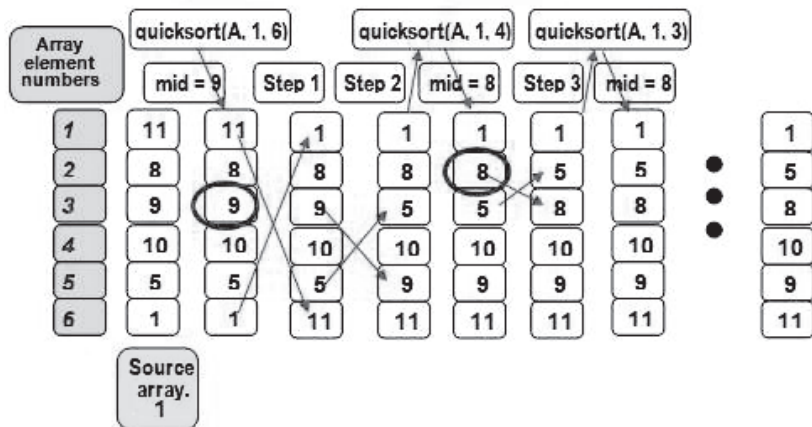


Fig 6. Sorting by quick sort

Examples of tabular graphical representation for four methods were given:

1. Bubble sort.
2. Insertion sort.
3. Shell sort.
4. Quick sort.

Has been formed an approach to increase the level of algorithmic understanding for sorting methods within the course "Algorithms and Data Structures".

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Abstracts

ГРИГОРІЙ КОРОТЕНКО, ЛЕОНІД КОРОТЕНКО, АЛЬОНА ХАРЬ, АРТЕМ ШИРІН. **Шляхи покращення алгоритмічного розуміння методів сортування під час вивчення курсу «Алгоритми та структури даних» студентами університету.** У статті розглянуто особливості викладання матеріалу при вивченні алгоритмів сортування даних в рамках курсу «Алгоритми і структури даних» та шляхи зниження рівня існуючих складнощів при його освоєнні. Активний розвиток програмного забезпечення та інформаційних систем в напрямку формування їх конвергентних та гіперконвергентних модифікацій призводить до вибухового зростання кількості взаємопов'язаних даних самої різної природи. Разом з тим, продовжують надходити повідомлення про постійну (катастрофічну) нестачу кваліфікованих фахівців у всіх сферах проникнення комп'ютеризації (computing) і, в тому числі, в сфері обробки даних. В основі компетентностей ІТ-фахівців лежить здатність вирішувати алгоритмічні завдання, що не зустрічалися їм раніше. Одним з досить поширених завдань є необхідність сортування даних. Тому пропонується розглянути шляхи підвищення рівня алгоритмічного розуміння методів сортування в рамках курсу «Алгоритми і структури даних» та можливі засоби зниження рівня складнощів (*reducing the complexity*) при його вивченні.

Ключові слова: алгоритми сортування, структури даних, обробка даних, програмування, таблично-графічна форма уявлення алгоритмів, метод Mind Maps.

HRYPORII KOROTENKO, LEONID KOROTENKO, ALIONA HAR, ARTEM SZYRIN. **Drogi doskonalenia algorytmicznego rozumienia metod sortowania w trakcie przejścia przez studentów kursu „Algorytmy i struktury danych”.** W artykule przeanalizowano specyfikę nauczania materiału podczas nauki algorytmów sortowania danych na kursie „Algorytmy i struktury danych” oraz sposoby zmniejszenia poziomu istniejących trudności w jego przyswajaniu. Aktywny rozwój oprogramowania i systemów informatycznych w kierunku tworzenia ich konwergentnych i hiperkonwergentnych modyfikacji prowadzi do gwałtownego wzrostu liczby powiązanych ze sobą danych o najróżniejszym charakterze. Jednocześnie wciąż pojawiają się informacje o permanentnym (katastrofalnym) niedoborze wykwalifikowanych

specjalistów we wszystkich obszarach informatyki (computing), w tym dziedzina przetwarzania danych. Podstawą kompetencji informatyków jest umiejętność rozwiązywania zadań algorytmicznych, z którymi wcześniej się nie spotkali. Jednym z dość powszechnych zadań jest konieczność sortowania danych. Dlatego sugeruje się rozważenie sposobów zwiększenia poziomu algorytmicznego rozumienia metod sortowania w ramach przedmiotu „Algorytmy i struktury danych” oraz możliwych sposobów zmniejszenia poziomu złożoności (reducing the complexity) podczas jego studiowania.

Słowa kluczowe: *algorytmy sortowania, struktury danych, przetwarzanie danych, programowanie, tabelaryczne i graficzne przedstawienie algorytmów, metoda Mind Maps.*