

ПЕДАГОГІЧНИЙ ПЕРСОНАЛ

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Perspectives of teacher professional development in Ukraine: discourses and practice

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Стаття є результатом плідної наукової співпраці у сфері порівняльної педагогіки, яка розгорнулась між дослідниками двох університетів – ДВНЗ «Менеджмент освіти АПН України» і Х Паризького університету (Сорбона). Проведення спільних досліджень і наукових проєктів, оприлюднення результатів досліджень на міжнародних наукових зібраннях Європейської асоціації педагогічної освіти (ETEE), Європейської асоціації дослідників у сфері освіти (ECER), започаткування нових організаційних форм співпраці, таких як центр європейської інтеграції, обмін науковою інформацією та ідеями, – все це є ефективними важелями вибудови спільного дослідницького простору в Європі, а також інтеграції вітчизняної педагогічної науки. У статті представлено дискусію щодо перспектив професійного розвитку українських учителів у контексті ідей підвищення якості педагогічної освіти та дієвої партнерської підтримки вчителів.

Ключові слова: учитель, професійний розвиток, модель, якість освіти, партнерство.

During recent decades governments around the world have paid increasing attention to the improvement of teacher education (TE). Improving education at different levels presumes a quality TE which can be guaranteed with adequate teachers' competences and professional development.

Teacher professional development is a newly used term in Ukrainian education. Ukraine inherited an educational system designed to meet needs of a centrally planned economy. The government's investments in education were high and resulted in high literacy levels of the population, a majority of skilled workers in the industrial sector and strong cultural and scientific achievements. After the «perestroika» period, education was underfinanced for many years. At the same time, Ukraine faced the challenges coming from a worldwide development of education, especially in regard to a knowledge and information based economy, quick development of education in Ukraine, whose Constitution guarantees secondary education free of charge for all citizens of the country. A number of significant changes aimed at solving urgent problems have already taken place in the Ukrainian educational system. Some of the initiatives and their purposes are briefly presented next.

- New legislation has been passed with the purpose of changing aims of education and curriculum content. The principles of equity and quality on education are

examined by the Law on General Secondary Education (adopted in June 1999). It underlines the importance of coordinating the interests of society with those of the state, of students and of their parents. This law envisages increasing the variety of educational institutions, their autonomy and the strategies for development. Another law, passed in 2000, began the process of making general secondary education compulsory and extending it to 12 years. In the new system general education includes four years of primary education, five years of lower secondary education and three years of upper secondary education. The legislation underlines the importance of recognising European and world standards in education.

- The adoption of a new pedagogical paradigm based on the learner-centred approach has required the development of new teaching skills and competences. The State Program «A Teacher» (1997) proposed some solutions for improving the quality of pedagogical education in Ukraine, effectiveness of practice, elaboration of new standards for the teaching profession. As stated in programme, the Government needs to improve the social services for teachers and provide them with informational assistance and teaching resources.

- The liberalisation of entrance to upper secondary schools has resulted in greater pressure to enter higher education. One of the consequences has been an increased variety and greater choice for educational programmes in these institutions (Law on Higher Education, 2002). At the same time, the government has elaborated some programmes that support the integration of Ukrainian higher education into the Bologna process.

Although the new legislation has contributed to the decentralisation and democratisation of education in Ukraine, this process has not been totally achieved. Analysts attribute this failure to an inadequate financing of these reforms. The system showed a lack of capacity to plan, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate quality educational policies. The inefficient use of teacher resources is mentioned in the reports [11, p. 3]. It seems that there should have been a better understanding regarding the meaning of changes on the part of all educational stakeholders and teachers in particular. Educational issues such as «quality», «equity», «evaluation», «standards», «choice» should be questioned and assimilated by all actors involved. This is not an easy task and Ukrainian education and teacher training system have encountered a great number of difficulties. The difficulties could be explained by the gap between the political decisions and the local realities. As a result, the reforms occurred more quickly than the abilities of schools and teachers to accommodate themselves to the new demands.

Teachers and the transformation process

Teachers were not prepared to assimilate the new approaches and the multitude of new methods. These unfamiliar principles, which were based on western pedagogical theories, opposed previous teaching experience and created a situation where teachers had difficulties in finding ways to fit them into their teaching. Local educational authorities and in-service teacher training institutes offered workshops and seminars in order to implement the reforms and clarify the new strategies for teaching and learning. International organisations that supported educational reforms in Ukraine also conducted special training programmes for teacher trainers. This cooperation between national and foreign institutions continues still today and contributes to the promotion of professional development both for teachers and trainers. Clearly, for effective changes to

take place in education, it is vital for teachers to be well prepared. Different analysis of the teachers' attitudes towards the reforms showed their unwillingness or inability to critically appraise them [11]. Some key factors can explain this attitude:

- The education system organised during the Soviet era was influenced by strong ideological principles. Teachers were encouraged to participate in school life and promote ideas dictated by the politicians. They did not reflect on the teaching process and did not expect to influence the policies or their educational environment.
- The teacher training system was monopolised by the governmental institutions. Both the approach and the methods of teaching were prescribed by the Ministry. Theoretical knowledge prevailed in training programmes.
- Current economic problems in the Ukrainian society have lowered teachers' salaries and forced them to take on extra teaching hours to supplement their income. The most experienced teachers started leaving their jobs in order to find proper means to support their families. The inadequate income for teachers is leading to a loss of professional motivation and the deterioration in the quality of teaching.
- The shortage of finance in education has resulted in the lack of equipment and teaching aids such as teaching materials and textbooks.
- The existing system of continued teacher training as well as the certification and accreditation processes do not motivate teachers to develop their professional skills neither to participate in the process of educational changes.

A combination of passivity, desperation and exhaustion has caused teachers to become sceptical about the possibility of positive change and their ability to influence things for the better. It seems that any real positive change in the educational system is impossible without an increase in teachers' pay as well as their social status.

It might be helpful to discuss the problem of educational change from a broader perspective. It is clear that society, parents, government as well as foreign investigators express their demands for urgent changes. Teachers' desires and considerations are rarely taken into account. However, findings from research indicate that externally imposed reform will not necessarily lead to change in teacher practice. As F. Korthagen takes note, a major mistake of many attempts to implement innovations in education has been that the wish to change came from the outside and did not meet the needs and concerns of the teachers and circumstances in which they worked [6, p. 3].

According to the analytical study of the Renaissance Foundation (2003), 50 % of Ukrainian teachers do not consider themselves as the active participants of the reforms. These results indicate that it is important to take teachers' situations into account, respect their concerns and accompany them towards the process of professional development and change.

Another important aspect of educational reform concerns the use of valuable experience of national pedagogical culture. The Ukrainian researchers (Zazun, Nychkalo, Lugoviy, Savchenko, cited in Oliynyk, Danylenko, 2005) try to promote the ideas of the individualisation of teacher development and training for creative, collaborative and pedagogically free practice that could contribute to the improvement of the current situation. It is important not to focus mainly on negative results and criticisms as the best principles for change. The researchers speak about a special kind of conscience acquired by all the actors and their understanding that the success of the transformation will

depend on their profound evaluation of the traditional approach and its adaptation to a new system. This reflection might help to promote the implementation of principles essential to the development of Ukraine's education and teacher training.

It is necessary to mention that the Ukrainian pedagogical culture has been promoted through the large system of teacher training institutions, local educational centres and schools. The theoretical knowledge acquired during pre-service education can be helpful for teachers to innovate their practice. Performance and excellence in teaching is strongly encouraged by the system. The tradition of pedagogical seminars and workshops, conferences, regional and national contests of the best practitioners are an integral part of teachers' work and school functions. This component of national pedagogical culture is criticised for its weight in teaching time and its low impact on the outcome of learning or school development. Meanwhile, it is interesting to use this experience as it can be beneficial in reflecting about possibilities of school based professional development and changing relations between the different actors of the educational system concerning quality teaching and learning.

Teacher education and training

Today's teacher education system includes pre-service education provided by higher education institutions (pedagogical institutes, universities). These institutions prepare teachers and educators for all the levels of compulsory secondary education, teachers of pre-primary and primary schools can still receive their education in vocational schools and pedagogical colleges (upper secondary professional education institutions). The majority of graduates of secondary professional institutions – vocational schools and colleges – continue in higher education, as indicated by the high percentage of teachers (80 %) and educators in Ukraine that have diplomas from higher education institutions.

The duration of pre-service teacher education depends on the previous educational background of the students. Different institutions award certificates for the following educational qualification levels: Junior Specialist, Bachelor's degree, Specialist's degree, Master's degree, Doctor's degree (graduates with master's or doctor's degrees teach in higher educational establishments or become researchers).

This multilevel system of higher education corresponds to a model of initial teacher education and training in which theoretical knowledge and practical professional skills are acquired at the same time. The content of pre-service teacher education includes the following:

- socio-humanistic education (philosophy, cultural studies, ecology, religious, health education, sociology, Ukrainian history and language etc.)
- psychology and pedagogy (general psychology, pedagogical psychology, social psychology, psychology of professional activity, child psychology; general pedagogy, didactics, history of pedagogy, comparative education, modern teaching technology, pedagogical skills)
- professional education (disciplines of teaching and methods of teaching) and professional practice (continuing pedagogical practice of different types and length, up to 16 % of all the time of education).

The system of higher education is recently undergoing a process of structural and content changes. There is a strong desire of Ukrainian policy makers to integrate the national system of higher education into the expanding European educational system.

That is why, the new standards, qualifications, credit testing system as well as curriculum and programmes are developing in order to facilitate integration of the higher education system. It remains to be seen how it will influence teacher education where 41 % of student teachers are not motivated to develop their pedagogical skills, 25 % have a negative attitude towards innovations and 80 % don't feel prepared to work with children with special needs [11, p. 178]. This can be explained partly by very little practical in schools (16 %) as well as students' lack of knowledge about the reality of teachers work.

In-service teacher training system

Ukraine has a widespread system of in-service training and further teacher development. The professional development, called «methodological work», is realised on three levels: schools, district educational centres and regional in-service teacher training institutes. Non-governmental organisations play an important role in this process. Since 2004, they can deliver a certificate to the teachers who attend the training, limited to a maximum number of 200 trainees per organisation.

There are 27 In-Service Teacher Training institutes (INSETT institutes). Their curricula and approach to training are determined by the Ministry of Education. Once a new policy has been announced, the INSETT institutes support the policy and prepare teachers to implement it. All teachers should attend the training course at least once every five years, as the procedure of their accreditation demands an updating of their knowledge and skills in the INSETT institutes. In general, a teacher can participate in such training about seven or eight times during his/her professional career. The determination of the qualifying levels, called «category», directly affects the teacher's pay scale. The INSETT institutes train candidates for a category and give them the certificate required for accreditation procedure.

The Ministry designs the programme covering the main topics and the time spent on them. The Institutes elaborate courses of two or four weeks (72 or 144 hours) duration of training. Usually, the course consists of three parts:

- humanistic: general educational matters and changes in ministry policies and school curriculum (8 %–30 % of training time);
- professional: topics related to the subject of teaching, visits to schools and demonstration lessons by experienced teachers (60 %–80 % of training time);
- diagnostic and analytical: entrance testing, evaluation of training (2 %–10 % of training time) [3; 4].

In the last years, changes were observed in the activities proposed by the INSETT institutes in order to modernise this inflexible scheme and make it adaptable to urgent professional needs. The new types of training courses vary in duration and context. Individual trainers or experienced teachers run courses based on their innovative teaching techniques. Moreover, schools can formulate the demand for a specific seminar to explore a pedagogical situation. The group of trainers develop and organise such seminar at the school where training takes place. This new type of activity is popular as it is cost-effective and can give teachers quick answers to everyday problems they encounter in their practice.

The other activities provided by the INSETT institutes include activities such as: organising and running seminars for different actors of the educational system; participating in international projects; studying the work of experienced teachers and

promoting their teaching techniques among other teachers; studying the quality of teaching and learning in schools in order to, for example, make suggestions to teachers and administrators or design new training courses.

These changes contribute to the evolution of the in-service teacher training system in Ukraine. They will be encouraged by the joint project of Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and World Bank «The Equal Access to Quality Education» (2005–2009). It should be stressed that these changes can have a positive influence on teaching practice and the future learning outcomes if they are accompanied by a better understanding of the professional development process.

Teacher professional development

Researchers interested in teacher education and practice might view professional development differently. Teaching is a complex phenomenon and teachers need opportunities and support to master their knowledge and skills and to progress professionally. Killeavy (2001) observes the differences in using the term «professional development» according to the country's context. In some countries, the term teacher professional development is used for describing in-service courses and further academic studies of teachers desiring to obtain master's or doctor's degrees. In others, it is considered as continued process of theoretical and practical education on pre-service and in-service levels. Professional development can be interpreted loosely as an ongoing process comprising pre-service, induction and further professional development of teachers realised through formal training or informal educational support [1; 5; 7]. L.Ling and N. Mackenzie emphasise that: one of the major purposes for which professional development is designed is to facilitate positive change in the education system and in theoretical and practical knowledge and attitudes of individuals of whom the system is composed. In addition to bringing about the potential for change, professional development is regarded as a means of empowering teachers and administrators by providing them with an ability to update and upgrade their knowledge and qualifications [7, p. 92].

Therefore, in order to change the context in which teachers' professional development can take place in Ukraine, it is necessary to find out whether it can produce positive changes on the educational system and make teachers responsible for their professional development. As shown in Figure 1, teachers are situated today at the bottom of a vertical system for teacher development.

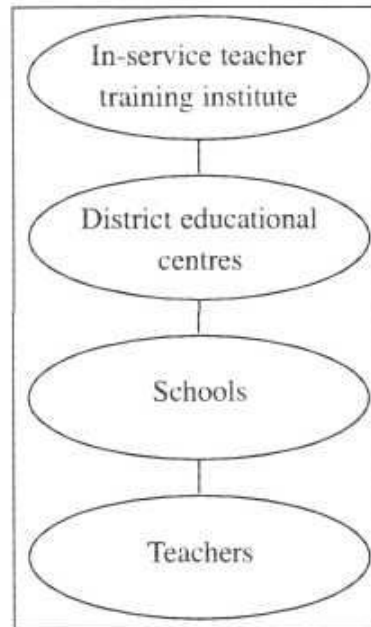


Figure 1. Traditional professional development model

It is still common in Ukraine that teachers attend two or four week training courses every five years at the INSETT institute. These courses propose a large number of themes for teachers in order to master the necessary knowledge and skills. However, the effectiveness of this form of professional development is still unclear. Teachers sometimes confirm having acquired some information about developments in educational sciences, but they can rarely prove its impact on their practice in the classroom. As the content and outcome of these courses are predetermined, teachers cannot express their worries and receive answers to particular questions. There is also the perception of the INSETT institutes and the Ministry of Education and Science that the system is inflexible and needs urgent reform.

Actually, trainers of the in-service institutes propose an innovative form of professional development and, last year, experienced teachers were connected to this practice. They provided professional development modules called «thematic courses». Modules are based on specific teaching experience or pedagogical initiative. Trainers try to share their ideas and the outcome with teachers interested in the problem. In this way, trainees can choose the module themselves and meet colleagues who have the same professional concerns. Trainers of the INSETT institutes are encouraged to become researchers and include their findings in thesis or to publish their articles in professional journals. When experienced teachers design such modules, they are assessed and might receive promotion in their careers. This is also an occasion for trainers and experienced teachers to work together and to reflect on the aspects of each profession (teacher or teacher trainer). In addition, this form of professional development motivates the school teachers as the system recognises their efforts and competences.

In Ukrainian schools, professional development is considered as an integral part of school work. School administrators are responsible for designing a project focused upon a specific problem and they involve the teaching staff in running the project. Every teacher should present the activities he or she intends doing during the year for individual professional development and for the fulfilment of the school project objectives. These activities are usually undertaken during school holidays or after classes and take the form of seminars or team workshops. The local educational authorities evaluate the professional development plans as they might influence their decisions about accreditation of the school. Ukrainian teachers express their dissatisfaction of such type of activities and consider them as a requirement and not as a professional support programme. According to a study carried out by the International Renaissance Foundation (2003), only 15 % of teachers participate creatively in professional activities. Their lack of commitment, or commitment by obligation, results in low effectiveness of professional development and teacher practice. Nevertheless, some schools succeed considerably in their teachers' development. It is evident that the willingness of teachers to participate in professional development activities is related to their role in this process. School administrators have to show their support and confidence in teachers' initiatives. The openness of the teacher training system and acceptance of teachers as participating actors in reforms can change their perception of professional development.

The international educational institutions and organisations, external to the system of national education, initiated one of the most popular forms of professional development. They provide programmes and projects to study a specific topic area unknown to Ukrainian teachers. Usually, these programmes run over an extended period with possibilities of correlation between theory and practice. Schools, or individual teachers, benefit from the ongoing support provided by the trainers. Therefore, teachers have time to reflect, assimilate new knowledge and change practice. Besides, they are encouraged to make presentations or demonstrate their abilities in lessons. Preparing teachers to become trainers is frequently one of the objectives of the programme. Consequently, this form of professional development attracts a great number of teachers and schools.

Conclusion

It is suggested here, that there is a transformation process taking place in Ukraine through professional development provided mostly by in-service teacher training institutes, by schools and by external educational institutions. Educational policies and reforms are considered important but not the only factors for improving the effectiveness of teacher professional development. Professional development leading to change in teaching practice may occur more readily if there is dynamic interaction between the three elements, that is professional development program and providers, the school as organisation and the teacher as unique individual... The culture of a school, and staff commitment to change and professional growth, can make a significant difference in implementation of professional development programs [7, p. 94].

The empowerment of teachers should be the main objective of this process. In Ukraine, traditional approaches can evolve and take the form of a partnership model for professional development. This might help teachers to take part actively in the transformation process and keep them continuously involved in developing their professional skills and competencies.

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