

APPROACHES TO THE NOTION OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS' SKILLFULNESS IN UKRAINE AND ENGLAND AND WALES

Yuliya Kishchenko

Kherson State University, Ukraine

yuliyavlad360@gmail.com

Section

TEACH EDUCATION & AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The article is devoted to the comparative analysis of English and Ukrainian approaches to the professional teachers' skillfulness. It states that the modern English model of school-based teacher education has become possible due to the evolution of the teacher training system of England and Wales. It has been preserving and developing its cultural, historic and educational traditions such as mentorship, partnership among schools and universities that provide for practical training of a future teacher.

The article highlights the fact that the most widely spread direction in modern teacher training is the strategy of training a teacher that is ready to act as a researcher. Within this strategy structural elements of the profession are being worked out.

Though there exist some differences in the modern approaches to the phenomenon of professional teachers' skillfulness among Ukrainian and English educators, there are definite similarities as well. Both the systems of teacher training underline the importance of integration between theory and practice, individual qualities of a teacher and the active essence of their profession.

Key words: professional skillfulness, structural elements, integration, mentorship, creative professional activity, reflexivity.

In the late XX-early XXI centuries there appeared a number of new ideas and concepts in the world's educational space. All of them are directed at the problem of forming teachers' professional skills in modern society.

Among the definitions given by Ukrainian dictionaries we have chosen the one that states that teachers' skills are equal to the *high-ranking educational activity*. The criteria for this phenomenon may be the following: humanity, scientific basis, optimal character, evident results, democratic ideas, creativity. Teachers' skills are based on the high-levelled teacher's spirituality, their general culture and teacher experience. The necessary conditions for teachers' skillfulness are the teacher's human position as well as their professionally meaningful individual features and qualities. This opinion is shared by the majority of Ukrainian scientists.

Another group of researchers regards teachers' skillfulness as a combination of scientific knowledge, habits of methodological art and personal qualities of a teacher (A. I. Shcherbakov); as a high level in the development of definite professional skills (k.K. Platonov); as a complex of habits, necessary for the productive solution of certain educational tasks (A.P. Derkach).

Having compared the theoretical and practical grounds for teachers' skillfulness in English and Ukrainian education, we came to the conclusion that the most developed understanding of the subject-matter, that is the closest to the research-oriented approach in the professional future teacher training in England and Wales, is contained in the conceptual issues of the Poltava University researchers – I.A. Zyazyun, V.O. Semichenko, L.V. Kramushchenko and others.

They regard teachers' skillfulness as a complex of teachers' qualities that provide for the high-levelled self-organization of their professional activity, as the best (among the other possible variants) decision for certain professional tasks. As a result, teachers' skillfulness is defined as an adequate, total reveal by the teacher of their individual potential, their creative self-realization in the professional sphere that guarantees a high final result, connected with creating similar conditions for the reveal of their pupils' individuality and their self-realization in education [2].

Ukrainian professor E. S. Barbina defines the phenomenon of teachers' skillfulness as a process and result of creative professional activity, the integration of a certain doer's personal qualities with the active essence of the profession, an integrated index of the degree of their readiness to fulfill the teachers'

professional duties. The scientist considers teachers' skillfulness to be a factor of integration in the process of professional teacher training [1, p. 37].

In our opinion, the notion of integration is the key one within the modern approaches to the problem. This understanding of the matter mostly coincides with today's researches of English educators in the area of teacher training. In English educational theory there appeared a new stream of investigations concerning the sphere of teacher professional thinking. Its supporters have grounded the leading role of the practical knowledge-base. Taking into account the fact that "the knowledge-base" traditionally meant "a structured scope of knowledge, skills, habits, techniques, ethic norms, relationships and ways of their representation [7, p. 15], one may see the principal shift of accents towards the practical experience in teacher training. Thus, the core problem of educational theory lies not in making ties among different kinds of knowledge but in reaching the *unity between knowledge and practice*.

English scientists think that in concrete class-room situations practical knowledge and experience are of the same professional value as theoretical knowledge (laws, theories). That is why famous western educator D. Schon calls the former "the theory in use" [6].

During the last few decades in the educational space of England and Wales there appeared a lot of projects that help to solve the problem of professional skillfulness for the modern teacher. Different models of the *concept of mentorship* can be referred to them. The idea of this phenomenon is defined as a dynamic, mutual link in educational space between the experienced mentor and the beginning teacher directed at the professional development of both of them [3, p.89].

For Ukrainian educators the phenomenon of mentorship is not new, for in the history of national Ukrainian education there is valuable experience of this kind. What attracts attention of Ukrainian educators in the English approach to mentorship is *the official status of the institute of mentorship* which gives the mentor great possibilities, interests and stimuli in professional making a new generation of teachers.

The necessary conditions for obtaining the status of the mentor are the following:

- a) habits of educational management;
- b) high level of subject and methodological knowledge;
- c) complex of personal qualities: openness of mind, reflexivity, flexibility, empathy, creativity, respectful attitude to others.

Structuring the most important components of the professional skillfulness for a mentor, most scientists single out, in the first place, their knowledge-base. The second component is thought to be the interpersonal skills base. And a separate – third – component is regarded to be technical skills which provide for the abilities to observe, to discuss, to give the feedback and to assess.

According to the classification by D. Hopkins, one of the leading components of teacher professional skillfulness is personal qualities of the educator. He refers to them such features as tolerance, adherence to moral norms in life, friendliness, a sense of humor [5, p. 67].

The author also defines two groups of special skills: constructive and organizational.

To the constructive skills he refers the ability to realize and solve the set tasks, to choose the adequate methods of work as well as plan it. A special accent is made on the ability of team working, of setting respectful relations with colleagues and pupils, school administration and subordinates.

To organizational skills D. Hopkins refers the abilities of organizing a class and a group, of managing the individual work, taking into account pupils' religious, ethnical, cultural and social characteristics.

Another English scientist, E. Wragg, worked out his own classification of the mentor's abilities and skills:

- planning and effective work in small groups;
- addressing the whole class while teaching, with the relevant approaches to every individual;
- management of small groups;
- organization and management of individual classes;
- finding means and ways of encouraging less able pupils;
- understanding individual differences among pupils, including their personal, religious, cultural and social peculiarities;
- assessment, analyses and description of pupils' dynamics in learning [8, p. 64].

Special attention in the works of English educators is given to mixed-ability teaching – one of the most burning issues in the educational theory and practice of England and Wales. This approach is spearheaded at desegregation, unification of children with different abilities and various physical skills. It

appeared as a kind of opposition to the active process of differentiation in schooling that had existed before. The concepts of differentiation had led to the mass segregation among children, the creation of different types of schools for able and disabled pupils. All these factors had promoted the isolation of such children and furthermore – their failure in the adaptation to real society and to the meaningful way of life.

Today we are all witnessing the tendency of uniting children in schools and classes of mixed abilities that accounts for the necessity to form special professional skills for being able to work with such classes and groups. The highly qualified teacher-professional should not only see and take into account some special and peculiar features of particular children, they also should be capable of structuring their work in such a way that the whole educational process should stimulate the most gifted pupils to work more and, at the same time, create the favourable conditions and class-room atmosphere for less apt and even mentally retarded school-children. It is very important for the teacher to possess enough tactfulness in order not to underline all possible differences in the pupils' skills and not to make any accent on them.

One more important aspect of teaching in classes of "mixed abilities" is based upon the fact that we talk about pupils of diverse cultures, nationalities, ethnical origins and religions. Thus, the modern teacher should be aware of their pupils' native languages, religions, cultural peculiarities; should be respectful to their traditions and customs. For example, some topics for discussions may be usual and quite common in one society and may be banned and unspeakable in others. That proves for the demand that the teacher should be attentive and tactful choosing topics for talks and discussions.

One of the extra-important events of the late XX century was the process of integration of European countries into one common all-European educational space. Consequently, today European educators are facing new tasks and are developing definite corrections concerning teacher training curricula and their in-service programmes. To the teacher's competence and skillfulness they refer the knowledge of several foreign languages, the ability to use them in communication and while teaching at school: it is common knowledge that the language is a major component of any culture, a means of learning another culture and of propagandizing someone's own. Due to the fact that many teachers are becoming subjects of international relations, participants of common projects and activities, they must not only be capable of discussing everyday topics, but of analyzing burning issues, working out common practical solutions, assessing the results of their common activity and formulating common strategies. The modern mobility of the Europeans, the possibility of free travelling abroad, participation in various multinational creative groups demand from the teacher not only the knowledge of foreign languages and communicative skills, but the talent of finding a "common language", of being tolerant towards other people's words, ideas, cultures, races etc.

The new tasks of European education include a new type of skills, which is called "a skill of effective collaboration in multicultural context" [4]. Alongside the knowledge of foreign languages, many other competences are acquiring certain importance – knowledge of geography, history, culture of particular countries as well as of the all-European context, in which every European would be able to define their own place and the influence of their people and their culture on the European one.

Thus, in the center of modern theoretical researches in the field of teacher training there is a *personality* of a professionally competent teacher. The utmost attention is being given to social and individual objectives and to personal priorities of a teacher, which add a special colour and expressiveness to their pedagogical skillfulness. The adherence to the practically-oriented methodology in professional teacher training has actualized the necessity of forming professional skills of traditional as well as of innovational activities at the school of the XXI century.

References:

1. Barbina E.S. Formirovaniye pedagogicheskogo masterstva uchitelya v sisteme nepreryvnogo pedagogicheskogo obrazovaniya. – K.: Vyscha shkola, 1997. – 153 s.
2. Pehota E. N. Individualizatsiya professionalno-pedagogicheskoi podgotovki uchitelya. - K.: Vyscha shkola, 1997. – 281 s.
3. Gordon P. Teaching as a graduate profession, 1890-2000 // in J. Wilkes (ed.). The professional teacher. - Leicester: History of Education Society, 2001. - P. 77 -96.
4. Halasz G. Individual competencies and the demands of society. Symposium on "Key competences for Europe", Bern, Switzerland, 27-30 March 1996. – Strasbourg: Council for cultural cooperation, 1996. – 10 p.
5. In-service training and educational development: an international survey/ Ed. D. Hopkins. – London: Croom Helm, 2006. – 334 p.

6. Schon D.A. Educating the reflective practitioner. – San Francisco, London: Jossey – Bass, 1997. – 208 p.
7. Shulman L.S. Knowledge and teaching: foundation of the new reform // Harvard Educational Review. –2007. – 57 (1). – P. 1 – 22.
8. Wragg E.C. Training teachers to teach mixed ability groups// Handbook of teacher training in Europe. – London: Fulton Publishers, 2004. – P. 53-68.