

Professional Training of Teachers in the United States as an Example for Improving the Professionalism and Competence of Pedagogues in Ukraine

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Abstract

The process of reforming of the system of compulsory secondary education in Ukraine challenges teachers and determine new requirements for them. The study and analysis of teachers' professional education and training in other countries are one of the main ways to settle strategic directions of pedagogical education modernisation and thus to improve the quality of education in Ukraine. The national education systems of Ukraine and the USA are functionally common despite some differences in cultural and social aspects. This makes it possible to use the experience of the USA in reforming the system of professional preparation of teachers in Ukraine and improving their educational and professional qualifications. The study aims to make a comparative analysis of professional education and training of teachers in the USA from professionalism and competence and propose a way to adjust the most successful American experience to Ukrainian conditions. The study applies a comparative-historical method to compare socio-pedagogical phenomena and views. The structural method makes it possible to consider the pedagogical process based on system components of theory and practice of professional education of teachers. The prognostic method is used to ascertain the successful experience of the USA and outline the prospects of its implementation in Ukraine. Our research concludes that the system of professional preparation of teachers should be improved in order to increase the educational potential of the country. The study reveals a significant contrast between academic competence and professional qualification of teachers. It is determined that the objectives for professional preparation of secondary school teachers are the following: improving teaching competence, the combination of teaching practice and pedagogical theory and integration of pedagogical subjects and subjects of specialisation.

Keywords: Professional Competence, Professional Preparation of Teachers, Professional Qualifications, Work Efficiency, Functionalism, the USA, Ukraine

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Introduction

The reform of the system of compulsory secondary education reveals contradictory tendencies in the sphere of professional preparation of teachers in Ukraine which determine new requirements for teachers. Since teachers are assigned the task of training secondary school graduates for the world market integration, formation of comprehensive world idea, adoption of cognitive and communicative methods of activity and ability to get information from different sources is delegated to them.

A vital source for determining strategic directions of pedagogical education development in Ukraine is the study and analysis of teachers' professional preparation experience abroad. Reforming the system of professional preparation of teachers is a priority in the theory and practice of education in the USA (Honingh et al., 2018; Maslennikov et al., 2017). Despite some differences in historical, social and cultural aspects of the USA and Ukraine, the operational commonality of national education systems makes it possible to experience creative use of teacher training in the United States and contribute to the improvement of the Ukrainian system of professional preparation of teachers (Serdali et al., 2018; Pinto & Poornananda, 2017).

Over the past decades, the United States has been intensively pursuing research on issues of professionalism and improvement of the social status of teachers (Shandruk, 2017). American scholars pay special attention to the professional preparation of teachers. Under the slogans of academisation and professionalisation reforms are implemented at all levels of education, the general aim of which is to improve the quality and status of the teacher's profession (Shandruk, 2017). The basic principle of professional preparation of teachers is the continuous improvement of professional qualifications and competence of teachers. A clear definition of "professionalism" is the first step towards understanding the current value of

professionalism for today's education and practice (Murphy, 2012).

The study aims to make a comparative pedagogic analysis of professional preparation of teachers in the USA from professionalism and competence and adapt the best American experience to modernise Ukrainian pedagogical education. The study is structured as follows:

It began with an introduction. In the next section, methods and methodological issues are discussed. Following this, the section on results and discussion include functionalism in pedagogical education, the concept of professional competence of teachers, concept of professionalism and profession of a teacher, educational and professional qualifications of teachers and efficiency of their work. In the final section, we outline the conclusion of this research.

Materials and Methods

Studying the issues of professional training of teachers in the USA in terms of professionalism and competence was based on theoretical research methods.

So, the following methods were used:

- analysis of particularities of methods of professional training of teachers;
- comparative-historical method of comparing socio-pedagogical phenomena and views;
- structural method of regarding a pedagogical process on the basis of system components of the theory and practice of professional training of teachers;
- prognostic method of determining the positive American experience and revealing possibilities of its implementation in Ukraine.

Besides, we deploy a comparative-historical method, which allows in determining the humanisation of pedagogical education and is aimed at instilling respect for an individual, alongside the formation of independence plus inculcation of spiritual and human values within

the particular individual. According to American scientists, studying humanitarian disciplines contributes to the development of a comprehensively developed and conscious person who can think creatively and act effectively in all spheres of public life (Pillai, 2006).

What kind of activity should be regarded as a profession remains an open question. So, a structural method and a method of analysis were used for studying this issue. It is established that Eraut (1994) emphasises the importance of professional preparation and higher education, arguing that activities currently defined as professions (occupations) use several teaching and training methods and their combinations such as:

- The period of pupilage or internship. During this period, students spend a good deal of time studying their “craft” from a specialist.
- Admission to “a professional college” which is not a part of a higher education system.
- Qualification examination which is usually established by a qualification association by type of activity.
- The period of study at a college, polytechnic or classical University which allows gaining an academic qualification.
- Collection of evidence of practical competence in the form of logbook or portfolio.

Each of these methods makes a significant contribution to a knowledge base of a student and into the process of student’s socialisation into the profession. According to Shacklock (1998), understanding the role of professionalism in the work of a teacher is impossible outside of the professional sector and without a demonstration of the real-life experience of teachers. This argument is based on certification and licensing and denies arguments regarding teacher’s professionalism not based on social experience, which is the very essence of the teaching profession.

Also, with the help of the prognostic method, there was revealed a certain positive American experience as well as the possibilities of its implementation in Ukraine.

Results and Discussion

Functionalism in Pedagogical Education

Functionalism plays an essential role in American pedagogical science (Lawn, 2001). The conceptual structure of this doctrine is based on the functionalist conception of education. Functionalism is one of the dominant theoretical approaches in sociology and other social sciences. This approach is based on two components: the application of the scientific method in the study of the objective social world and the use of the analogy between individual “organism” and “society” (Murphy, 2012). This doctrine allows a functionalist view of the features of “society” in the mid-twentieth century which is characterised by a higher degree of professional specialisation, distribution of norms and values and stability and tendency to maintain the balance of existing social changes (Murphy, 2012). According to Murphy (2012), the basis of functionalism is the central metaphor of a living organism, its components and organs that form a system, functioning of different parts and organs for maintenance of essential processes of an organism and its enabling of reproduction (Shandruk, 2017).

In their research, *What is Systems Theory?* by Heylighen, Joslyn and Turchin (1991) consider functionalism as “trans-disciplinary” theory of the abstract organisation of phenomena regardless of their substance, type and spatial or temporary existence level. Functionalism studies general approaches to all complex systems (structures) and models (usually mathematical) for their description. School in general and system of professional preparation of teachers, in particular, are the components of the education system and tend to exist in a stable state. Structural functionalists consider an education system to be essential for the society in which students above-average level are selected of the mass of students of middle and low levels. This is a guarantee that the most

talented students will occupy higher positions in the socio-economic status system (Heylighen, 1992).

An important feature of structural functionalism is that it justifies the skills and norms of society. Structural functionalists believe that for preserving a viable system of the society, all components should function together. That is why the system should instil such convictions and values in every member of this society. In his work, *The Limits and Possibilities of Education: An Introduction to the Sociology of Education*, Hurn (1995) expressed the thought that according to the theory of functionalism those who are at the top of society worked most to get their positions. This social phenomenon is called meritocracy – a system that defines a person's place in terms of his or her abilities. The society needs the best and the brightest for functioning at the highest levels, and therefore, it gives its highest rewards to this group of people. Hurn (1995) is convinced that the functions of the society are economically improved when an individual and society generally receive more in terms of education. An individual's acquisition of additional skills gives additional benefits to the society in which he lives. The scientist believes that the increase in education level reduces inequality. Human capital theorists (Arthur Lewis, Arthur Pigou and Adam Smith) consider education as an investment of those who feel that the benefits of university education are more important than money and it is an inevitable rise to the top of the socio-economic pyramid of education. Those who decide not to continue education get less reward from society.

Seemingly, Carr and Kemmis in their research *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action* (1986) convince that functionalist sociology of education makes it possible to gain knowledge regarding how to change an already existing social mechanism of educational establishments in order to support the equilibrium of the society. Researchers apply a functionalist approach to education because it considers the school as a unified target-oriented organisation or simply as a multicomponent system. In this case, all the staff of the school

system should be a single entity; moreover, it is assumed that staff members are experts in their fields of study or specialities. A clear definition of the classic view of the term "professionalism" is the first step towards understanding the value of professionalism for modern education and practice. From this point, functionalism, as a philosophical school, organises the society's functioning and predetermines its mission and purpose. According to Eraut (1994), functionalism affects instructional processes and society as a whole. In *Development of Professional Knowledge and Competence* Eraut (1994) recognises the fact that professionalism ideology is based on functionalist models of John Goody, Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons. The scientist emphasises that the professionalism concept can successfully solve the problem of social control of expert evaluation. Experts are needed to provide services to clients who are not well informed to adequately assess them (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

The problem of professionalism was also studied by Leino (1996). In his *Development and Evaluation of Professional Competence*, the scientist, points out that professional qualifications should be created in order to motivate employees to acquire pre-service education and training and continuously improve skills during their professional life (Kirillov et al., 2015; Melnichuk et al., 2017). From the perspective of the concept of qualification and competence, Leino (1996) formed a structure that consists of knowledge and ability to perform a professional task.

Summing it up, we can conclude that the application of the functionalist approach to the tasks of pedagogical research is essential since it enables us to identify problems in the system (functional) aspect. The functionalist approach helps consider interdependent problems in interaction with other components of society and analyse the interdependence of other components of society. In the next section, we discuss the concept of the professional competence of teachers.

The Concept of Professional Competence of Teachers

The behaviour of a teacher is governed by views, beliefs and decision making both in the classroom and beyond (Kirillov et al., 2017). Challenges faced by secondary school teachers are quite significant. In addition to the continuous improvement of knowledge of their subjects, teachers should also master a large number of diverse pedagogical techniques and strategies and understand the learning process. Introduction of the term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) by Shulman (1987) allowed the combination of content knowledge and pedagogic skills necessary for organising pedagogical situations and student's activities. In his article *Knowledge as Teaching: Foundation of the new reform*, Shulman (1987) defines pedagogical content of knowledge as a unique form of content knowledge that combines aspects of content relating to teachability. This means that the competence of a teacher and his subject knowledge differs from ordinary erudite knowledge and pedagogy. In other words, teachers should learn to combine a subject and pedagogical knowledge into pedagogical content of knowledge in their daily professional activities. Besides, unlike knowledge of pedagogy content, knowledge provides an understanding of what makes a specific concept difficult, which instructive (pedagogical) strategies can help present different aspects of instructional processes. Pedagogical content knowledge also implies an awareness of what motivates students and what determines the attitude of students to different subjects to learning and teaching. PCK also promotes cognitive development and forms the ability to comprehend students' diversity. So, we can state that for this reason, scientists pay special attention to the professional preparation of teachers.

Similarly, Day and Sachs (2004) claim that the basic principle of teacher's training is continuous improvement of teachers' professional qualifications and competencies. Every teacher's professional activity competence is important for the general educational process. Similarly, in *Administrative Work: Issues and Dilemma* Ready (2017) defines competence as a motivating

factor responsible for an individual's achievements.

The results of many studies indicate that teachers have difficulties with performing several professional activities at the same time (Kirillov et al., 2015). According to research by Rawls (1985), the processes that include adult education, supervised occupational experience programmes, classroom teaching, administration and policies programmes are the main sources of problems for teachers (Rawls, 1985). Other studies have also identified additional problems related to the performance of professional activities both by new as well as experienced secondary school teachers (Findlay, 1989). So, one can assume that American society expects from a secondary school teacher, the foundational knowledge of the academic subject and adequate training sufficient for understanding a child. A secondary school teacher should also help a student achieve integrated general education, vocational training and academic orientation.

During our research, we found out that American scientists concluded that the association of colleagues or experts (professional associations) was an essential tool for improving the competence of professionals. For example, in the United States, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education defines key competencies as that a future teacher should possess in pre-service training. This training should be taken under the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, who develop qualification requirements for a National Teacher Certificate, and the National Institute of Education conducts research related to the increase of professional competence level of the American teachers.

It is important to note that such components of high professional competence as individual professional experience and personality traits should exist in the interaction. The ratio and significance of different factors of competence depending on the type of activity and further professional requirements. According to the

National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008), there is a recent increase in professional competence level of high school students in the United States. In order for the level of professional competence to be high, fruitful cooperation (interaction) between individuals, schools, universities and society is needed. The following section discusses the concepts of professionalism and a teacher's profession.

The Concept of Professionalism and Profession of a Teacher

In *The Rhetoric of Teacher Professionalisation Research Workcheck*, Soder (1991) convinces that attempts to clearly interpret the concept of "teacher professionalism" were not successful because there is no explanation of what is "to be a teacher".

According to Shacklock (1998), most of the prominent studies of the phenomenon of professionalism are based on the criteria of sociological analysis, but they do not refer to the practical experience of teachers since they comment on the work of the teacher without taking into account the teacher's opinion. This view of the teacher's work allows localising teachers' professional lives within the framework of the teaching process. This makes it possible to analyse complex historical and sociological factors that influence the macro- and micro-characteristics of teachers' work. The ideology of professionalism is one of the most effective factors that influence the understanding by teachers of their work. The ideology of professionalism is vital for the profession of a teacher since it legitimises working methods and strategies for controlling the work of teachers, defines prospects (opportunities) and establishes the boundaries of disclosure of information about the work of a teacher at school and beyond.

Are you evaluating teachers as educational workers in *The Educational Worker? A Reassessment of Teachers Article*, rephrase it Lawn (2001) have concluded that there is a dominant view that professionalism and profession of a teacher are not synonymous. Analysing the work of teachers, the internal

complexity of professionalism as a sociological construct due to the volatility of people, contexts and goals being revealed. According to Shacklock (1998), this observation is important because it signals scientists and politicians of the danger of identical theoretical studies of school teaching. Such analytical studies warn against the desire to use decontextualised general statements about teachers and professionalism (Lawn, 2001).

In *Professionalizing Teaching: Is There a Role for Professional Development Schools?* (Ismat, 1992) draws attention to four criteria that form the traditional view of the concept "profession": remuneration, social status, autonomous or authoritative power and performance of responsibilities. These characteristics include professional autonomy; well-defined, highly developed, specialised and theoretical knowledge base; control of education, certification and licensing teachers-beginners; self-governing body with particular respect for professional ethics and an obligation to serve the society. According to the scientist's conviction, teaching is not a technical (rational) or skilful task performance since the context of teaching is closer to the texture of upbringing, in particular, the performance of parenting. The nature of teaching the context in which it exists and the process by which the type of activity traditionally turns into a profession makes it impractical and undesirable to use traditional models of professionalisation of teaching. It should be noted that professionalisation is the best way to improve the working conditions of teachers and school teaching itself. At the same time, it was evident that some of the main features related to the professions do not exist in the teacher's profession.

According to Shacklock (1998), one should analyse in detail the content that teachers put into the concept of professionalism in order to apply the concept of professionalism in every day difficult teaching conditions the same way political, organisational and service particularities were used in school teaching. In daily work with students and colleagues, teachers adhere to the present position of

specialist-practitioner as for the role of professionalism in school teaching. At the same time, teachers are aware of the view of those who are outside the world of classrooms and teachers' lounge and fall under the influence of professionalism. In order to understand what professionalism means for a practitioner, we should finally figure out what teachers think about this.

Consequently, taking into account the above arguments, we can conclude that a profession is a type of activity that requires special education and practice. Besides, the professional is one who meets direct requirements and demonstrates high competence in the work. The profession is the union of professional practitioners who skillfully possess knowledge and skills of their sphere. Profession sets standards and requires their implementation by those who are claimed to be professionals. The educational and professional qualifications of the teachers and the efficiency of their work are discussed in the next section.

Educational and Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Efficiency of Their Work

During instructional periods students acquire knowledge and specific cognitive and behavioural skills when working with information material presented by various means of information classified from specific to symbolic or abstract (Marjoribanks, 1991). Knowledge (information) that students master at school is documented in the curriculum. A critical component of the curriculum is the doctrine of how to learn from a teacher.

According to Buchberger (2000), teachers should have as high qualifications as possible. They should meet the requirements of the teaching profession and be interested in it. Teachers should cultivate the right attitude, be faithful and professionally suit. All this will help them successfully teach children, who in turn will master the world. For example, *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was created to improve learning and teaching; to prepare the national system for education reform; to promote research and important systematic changes; to guarantee fair educational opportunities and

high levels of learning achievement for all students; create a system for reviewing all federal curricula and promote development of national system of standards for qualification requirements and certification. This Act emphasises the professionalisation and education of a teacher.

Initiatives taken to improve the professional development of teachers in many states of the USA are primarily based on modification strategies due to the growing role of the state in the education system. As Day and Sachs (2004) rightly point out Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which they also name "staff/teacher development" begins with recruiting of initial students who have chosen a pedagogical speciality and consists of the following closely related components: initial teacher education; induction; in-service teacher education and further education.

In particular, in *Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning* (Day, 1999) considers qualification as an aggregate of all learning experiences and those conscious and planned actions that directly or indirectly benefit individual, group or school, and enhance the quality of school education. This is a process which involves teachers, every person and all together. Teachers review, renew and extend their commitment to promote a positive change and enrich their knowledge, develop skills and emotional responsiveness that is essential for the implementation of advanced professional ideas, planning the activities with children, youth and colleagues. Teachers should have a qualified education and be professionally competent to be able to carry out their duties. Knowledge and professional skills are interdependent.

Analysis of the works of famous scientists —D. G. Armstrong and T. V. Savage ((1994) *Secondary Education*; M. Brain (1998) *Emphasis on Teaching. What is Good Teaching*; L. Cuban (1969) *The Teacher and Community*; L. Darling-Hammond, A. Wise, S. Klein (2006) *A License to Teach: Building a Profession for 21st-Century Schools*; D. Davies (2012) *Teachers will be professionally educated*; J. Goodlad (2006) *Teachers for our nation's schools*) confirms the

need for concentration of secondary school teachers around universities, as this enables to increase an academic level of teacher education and intensification of interaction between education and research. The reform should be directed to a system of education in which basic education corresponds to formal qualifications that are relatively universal and can easily be completed by further education. The perspective is to coordinate all teacher training programmes. At the same time, the professional preparation of a teacher should also cover other branches of science.

Pedagogues-researchers Alberto and Troutman (2008), Armstrong, and Savage (1994), Brain (1998), Cuban (1969), Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Shulman (1987), Davies (2012), Goodlad (2006) formulate the following goals of professional preparation of teachers:

- Pedagogical competence of teachers needs improvement. Teachers should be sufficiently qualified to carry out the socio-emotional and psychological development of students in addition to academic teaching. They should be teachers in the broadest sense of the word. Didactics is a crucial element of pedagogical qualification of teachers, but the sociology of education and psychology of teaching are more significant.
- The theory and practice should be integrated, combining teaching practice and pedagogical theory. The goal is to help future teachers identify problems in their work on their own and solve them using theoretical methods. Teachers should treat their work as researchers.
- The study of pedagogical subjects and disciplines of specialisation also requires further integration. In addition to pedagogical knowledge, in-depth knowledge of the chosen specialisation is needed. The solution to education

problems at schools requires teachers pedagogical education and subject knowledge.

Thus, teachers should understand the significance of their position in society and their responsibilities to the community. Professional activity of teachers contributes to the development of the school system following the principles of democracy (Serdali et al., 2018). Education should be continuous. Increase of further education of teachers is expected: every five years a teacher is obliged to take professional development courses.

The above arguments coincide with the position of Arene (1990). In *Personality Excellence. A Quest for Human Soundness*, Arene (1990), writes that as a tool for self-actualisation¹ education helps an individual occupy a corresponding place in the society. In particular, academic training allows a teacher to get adapted to teaching activities. The scientist convinces that education should be directed towards the professional preparation of teachers who can perform well in the education system. In the pedagogical field, there are many new techniques and technology about which teachers should be thoroughly well-informed. In the opinion of Arene (1990), a teacher should have a proper education in his field of science for the best possible performance of teaching responsibilities in accordance with the curriculum. Sound education contributes to the full development of an individual. Poorly trained doctors, lawyers, engineers or architects perform their duties inefficiently. The same can be said about teachers because they have to get a decent education to teach others the best way (Nunes et al., 2016; Andrade et al., 2016; Freitas et al., 2016; Medeiros et al., 2016).

In the same ways, in the research *Teachers Must Engage in an Active Capacity Building* Pillai (2006) notes that teachers are the essential part of any educational system. They are responsible for the conduct and implementation of educational policy, actively participate in the

¹ Self-actualisation is a person's desire to use all their abilities to achieve and be everything that they possibly can.

development of the curriculum, create instructive materials and evaluate learning outcomes. Teachers devote themselves to educating the students; they have a significant influence on the formation of nature and socialisation process of children, demonstrating the physical, social, mental and emotional care.

Conclusion

So, taking American lessons, we can conclude that in order to increase the educational potential of Ukraine, much attention should be paid to improving the system of professional preparation of teachers. This is because, with highly educated teachers, the country would be able to take a decent place in the world and be competitive. The level of school cannot be better than the professional level of teachers who work there, so the improvement of the education system of every country depends directly on the quality of professional preparation of teachers. Education should be coordinated with each stage of the country's development. Educational infrastructures in the school system are worthless if there are no trained and competent teachers to manage them. This was shown to be a significant difference between academically competent teachers and professionally qualified teachers (Shandruk, 2017)

The American pedagogues-scientists formulate the following objectives for professional preparation of secondary school teachers: improving teaching competence; a combination of teaching practice and pedagogical theory and integration of pedagogical subjects and subjects of specialisation.

In American society, a secondary school teacher is required to have substantive content knowledge of the subject and adequate pedagogical training. A high level of professional competence requires fruitful cooperation between individuals, schools, universities and society.

Professionalisation is the best way to improve the working conditions of teachers and school teaching. The measures taken to develop the skills of teachers in many states of the USA are primarily driven by modification strategies which

are influenced by strengthening the state's role in the education system.

Most of the analysed studies emphasise the need for academic education as a supplement to professional preparation and in-service training for teachers. Professional development and advanced training are the most promising ways to improve teaching.

Among the promising areas of further research tendencies of systems of professional preparation of teachers in the USA and Ukraine, reform of professional development of teachers in the USA and Ukraine deserve special attention.

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