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STRATEGY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL SPECIALISTS IN NORWAY

The article highlights the specifics of professional development of teachers in Norway, provided in the national strategy for continuous pedagogical education. In particular, four main goals of the strategy are outlined (academically challenging and rewarding study programmes; academically strong and well-organized teacher education providers; knowledge-based and involved partners in the kindergarten and school sectors; stable and mutually beneficial cooperation between teacher education institutions, the kindergarten sector and the school sector), which allow understanding how Norway offers effective approaches to building professional development of teachers (preschool teachers as well). The strategy is realized through seven blocks of a set of measures. The blocks that offer strategic scenarios for the possible professional development of a teacher are of particular interest. In the country under study, attention is focused on programs to support teachers, especially at the early stage of their professional development; the formation of mentoring programs as a form of professional development of teachers; strengthening network interaction and communication at all levels of the pedagogical education system as a guarantee of continuous professional development of the entire pedagogical community. The internship in the course of study at higher educational institutions plays an important role. It is emphasized that pedagogical practice plays an important role in professional development during studies in higher education institutions. Pedagogical internship aims to practice and improve professional skills, as well as develop a unique pedagogical style of future teachers. It is stated that the professional development strategy in Norway is based on a combination of formal education, continuous professional development, institutional support and national policy.

Key words: continuous pedagogical education, future preschool specialists, internship, pedagogy of partnership, preschool education, professional development of a future teacher.

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СТРАТЕГІЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО РОЗВИТКУ ФАХІВЦІВ ДОШКІЛЬНОЇ ГАЛУЗІ В НОРВЕГІЇ

У статті висвітлено специфіку професійного розвитку вчителів у Норвегії, що подана в національній стратегії безперервної педагогічної освіти. Зокрема, окреслено чотири основні довгострокові цілі цієї стратегії (академічно складні та значущі освітні програми; академічно сильні та добре організовані постачальники педагогічної освіти; дитячі садки та школи як активні партнери; стабільна та взаємовигідна співпраця між закладами педагогічної освіти, дитячими садками та шкільним сектором), що дозволяють зрозуміти, як Норвегія пропонує ефективні підходи до побудови професійного розвитку вчителів (також вихователів дошкільних закладів). Стратегія реалізується через сім блоків комплексних заходів. Особливий інтерес викликають блоки, що пропонують стратегічні сценарії можливого професійного розвитку вчителя. У досліджуваній країні увага зосереджена на програмах підтримки вчителів, особливо на ранньому етапі їхнього професійного становлення; формуванні програм наставництва як форми професійного розвитку вчителів; посиленні мережевої взаємодії та комунікації на всіх рівнях системи педагогічної освіти як гарантії безперервного професійного розвитку всієї педагогічної спільноти. Наголошено, що важливу роль у професійному розвитку відіграє педагогічна практика під час навчання у закладах вищої освіти. Наголошено, що педагогічна практика має на меті відпрацювати та вдосконалити професійні навички, а також розвинути унікальний педагогічний стиль. Зазначено, що стратегія професійного розвитку в Норвегії базується на поєднанні формальної освіти, безперервного професійного розвитку, інституційної підтримки та національної політики.

Ключові слова: безперервна педагогічна освіта, майбутні фахівці дошкільної галузі, педагогічна практика, педагогіка партнерства, дошкільна освіта, професійний розвиток майбутнього педагога.

Problem statement. Documents of major international organizations (UNESCO, OECD, Council of Europe, European Commission, etc.) regulate the potential of teaching staff as the basis for ensuring high quality and competitiveness of education in the global labor market and teaching staff of the 21st century has become a vector of social changes. The integration of the Ukrainian national education system into the European and global educational space requires research and implementation of new approaches to guarantee a qualitatively new level of teacher training based on the preservation of national heritage and the best examples of world experience.

“Today, as the contemporary society is increasingly theorized as global, fluid, and networked, the challenges that education faces demand high quality professional development of future teachers and correspondingly holistic enhancement in student teachers’ training, thus increasing the likelihood that this improvement will be sustainable over time. ... Student teachers’ training is a field of constant evolution not only in terms of implementing new approaches, exploiting innovative technologies and pedagogical technics, but what is the most important, in terms of organizing, managing and constantly improving the cyclic process of training” (Fedorenko, Tikan, Kolomiets, 2021: 188). In the context of the integration of national education into the European and global educational space, it is necessary to take into account the results of comparative pedagogical research on the experience of advanced countries in this field, in particular Scandinavian ones. The need to improve the national system of professional preschool education is due to a number of factors, in connection with which the tasks of improving the organization of the educational process for training future specialists in the preschool sector and early child development, the formation of a multicultural identity in each of them acquire special significance. They are an important condition for the implementation of the state education program.

Since one of the prerequisites for ensuring high-quality preschool education is the training of modern, qualified and creative specialists in the preschool sector, Ukrainian universities are developing new approaches to education, studying the experience of advanced countries of the world, in particular Norway, and improving national educational practices. Research into the specifics of professional training of future specialists in the preschool sector in Scandinavian countries, in Norway in particular, can help identify the most optimal ways to improve not only Ukrainian preschool education, but also to clarify the search for an effective strategy for training

pedagogical staff in the field of early development and preschool education. After all, Scandinavian countries are known for the advanced state of their education systems, which in turn contributes to high standards of social security. This makes the issue of considering and borrowing the progressive pedagogical experience of these countries relevant (and Norway is among them).

Research analysis. Within the framework of the presented study, the experience of countries whose education systems are considered the best in the world is important, in particular Norway, whose experience in implementing partnership pedagogy in strategic plan for professional development of preschool teachers is a valuable source for in-depth analysis.

Analysis of scholarly sources allowed us to state that various aspects of the functioning of the education system in the Scandinavian countries have aroused scientific interest in a number of Ukrainian (N. Andriychuk, L. Vashchenko, O. Vasylenko, N. Vyshnevskaya, M. Grab, K. Kotun, T. Logvinenko, O. Lokshyna, O. Ohienko, G. Trukhan, S. Fedorenko, O. Tsiuk, etc.) and foreign (R. Bagnall, B. Elle, T. Plomp, P. Shukl, L. Skow etc.) scholars.

In the Ukrainian scholarly and pedagogical discourse, many studies have recently appeared that reveal various aspects of training specialists in the preschool field, such as: theoretical and methodological principles of training preschool teachers in Western European countries (N. Melnyk); experience in training specialists for the preschool sector in Poland and Romania (M. Oliynyk). The studies by A. Bohush, I. Dychkivska, T. Zharovtseva, G. Zakorchenna, L. Ishchenko, I. Rogalska-Yablonska, prove that the quality of future specialists in the preschool sphere influences the effectiveness of the development of the preschooler’s personality, which serves as a guarantee of their success in the future.

Over the past decades, various modern problems of the development of Ukrainian and foreign vocational education have been considered in the works by N. Abashkina, N. Bidiuk, N. Korchynska, N. Nychkalo, L. Pukhovska, V. Radkevych and others. Domestic authors investigate the issues of the development of innovations in the field of professional education, didactic principles of organizing training in the workplace, strengthening ties between vocational education institutions and the labor market, lifelong learning, etc. In this context, the interest is in vocational education in Norway, which is influenced by the leading trends of the European educational space, is guided by its key principles and at the same time has a number of local features that are studied by both Ukrainian and foreign scholars: A. Antikainen,

J. Jonasson, K. Jorgensen, T. Jensen, E. Kokkersvold, R. Lappen, R. Lungstad, O. Maksymenko, M. Nilund and others.

Purpose of the article is to highlight the the specifics of professional development of teachers in Norway, provided in the national strategy for continuous pedagogical education.

Main material. The strategy “Kompetanse for fremtidens barnehage» (Revised strategy for competence and recruitment 2018–2022) describes the competence development strategy for Early Childhood. This strategy aims to contribute to (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017):

- an increase in the number of pre-school teachers in kindergartens;
- an increase in the number of child-care workers in kindergarten;
- providing all staff members in kindergartens with an opportunity to pursue continual professional development;
- to acquiring more kindergarten teachers in kindergartens to attain master’s degree-level competence;
- all kindergartens developing their teaching practice through kindergarten-based competence enhancement.

“The competence strategy aims to boost recruitment and competence development. Kindergartens should allow staff to develop professionally, both individually and collectively” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017: 2). The specific features of the development of a strategy for professional development of school and preschool teachers in Norway can be seen through the four main goals of the National Strategy for Quality and Cooperation in Teacher Education “Teacher Education – 2025” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). The university and college sector, the teachers’ organizations, and other relevant actors have been involved in the development of the strategy. It seems possible to dwell on a brief description of the four goals of this document, which allows us to understand how Norway proposes its approach to developing a strategy for professional development of preschool teachers.

Goal 1. Academically challenging and useful curricula. This is realized through a number of mechanisms, which can be rendered as follows (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018):

- well-qualified and motivated applicants;
- improved gender balance among students;
- a diverse student background that better reflects modern society;
- less detailed national regulation of the curriculum than at present;

- teaching based on modern, high-quality research relevant to the teaching profession;
- teaching methods that actively involve students in the learning process;
- practical learning based on experience and research as an equally important part of the curriculum; professional orientation and coordination between the different elements of the curriculum.

Goal 2. Academically strong and well-organized teacher education. This goal can be achieved if the following is ensured (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018):

- a high level of academic expertise in the relevant fields – on par with renowned international pedagogical higher education institutions;
- teaching staff with a high professional level and practical experience;
- improved IT skills relevant to the profession and increased internationalization;
- clear management and functional organization in accordance with the goals of the educational programs.

Goal 3. Involvement of interested partners in the work of kindergartens and schools. The implementation of this goal of the strategy is possible if the following factors are taken into account (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018):

- a high level of knowledge in the field of scientific research for the education sector among kindergarten and school owners, managers and teachers;
- active professional learning communities in kindergartens and schools that systematically work on professional development, including the involvement of all newly qualified teachers in professional communities;
- comprehensive and competent participation of kindergartens and school sectors in the development of national teacher education policies.

Goal 4. Stable and mutually beneficial cooperation between higher educational institutions, kindergartens and schools. The implementation of this goal will be possible if the following mechanisms are built (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018):

- cooperation with a special emphasis on the main tasks and social purpose of the teaching profession;
- regular research cooperation between pedagogical educational institutions, kindergartens and schools;
- systematic cooperation regarding student and master’s theses;
- structures for long-term cooperation at all levels;
- mutual respect for the contribution to partnerships.

In building a strategy for continuous pedagogical education in the abovementioned way, the authors of the strategy propose to take into account the specifics of its implementation in modern conditions, which is described through seven blocks of a set of measures. The blocks that offer, in particular, strategic scenarios for the possible professional development of a preschool teacher are of particular interest. Some of them are as follows.

Block 1. Improving the practice of training and cooperation in the field of research through schools and kindergartens for teacher training. This block is related to the solution of a range of issues of comprehensive interaction of kindergartens and schools with pedagogical universities and educational organizations that train future teachers. The principle of clinical practice is applied, when a future teacher directly undergoes practice in real conditions, and kindergartens and schools receive a highly qualified specialist (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). The aim of the clinical practice (internship) is three-fold: firstly, to practice and improve student teachers' skills through the classroom practice; secondly, to develop the unique pedagogic style of every student teacher; thirdly, to promote positive changes in students learning that provide the theoretical basis for pedagogical internship as well as monitoring the process of internship, assessing the progress (self-assessment including), eliminating certain drawbacks, and providing the feedback (Fedorenko, Tikan, Kolomiets, 2021: 196).

Block 4. Improving the qualifications of newly qualified teachers. This block is one of the key ones for understanding how a teacher should build his or her professional development strategy. The early phase of work as a newly qualified kindergarten or school teacher is important for subsequent professional practice and development. Initial teacher education programs alone cannot prepare candidates for every aspect of the teaching profession, and newly qualified teachers must be able to rely on their employers to have a system of support for them in the transition from the knowledge gained during their training to practice and their inclusion in the professional learning community. This strategic framework and understanding are clearly expressed in the 2014 Quality Agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. One of the proposed support mechanisms is the organization and delivery of induction programs for newly qualified teachers. These programs have been shown to help ensure a better transition between theoretical knowledge acquisition and professional practice, as teachers

gain more confidence and awareness of their own competence and become more comfortable in their role as teachers. A good working environment with support from colleagues and management, as well as opportunities for professional collaboration, are key factors for newly qualified teachers to feel confident in their new role (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

On the other hand, these teachers are holders of knowledge and skills that can trigger innovations in the professional learning community. Importantly, as part of the stated strategy, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research funds training places for those who want to qualify as mentors as another strategic scenario for teacher professional development. An evaluation of mentoring courses has shown that there are significant differences in terms of target groups, content, the relationship between theory and practice, the organization of mentor training and the literature used. Both mentors and their trainees have found that the quality of mentoring improves when the mentor has received specialist training. In addition, training appears to help increase the mentor's understanding of his or her role (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

The competencies acquired by mentors during their training are valuable for the development of the institution and the profession as a whole. Continuing education in mentoring opens up important career paths and can help ensure that more experienced and talented teachers remain in the profession. Therefore, consideration should be given to whether mentoring courses should be adjusted to make mentors more attractive candidates for a wider range of roles, including specialist teachers. One possible model could include several modules, some of which could be designed for all candidates and others targeted at specific roles.

Block 6. Venues for collaboration and quality development. Another block explores forms of networking as an opportunity for teacher professional development. Developing high-quality, evidence-based teacher education programs relevant to the profession requires collaboration between a range of stakeholders. It is therefore clear that spaces need to be created where both teacher education providers and kindergarten and school owners/directors, administrators and teachers can participate in shaping teacher development strategies through educational programs. Such spaces should be available at a local level to help ensure quality development in each teacher education institution, and at a national level to enable them to contribute to various forms of wider policy development processes (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

Partnerships related to teacher education schools and kindergartens will be important local spaces for collaboration between individual teacher education institutions and kindergarten/school owners, administrators and teachers. Close and committed partnerships will enable in-depth discussions on quality improvement. Ongoing discussions of this kind will enhance the relevance of teacher education and support research-based practice (Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

Clarification of roles and consensus building on what constitutes good practice are necessary preconditions for partnerships to work. Another important local platform is the joint forums that will be set up in connection with the new decentralized model for quality improvement in schools and kindergartens. Here, municipalities work together to identify the qualifications they need and discuss how to use the public funding provided for this purpose. Norwegian universities and university colleges also participate in these forums and, by engaging in dialogue with local authorities in their region, will be able to identify local competence needs. This information can be used to build capacity and develop expertise in a way that meets the needs of local authorities in the short and long term.

Conclusions. Thus, summarizing the experience of Norway in professional development of preschool teachers, it can be noted that the strategy of professional development of pedagogical staff is based on the level of description of a set of strategic scenarios and measures recorded in the general regulatory

framework. In Norway, attention is paid to the need for continuous pedagogical development as part of the national educational strategy. In the country under study, attention is focused on programs to support teachers, especially at the early stage of their professional development; the formation of mentoring programs as a form of professional development of teachers; strengthening network interaction and communication at all levels of the pedagogical education system as a guarantee of continuous professional development of the entire pedagogical community.

Therefore, the professional development of preschool education professionals is considered a key factor in ensuring the quality of early childhood education. The professional development strategy in Norway is based on a combination of formal education, continuous professional development, institutional support and national policy. The Norwegian strategy for the professional development of preschool specialists is multi-level and holistic. It provides for: a systematic approach to formal education; constant updating of knowledge and skills; active support from the state, local authorities and professional communities. Such an approach contributes not only to improving the quality of preschool education, but also to the formation of a positive image of the teacher profession in society.

The scope of further research lies in studying organizational and pedagogical conditions in Norwegian higher educational institutions that ensure the formation of polycultural identity of a future preschool teacher.

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