

ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІ НАУКОВІ СТУДІЇ

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INTERNATIONAL GRANT COOPERATION AS A TOOL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

The education and development of university teachers have its justification and its importance is significant not only in the Czech Republic but also abroad. This study provides an analysis of further professional education of university teachers in the Czech Republic and in selected European countries. Subsequently, it presents an international project with participants from the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Slovakia and Poland, which, ultimately, plays a role in the improvement of the quality of higher education.

Key words: didactics, professional competence, quality of higher education, university teacher.

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Introduction and the aim of the paper

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the university education in the Czech Republic has undergone relatively substantial changes; universities became self-governing and independent of the state to a large extent and university teachers can enjoy academic freedom. At the core, there is a university teacher who performs a range of highly qualified activities, namely a scientific, research, development, artistic and other creative activity. This profession traditionally occupies a highly prestigious position in the rankings of professions. According to sociological research, the academic profession has ranked second or third not only in the Czech Republic but also abroad for many years. At present, based on the changes in the paradigm of education and scientific work in higher education, we witness a pressure on a constant improvement of quality and professional standard of academic activities in accordance with the newest and modern trends in teaching, which brings new and new demands on university teachers. It is especially the improvement of their scientific erudition, production of scientific knowledge and development of pedagogical competencies.

1. Pedagogical preparation of university teachers in the Czech Republic

In the Czech context, during the past 20 years, we could observe two phenomena which are strongly

interconnected. Firstly, it was the democratisation in education and secondly, the mass character of university education. This meant an increase in the number of universities, especially private and regional ones, and an increase in the number of students in auditoriums. These changes and development trends lead to the re-assessment and shift in strategies in higher education (Slavík, 2012).

The demanding character of the profession of a university teacher is manifested in many aspects. The most demanding task is to coordinate the teaching process and scientific activity. Sajdak (2013) generally approaches these two tasks as teacher's roles and he also emphasizes a third role — managerial. The professional public, (Průcha, 2013) (Turek, 2001), distinguishes the following pedagogical competencies of a university teacher: specialist-subject (knowledge of the teaching content), scientific (qualification to do scientific research in their field), psychodidactic (creating favourable conditions for teaching/learning), communication, diagnostic, planning and organisational, advisory and self-reflective. While a teacher gains specialist-subject competencies through the completion of a Master's degree programme and scientific competencies through doctoral studies, the other above-mentioned competencies are generally gained through experience. Sajdak (2013) considers teacher's

didactic competence to be necessary since it includes preparation, implementation and also evaluation of the educational process.

Even though an essential part of the academic profession is a high degree of self-reliance and independence related to academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions, university teachers should systematically participate in pedagogical education during their professional career. The research carried out by CISOVSKÁ and TOLLINGEROVÁ (2002) shows that pedagogical competencies are often undervalued by academics. Even though the majority of Czech academics have a positive attitude to their profession and view it as their life mission, they do not feel the need to prepare pedagogically and they see the basis of their profession in their field of expertise. However, in this case, it is not enough to know one's field but to be able to communicate one's knowledge to students. The research also shows that academics from a faculty of education consider themselves to be rather teachers than researchers since they mostly studied at a faculty of education themselves and worked as teachers for many years.

The development of academics' pedagogical competencies is directly related to their long-life learning. University teachers who are interested in building their career have to keep pace with the best in their field, participate in conferences, seminars, professional meetings, depending on the opportunities of the university they participate in grant activities and publish results of their research in specialised literature.

It is also necessary to realise that the given issue concerns a relatively large group of people professionally involved in tertiary education. In 1989, the number of university teachers in the Czech Republic was 11,644 and in 2007, it increased to 18,026 academics (teachers working full-time + 1,500 teachers at higher vocational schools, which did not exist before 1989) (PRUDKÝ, PABIAN & ŠIMA, 2010).

In 2014, the number of academics reached its maximum; in fact there were 18,384 academics. At that time, there was one academic per 17 students. The situation with students changed and there was one academic per 16 students in 2016 (RŮŽIČKA, 2018).

The Czech academic community distinguishes professors, docents, teaching assistants and assistants. The habilitation process is viewed as a certain milestone in the career of a university teacher and is connected with a higher security of employment and higher prestige among the academic community. Before 1989 as well as today, the ratio of academics before habilitation

and after habilitation is 2:1. The Czech academic environment is characterised by higher age when achieving the title of docent or professor. As for docent, the average age is 48, and for professor, it is 53 years (PRUDKÝ, PABIAN & ŠIMA, 2010).

In the 1980s, there were two expert institutions in former Czechoslovakia: the Institute for the Development of Universities based in Prague and an institute of the same name based in Bratislava. Both institutes focused on the pedagogical education of university teachers, including the formation of a field of study called University Pedagogy. It also dealt with university policy, scientific policy, university management, economics of education at universities and processing information from the field of university education. Nowadays, these former institutions were substituted by the Centre for Higher Education Studies in Prague, which, among other things, deals with the concept and strategy for the development of tertiary education and the evaluation of quality in systems of tertiary education in the Czech Republic.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was an intensive development in theories and practices related to the quality assurance in higher education. From all theoretical definitions, there are three which are applied most often for the purposes of higher education: accreditation, evaluation and audit. Accreditation is used as a way to assure the quality of a university and its result is issuing or non-issuing an authorisation to do this activity. The evaluation of quality can be defined as an assessment of quality or value of a certain subject (programme, faculty, teacher) (KOHOUTEK, 2008).

The Amendment No. 137/2016 Coll. changes the Higher Education Act No. 111/1998 Coll. and brings a fundamental change to the system of accreditations. The right to issue accreditations fall within the authority of a completely new body — the National Accreditation Bureau, which replaced the accreditation committee on 1 September, 2016. At the head of this bureau, there is a chair and vice-chairs and together with 15 board members cannot hold either paid or unpaid function at any university. Thus, their impartiality when issuing accreditation decisions is ensured ("Zákon o vysokých školách", 2018).

In 1990, the system of preparation within university pedagogy ceased to exist. Until then, the system of professional education was codified by Order No. 8/1983 as obligatory for all university teachers and it included two levels of pedagogical education: Level 1 — basic study of university pedagogy (for young teachers with less than 5 years of experience at university), Level 2 — specialised study of university pedagogy (educational duty

for all teachers with less than 10 years of experience at university). The basic study contained general topics from university pedagogy related to the education at university, student personalities, profession of a university teacher, forms of teaching, methodical innovations, self-reflection etc., always taking into consideration the psychological aspects. The specialised study focused on teaching individual fields of study/study groups and it provided a basis for the formation of university specialised didactics in experimental verification. The system ceased to exist with Act No. 172/1990 Coll. about higher education, also together with 14 university institutions which implemented the pedagogical-psychological training of their academic staff (Vašutová, 2005).

At present, the pedagogical preparation of university teachers is carried out within their Master's or doctoral studies or within further education. Courses are implemented by a range of educational organisations¹, for instance, we can mention one preparatory course called 'Pedagogical Preparation for Beginning University Teachers and doctoral students at the University of Economics' taught by the Department of Economic Teaching Methodology at the University of Economics in Prague. The course is aimed at doctoral students and beginning teachers at universities and participants receive a certificate at the end of the course². The course consists of three modules:

1. University pedagogy and didactics (1 day);
2. Complex individual work of a university teacher (1 day);
3. Microteaching (2 days).

2. Pedagogical preparation of university teachers in selected countries

In connection with the issue of further professional education of academics in the Czech Republic in the field of professional competencies, an analysis of approaches to academics' development was carried out in selected European countries — England, Austria, Germany, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Netherlands and Slovakia. The main information source was the web portal Eurydice ("Eurydice", 2018). The analysis investigated how the development of professional competencies of university teachers is implemented in each country.

Based on the analysis, it can be stated that there is a law on higher education in the majority of above-mentioned countries. This law defines the position of university teachers and their further development.

In some countries, this issue is provided for other acts (for example, Portugal — Estatuto da Carreira Docente Universitaria, Netherlands — Agreements on Teachers' Professional Development are set out in the 2013–2020 Teachers Agenda, Austria — collective agreement). These legal provisions lay down an obligation for universities to support a further professional development of their employees. It is also necessary to take into consideration university directives by which university teachers are constrained. University directives determine a specific form of professional development of an academic (for instance, in Austria, France, Poland). A system programme of further education for the pedagogical development of university teachers is lacking in many countries. University teachers usually draw on their Master's or doctoral studies where they may have had a pedagogical preparation. Courses teaching pedagogical skills are either offered by a university itself as a support service for academics (Spain, Poland, Germany) or there is a choice of similar courses provided by public and private institutions, such as education organisations, foundations and associations. It is up to academics whether they use this opportunity. Some courses organised by universities can be paid (Poland). In countries such as Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and others, there are national institutions which deal with the development of university teachers' competencies.

If we focused on the question whether the ways how to prepare academics are in accordance with established trends in higher education, we would observe that a big emphasis is still placed on teachers' didactic and subject competence. The more and more extensive preparation for the use of a digital teaching/learning environment, especially social networking sites, media and online courses, does not stand on the sidelines either.

3. International research — One way how to improve quality at universities

Trends in current higher education show a significant interest in evaluating the quality of education at universities, where an integral part is the evaluation of professional competencies of university teachers. Looking for ways for best practices can be also achieved through international cooperation. The Faculty of Education at the University of Ostrava is implementing a grant project called 'High School Teacher Competence

¹ ICV MU Brno — free course for beginning academics and doctoral students. More information here:

<http://icv.mendelu.cz/26516n-zaklady-vysokoskolske-pedagogiky>, TU in Liberec — four-semester part-time study.

More information here: <https://www.cdv.tul.cz/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Kurz-vysoko%C5%A1kolsk%C3%A9-pedagogiky.pdf>

² Course content available here: <http://kdep.vse.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/program-kurzu1.pdf>

in Change', ID No. 21720008, within the Visegrad Fund between 2017 and 2018. The research is in cooperation with universities from Ukraine (Ukrainian Academy of Acmeology — BGKU), Slovakia (Matej Bel University) and Poland (University of Silesia in Katowice). The subject of this research was academics and students' opinions on the importance of university teachers' professional competencies.

The research problem lies in the identification of preferences for professional competencies among academics and students in individual countries. The aim of this project is to get to know current opinions from both groups participating in education at universities in the countries involved. The method of an interview survey was used; respondents were answering 37 items with a range of four numbers. Figure 1 meant 'completely agree' and figure 4 — 'completely disagree'. The questionnaire was a result of project partners' cooperation, which means that 14 defined competencies and three profiles (dimensions) created from them are not based on a theoretically presented list or model but they were defined for this research aim. Three profiles with the following competencies were created. Profile 1 (professional-pedagogical) includes innovative, professionally self-improving, digital, communication-interactive and managerial competence. Profile 2 (social-personal) includes socio-cultural competence, professional and personal responsibility, leadership and civic competence. Profile 3 academic (scientific) includes the competence of research, inter-

national cooperation, scientific public relations, methodological competence and academic integrity.

Questionnaires for students and academics were sent and administered electronically. The research sample consisted of 992 members of academic communities from four universities, of whom 326 were academics and 666 were students. In the Czech Republic, we received answers from 73 academics and 150 students, in Slovakia (always the same order) 65 and 83 answers, in Poland 63 and 164 answers and in Ukraine 125 and 269 answers. The research pointed out that academics from researched universities value the social-personal profile the most. On the other hand, the lowest importance was ascribed to the academic-scientific profile, and within this profile, the lowest value was given to the competence of scientific public relations.

The research results are discussed within the international project team and they will be presented at the international conference 'High School Teacher Competence in Change' in Kiev on 29–30 November 2018.

Conclusion

The evaluation of quality of higher education has been a trend at universities for a long time and the interest in this area is still increasing. The professional public view the evaluation of higher education by students and academics as an important factor in the overall evaluation of a university. Evaluation data are then used by executives from individual educational institutions.

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Мілан Хмура

МІЖНАРОДНЕ ГРАНТОВЕ СПІВРОБІТНИЦТВО ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ РОЗВИТКУ ПРОФЕСІЙНИХ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЙ УЧИТЕЛІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ

Освіта та розвиток викладачів університету є цілком виправдані й мають велике значення не тільки в Чеській Республіці, але й за кордоном. У статті проаналізовано роль подальшої професійної освіти викладачів університетів Чеської Республіки та окремих європейських країн. Надалі проведене дослідження лягло в основу міжнародного проекту, у якому взяли участь представники таких країн, як Чеська Республіка, Україна, Словаччина та Польща, що в кінцевому підсумку має відіграти певну роль у поліпшенні якості вищої освіти.

Ключові слова: дидактика, професійна компетентність, якість вищої освіти, викладач університету.

Мілан Хмура

МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЕ ГРАНТОВОЕ СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВО КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТ РАЗВИТИЯ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЙ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА

Образование и развитие преподавателей университета вполне оправдано и имеет большое значение не только в Чешской Республике, но и за рубежом. В статье проанализирована роль дальнейшего профессионального образования преподавателей университетов Чешской Республики и некоторых европейских стран. Проведенное исследование стало основой международного проекта, в котором приняли участие представители таких стран, как Чешская Республика, Украина, Словакия, Польша и который в конечном итоге должен сыграть определенную роль в улучшении качества высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: дидактика, профессиональная компетенция, качество высшего образования, преподаватель университета.

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