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FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN METHODOLOGY COURSE

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The article is devoted to the issues of future English language teachers' life skills development. The authors prove the topicality of life skills development and their role in the professional competence of a teacher. It is stated that there are no researches on the whole complex of life skills in the methodological bank of a teacher. The skills under consideration are as follows: intercultural awareness, communicative skills, teamwork skills, time management skills, critical thinking skills, ability to solve problems, information literacy skills, creativity.

In the article the experimental course of English Language Teaching Methodology is presented as the one which is crucial in future teachers' professional education. The sessions within the experimental curriculum help students to develop their life skills. The results of methodological experiment presented in the article emphasise its connection with contemporary requirements to the teacher professional competence in general and according to the Concept of New Ukrainian School in particular.

Key words: life skills, «Methodology of English Language Teaching», «New Generation School Teacher», professional education, future teacher of English language.

Стаття присвячена питанням розвитку життєвих навичок викладачів англійської мови. Автори доводять важливість розвитку життєвих навичок та їх ролі у професійній компетенції вчителя. Встановлено, що у вчительському методологічному банку не проводиться досліджень щодо всього комплексу життєвих навичок. Навички, які необхідно розглядати, є такі: міжкультурна освіта, комунікативні навички, навички роботи з командою, навички управління часом, навички критичного мислення, вміння вирішувати проблеми, навички інформацій-ної грамотності, креативність.

У статті експериментальний курс методики викладання англійської мови представлений як такий, що має вирішальне значення для професійної освіти майбутнього вчителя. Заняття в межах експериментальної навчальної програми допомагають студентам розвивати свої життєві навички.



Результати запропонованого в статті методологічного експерименту підкреслюють його зв'язок з сучасними вимогами до професійної компетенції викладача в цілому та відповідно до Концепції нової української школи зокрема.

Ключові слова: життєві навички, «Методика викладання англійської мови», «Шкільний вчитель нового покоління», професійна освіта, майбутній вчитель англійської мови.

Introduction

The professional education of the future teacher of foreign languages has been studied and has undergone significant changes for several decades. However, this issue was particularly acute after the appearance of the Concept of the New Ukrainian School, which leads the general education school to a qualitatively new level and forces the higher pedagogical school to respond to the complex of innovations. The very purpose of this key reform of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine is to create a school in which it will be a pleasure to study and which will give students not only knowledge, as it is now, but also the ability to apply it in life. These current changes prove that a graduate from a pedagogical higher educational institution is to master all relevant skills and to develop them in their students.

The profession of a teacher is full of unpredictable situations, so he or she needs to deal effectively with the challenges in everyday life, whether at school, at work or in his or her personal life. The ability to behave effectively in those situations means that the teacher has his or her life skills developed.

There is no universal or consolidated list of such skills. The government people, education policy makers, educators and employers discuss these skills, confirm the necessity for their development but still do not have the same opinion on this issue. There are various terms for this inseparable part of teacher's professional competence: life skills, 21st century skills or soft skills. It goes without saying that the teachers who are equipped with these skills and the skills of understanding learners, planning lessons and courses, managing the lesson, evaluating and assessing learning, knowing the subject of English and methodology, managing own professional development, will be ready to turn their seemingly problems into opportunities and to take all possible advantages.

The development of future English teachers' life skills should take place during their professional education in general and within its methodological component in particular. As the Baseline Study of the joint project of the British Council Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine «New Generation School Teacher» showed, all stakeholders in the English language learning process find a lot of issues relating to the effectiveness of this process. The project group has studied the system of future English language teacher's education. So, according to the results of the Baseline Study, the project group found out the need to «increase the importance of the following aspects of methodological preparation in the curriculum: socio-cultural knowledge, intercultural awareness, educational and strategic competence, ICT competence, person-oriented approach to learning foreign languages, national textbooks, modern forms and methods for controlling and assessing students' academic achievement in a foreign language» [2, p. 32].



In the undertaken study, the general tendency of insufficient attention to the transition from learning to teaching, reconceptualisation of the teacher's role, who should be the facilitator of the learning process [2, p. 32] was noted. That is why the risk of implementing the reform into the English language teacher system of education was attributed to the students' lack of awareness about the existence of general/transferable skills and procedural knowledge, which would require special efforts from both teachers and students [2, p. 32].

In addition to the above-mentioned research in the domestic methodology scientists focused only on the formation of certain life skills, such as formation of intercultural awareness (O. S. Danyshenko, O. V. Ignatenko, N. B. Samoilenko, S. L. Fedorenko, I. Yu. Philipova), development of communicative skills (I. V. Kohut, A. V. Volkov, O. V. Borovets, Z. V. Zalibovska-Ilnitska, N. S. Kaliuzhna, N. I. Shyian, T. V. Konovalenko), development of the ability to work in a team (A. Y. Klimyshina, Yu. P. Krashchenko), development of the time management skills (M. Fedorets, O. V. Tereshchenko), development of the critical thinking ability (L. V. Potapenko, L. V. Kuzemko, G. Titis, L. Tkachenko), development of problem-solving skills (V. A. Kovalchuk, E. T. Solomka), development of the ability to work with information (E. Karpenko, S. V. Krivets, O. O. Mykhailyshyn), creativity skills development (O. E. Antonova, L. V. Bortnikova, N. I. Golov, S. S. Sysoiev) etc.

Nevertheless, there are no studies of life skills development as a complex and an integral part of professionally required competence. It is well-known that the teacher's profession is a universal job which requires to be competent at a wide range of skills and to be equipped with rather broad awareness. It is the teacher who is to act professionally while constantly solving educational issues of various difficulty levels.

Methodology, methods and research tools used by the authors. Thus, the working group of the project, which includes the leading experts from eight Ukrainian universities, proposed to reform the methodological component of the future English language teacher education. The implementation of the pilot programme began on September 1, 2016, in accordance with the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 871 dated by August 12, 2015 «On conducting a pedagogical experiment on the methodological education of future English language teachers» [1].

The project research has revealed that insufficient attention is being paid to such important aspects as the formation of intercultural competence, the development of autonomous learning strategies, competence in the field of information technology, student-centered approach, which also are the basis for the integrated development of future pedagogues' life skills. And effective teachers, as it is well-known, should be prepared for professional implementation in the conditions of world variability and contemporary need for continuous professional development. That is why new Curriculum is created so that the students are provided with all the necessary skills related not only to the methodology of English language teaching, it also gives scope for developing essential life skills that transcend subject boundaries. It is therefore recommended that University teachers take every opportunity to emphasise and foster these skills in their students. In Methodology sessions within the experimental curriculum students can develop the following skills: intercultural awareness, communicative skills, teamwork skills, time management skills, critical



thinking skills, ability to solve problems, information literacy skills, creativity. Each specified group of skills should be in the methodological bank of a teacher of any subject. These skills supplement the integrity of the professional education of the New Ukrainian school teacher, since they fully meet contemporary challenges and social requirements.

Intercultural awareness is important for future teachers as it helps them to respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values, respect and embrace social and cultural differences, and use this ability to develop new ideas and new solutions. It is especially crucial for the teachers of foreign languages as they lead their students to the secondary socialization and teach them other cultures. Besides, our society is multicultural and it is school where the representatives of different cultures interact most closely and spend together a lot of time. So, it is a serious task for a teacher to build rapport in the children's society according to the rules of humanity, tolerance and mutual respect.

In English language classroom the teacher is to acculturate his or her students, i.e. to adapt to a new culture. As Jerrold Frank says, «Teachers need to provide students opportunities to explore and recognize cultural differences. That means raising their awareness not only of the target culture but of their own as well» [3, p. 6]. Interculturally competent teachers are characterised by the following features: they know and appreciate their native culture as well as other cultures, they see the ways to make other cultures comprehensible for themselves and for their students, they are able to use other cultures as a wonderful resource for their students learning, they are able to evaluate, select and adapt intercultural materials, they build rapport according to intercultural collaboration and respect.

Intercultural issues have been paid some attention for a long time in English language teaching methodology, nevertheless, «teachers need to go beyond introducing traditional holidays, food, and folk songs of the target culture and incorporate a framework that enables students to understand the social aspects of the culture as well» [3, p. 12]. Jerrold Frank offers to provide «a starting point for teachers to create «third cultures» in their own classrooms», the methodologist states that there should be created the opportunities for students to speak English «not only with native speakers of the language but with non-native speakers of English from a variety of cultural backgrounds» [3, p. 12].

It goes without saying that a teacher without the communication skills cannot exist. The ability to understand and articulate messages, to transmit information clearly and effectively is an important component of a sound teacher's personality and the condition for educational process organisation. This issue is one of the most discussed in contemporary methodological science, but it still remains unsolved as the extremes often occur in the classroom. It is not a secret that not all non-native teachers of English can speak English fluently and can create all conditions for students' free use of English in speaking. While there are some teachers who are so happy to be fluent English-language speakers, that teacher talking time in class does not give any opportunities for their students to be involved in the process of communication. Thus, it's vital to strike the happy medium and become a really communication skilled teacher.



Besides, the communication skills go hand in hand with the teamwork skills. The teacher is to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams (students, colleagues, parents, etc.) in order to accomplish a common goal. As the English saying remarks, «One man, no man». The most successful environment for learning and teaching is in case if both students and teachers create a real team of personalities ready to collaborate.

It can be a challenge to begin the teamwork at first, but the more the teacher uses it the more opportunities appear for students to learn the vital skills of compromise and collaboration. The teamwork can be included in almost every classroom. Since the very beginning students can object to cooperating, teachers can say that it difficult to assess students' achievements and remark that some of students can only to pretend that they are working. These issues are the reasons to develop future teachers' ability to work in teams and to manage their students' teamwork.

The time management skills of a teacher show his or her ability to plan and use time effectively in order to meet deadlines and successfully complete tasks and assignments. The profession very often requires the urgent considering a number of issues, so it is necessary to prioritise, be responsible and able to spend time relevantly. A good example educates best of all other methods, so the teacher with good time management skills can easier demonstrate his or her students the possible ways of handling problems, tasks and other actions without complaining of lack of time.

It's a well-known fact that the profession of a teacher is one of the most time-consuming professions. To be able to keep schedules and plans in mind, set aims, fulfil them, monitor the long-term planning realisation, work with emergent tasks, prioritising and numerous other challenges make teachers be always in the state of alert. So, teacher professional education should comprise this important issue and supply future pedagogues with the skills of time management.

The real teacher surely has developed critical thinking skills which are the ability to ask the right questions, to reason effectively, analyse different points of view and to reflect on decisions and processes. Besides, the teacher is to develop these skills in students as well as the problem solving skills. Recognising and analysing difficult situations and finding suitable solutions help to make the educational process creative, challenging, stimulating and motivating.

Information literacy skills can be described as the ability to locate, evaluate and effectively use information from a variety of sources. Nowadays it is important for the teacher to be able to process that information which is valuable for professional application. A great many of sources, while being good as for wide choice, still add some difficulties connected with relevance or reliability of information presented. Besides the teacher's ability to work with information, it's crucial to teach his or her students to find and make use of information. It is especially emphasised in New Ukrainian School Concept that one of the key competences is students' ability to be information literate. It has gone to the past that school students are given the instruction as for what to read, what to retell, where to take the information. Now the teacher doesn't give the knowledge, but helps to find the way to it. So, a number of skills how to work with information should equip both teachers and students for their effective learning and teaching.



It should be remarked that the capacity to think and act in innovative ways either alone or with others is the key to the creativity. The teacher is one of the most creative professions, so the teacher cannot be uncreative. In the experimental course of methodology future teachers have great opportunities to develop their creativity by means of choosing the modes of interaction, finding their own way of problem solution, understanding the main methodology concepts with the help of metaphors, finding out modern and non-standard approaches to teaching foreign language, etc.

Modern ways of learning and teaching such as project work, task-based learning and problem solving are designed to develop these life skills. It is advised that University teachers make extensive use of modern approaches when planning and teaching their sessions.

The very form of Methodology classes' organization encourages students to develop the above skills. Pair and group work allows future foreign language teachers, through work in a team, to design their own competencies, as the teaching material is not presented in the finished form. Even the complex theoretical blocks of materials are processed through active forms of learning (guided reading, jigsaw reading, creating the definition, underlining the key words, etc.). Tasks based on students' existing experience and tasks for reflection are used widely.

The course of Methodology prepares the students to be ready to act professionally and effectively since the very beginning as it helps them to believe in their ability to solve the problems in their professional sphere, perceiving them not as problems but as opportunities to apply all awareness and skills they accumulated while obtaining higher pedagogical education. Getting inspired and having positive attitude to their profession and children will surely help to become a successful teacher. It is a throughout message of the course.

Conclusions and results of the research

From the first lessons students already have considerable interest in the experimental course «Methodology of English Language Teaching». Future English language teachers are showing significant progress in the development of life skills. This is evidenced by their reflective essays, lists for self-evaluation, as well as concrete actions and actions such as the ability to work in a team, the ability to think critically, readiness for responsibility, autonomy in thinking and actions, etc.

Thus, within the framework of the formed intercultural awareness, students not only demonstrate their openness to various ideas and values, respect and understand socio-cultural differences, but also apply them to generate new ideas and in constructive problem-solving. Communicative skills are realized through well-organized communication and effective and appropriate use of information with its corresponding perception or sharing. The communication process is closely linked to the process of developing skills to find, evaluate, and apply information from a variety of sources, known as information literacy skills.

The ability to work in a team is important, since future teachers must be able to cooperate in the teaching staff themselves and, in class, collaborate with students and effectively organize student work in the team. Different modes of interaction and the variable composition of pairs and groups in Methodology sessions help students to form both communicative skills and teamwork skills. In the same way, the



development of skills in time management occurs, since in classes students have to complete a task or a series of tasks for a certain time, but not always the teacher dictates the amount of time, students learn and themselves plan their spending time.

The content of the experimental Methodology is constructed in such a way that future English language teachers develop their critical thinking skills. Educational materials are not presented in the finished form, but are offered as problem tasks, parts of the material for addition or correction, etc. Students demonstrate the ability to raise the right questions, in particular those that contribute to the formation of higher level thinking skills, to justify, analyze different points of view, reflect on their own decisions and actions. Students also develop their ability to recognize and analyse complex situations with their further constructive solution. In addition, the teacher cannot be successful without creative abilities and skills. So, the Methodology sessions are aimed at developing the skills to think and act in an innovative way, without waiting for the prompt what to do and how to do it. Future teachers become much more independent, ready to make decisions and be responsible for those decisions. They can even decide what mode of interaction to choose and if they would like to work individually, in pairs or groups. Consequently, a complex of future foreign language teachers' life skills described above will ensure the effectiveness of their professional readiness with achieving the maximum results in the organization of educational process. Highly developed life skills comprise an integral part of New Ukrainian School teacher's professional competence.

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