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INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' TRAINING WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL SPACE OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

The article examines the main approaches to content, forms and methods of training future teachers of vocational education in Europe. It has been found that the structure and content according to national traditions and European standards have led to success of European vocational education. It has been proved that training is practice-oriented, has a solid fundamental basis and is interdisciplinary, effectively contributes to the forming of a professional outlook. We have identified common trends in training teachers of vocational education: flexible training programs based on a broad concept of competence and establishment of closer links between education institutions and research laboratories; greater attention to quality control through a large diversity in the education content; increasing autonomy of education institutions that widens their perspectives, obligatory research and innovation projects within training of future vocational education teachers, diversity of forms and methods of professional training that develops creative innovative thinking, the importance of using ICTs in the training. All these aspects prove innovative nature of European education and great opportunities for training future vocational education teachers' readiness for creative professional activity.

Keywords: Master, future teacher of vocational education, innovation, pedagogical experience, European countries.

INTRODUCTION

Innovative processes taking place in the system of higher education in Ukraine are closely connected with modernization of the education process, its adjustment to European and international standards, which in turn, increases demands on quality of education and training of educators able of applying innovative approaches to the training of vocational education teachers.

Ukraine's joining the Bologna process necessitates a detailed study of European approaches to updating the content, forms and methods of future vocational education teachers' training. A comparative analysis of education in European countries, justification of similar and distinctive features are actualized in the context of creating the common European Educational Space. Thus, recognition of education standards, equivalence of academic qualifications, training courses, as well as qualitative changes in organization of training future vocational education teachers ready for creative professional activity are on the agenda.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to analyze and synthesize innovative approaches to training future teachers of vocational education in European countries.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The presented research encompasses data available on professional training of vocational education teachers abroad, namely, in European countries (Sweden, Germany). It must be noted that of great scientific value is the work by S. Marginson. Foreign experience in training teachers has been presented in works of such scholars as N. Karpenko, N. Melnyk, T. Ponimanska et al (Puhovska, 2010; Puhovska, 2001). Despite the data available, the problem of training future teachers for creative professional work in foreign countries has not been sufficiently studied yet.

During the study, we used the following methods: theoretical and methodological analysis and synthesis of psychological and pedagogical literature, classification, induction, deduction, comparison, generalization.

RESULTS

In most European countries, a Masters degree is the first step in professional education of future lecturers. The participants of the Bologna process agree on the definition that a Masters degree in European higher education should consist of 300 credits, of which at least 60 must correspond to the level of the specialist in the chosen area. This will create the opportunity to distribute study load as follows: 180 credits for a Bachelors degree + 120 credits for a Masters degree; 240 credits for a Bachelors degree + 90–120 credits for a Masters degree (30–60 of them may be transferred from previous courses during the last year of a Bachelors degree, providing minimum credits 60 at specialist level); 300 credits for a Masters degree (integrated programmes) (Desiatov, 2008).

The credit system has already been implemented or is still being implemented into the societies of European countries and there is a clear trend toward the use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) (Kiku, 2010).

Professional pedagogical training of specialists at universities of Sweden has been studied by many researchers, in particular, N. Karpenko. According to many researchers (N. Karpenko, N. Melnyk, T. Ponimanska), professional training in Sweden is practice-oriented, has a solid fundamental basis and is interdisciplinary, effectively contributes to the forming of a professional outlook and a holistic perception of objective reality. The forming of pedagogical education content is based on the principles of humanization, humanitarization, fundamentalization, integration, differentiation, historicism and practical orientation. Content integrity is ensured by a comprehensive training of future specialists, which provides the integration of three components, namely, educational, cognitive, research and practical activities (Synenko, 2002).

N. Karpenko notes that the Swedish university education is a multi-level system that prepares Bachelors, Masters, PhDs and doctors, offering both general academic and professionally oriented programmes.

Due to implementation of curricula for different levels, students may obtain general or vocational diplomas, types of which are determined by the Swedish Higher Education Act. Students obtain Higher Education Diploma after two years of study, a Bachelors degree after three years of study or professional qualification after four years of study. The second cycle provides one or two-year Master programmes. The third cycle offers philosophy (two years) and doctoral (four years) programmes (Bidyuk, 2014).

In Sweden, a degree in Education is considered to be professional. All graduates who follow the updated program of pedagogical training obtain a Lärarexamen or teaching degree. It must be noted that this term can be translated as a Bachelor of Education (180, 210 credits) or a Master of Education (270, 300, 330 credits) depending on the duration of the program.



Research personnel of higher qualification are trained within doctorate training centers usually located at universities. Today, most of universities provide a philosophy (an intermediate degree between a Masters degree and the doctorate) after two or two and a half years of study. philosophy dissertation comprising no less than 60 credits is defended during the seminar. Later, one may proceed to the doctorate (Marginson, 2008).

Research-oriented training and a research-based innovative environment in Sweden are the required components of initial training of future vocational education teachers. Student research activities are organically connected with the education process and are a part of it. This is the study of theoretical and methodological principles for conducting research on the content of disciplines and performing research tasks during classes or placements (Sliepkhan, 2005).

At the final stage, students are to write a dissertation that is a kind of graduate training for the next cycle of studies.

The basis of teachers' professional education is research-oriented teaching. It may be realized within a reflective environment, the essential features of which are a problem situation, collaboration, experience exchange. Educational and cognitive activities of students are activated due to a great number of educational alternatives, a combination of various forms and methods. The most common organizational forms of teaching are lectures and seminars. Special emphasis is made on work in groups. The portfolio method, case method and videotaping are the most popular means used in professional education (Regulations on advanced training and probation of pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical staff in higher educational institutions, 2013). In addition, students participate in research projects, which involve researchers and lecturers (Puhovska, 2010).

It must be noted that one of the promising mechanisms able to improve the system of vocational education teachers' training in Sweden is development of distance education presented as separate academic courses and programmes that provide students with the opportunity to obtain a Bachelors or Masters degree.

Theoretical analysis of research findings allows asserting that Swedish education is innovative and contributes to future vocational education teachers' training for creative professional activity.

Also, we would like to consider the peculiarities of future vocational education teachers' training at German universities. According to the classification adopted in Germany, all higher education institutions are divided into three groups:

a) universities (classical, technical, comprehensive and specialized institutions of university level, higher pedagogical, theological and medical schools). Most universities have a classic structure. They are aimed at conducting researches and training highly qualified personnel; b) higher education institutions providing specialized training for future specialists in such fields as engineering, business, management, etc.; c) higher education institutions (colleges) of arts and music.

If graduates of higher education institutions pass the state examination, they are awarded the title of a fully-trained specialist, when university graduates – a Masters degree that gives them the right to pursue professional activity as appropriate to their training and qualification or to proceed to postgraduate study (Lukianova, 2014).

A Masters degree is focused on teaching. Among 35 specialties the title of doctor philosophy is recognized as a higher qualification. It requires 3–5 years of research activity, the state examination and dissertation defence. The highest qualification is doctor that is usually awarded after 5–10 years of research and dissertation defense (Kiku, 2010).



In our opinion, quite interesting is training of future teachers provided at Heidelberg University. N. Melnyk indicates that the University provides undergraduate and postgraduate training of vocational education teachers (Puhovska, 2010).

The process of forming professional competency of future vocational education teachers at Heidelberg University that is considered to be a classical German higher education institution is implemented through different forms, methods and means of the education process organization, the most effective of which are practical activities (seminars and workshops); Lab; extracurricular activities (implementation of university-based teacher training, namely, participation in public educational programmes developed and realized under the guidance of a leading research university); forms of student independent work and university-wide conferences, teaching and research briefings (counseling), coursework, dissertation; traditional methods such popular science talks, narratives, discussions, practical exercises, research assignments, pass/fail exams, exams, etc., as well as innovative methods, namely, discussions, heuristic conversations, microphone; video presentations, electronic courses; trainings, brainstorming, "aquarium", synectics, didactic games, etc. (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2013).

The use of electronic interactive whiteboards (the Smart Board) is quite popular at German universities. Thus, German teacher education colleges develop methodological complexes based on the Smart Board that enables the implementation of the concept of a new information environment and may be freely used by teachers, students and postgraduate students (lectures, practical classes, independent work, counseling, etc.). The Set of Smart Notebook files based on the content of lectures and practical classes (Smart Notes) is an essential tool in training students for test papers and examinations and particularly necessary it is for those students who did not attend classes. Thus, the use of the Smart Board allows teachers to creatively design the education process and implement this project (Synenko, 2002).

According K. Holtz, a reasonable combination of traditional and innovative methods of training in higher education is the key to quality professional education and forming of highly qualified specialists (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2013; Puhovska, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

So, the results of our study prove that approaches to training future teachers of vocational education in European countries are implemented differently. However, general trends, in our opinion, are: flexible training programs based on a broad concept of competence and establishment of closer links between education institutions and research laboratories; greater attention to quality control through a large diversity in the education content; increasing autonomy of education institutions that widens their perspectives; obligatory research and innovation projects within training of future vocational education teachers; diversity of forms and methods of professional training that develops creative innovative thinking; the importance of using ICTs in the training.

All these aspects prove innovative nature of European education and great opportunities for training future vocational education teachers' readiness for creative professional activity.

Prospects of further researches include the study of foreign experience to creatively implement innovative ideas in Ukraine with taking into account national peculiarities and interests.



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