

DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS IN A CHANGING EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

DESENVOLVIMENTO DE MEDIDAS PRÁTICAS PARA MELHORAR AS QUALIFICAÇÕES DOS DOCENTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS NUM AMBIENTE EDUCACIONAL EM MUDANÇA

DESARROLLO DE MEDIDAS PRÁCTICAS PARA MEJORAR LAS CUALIFICACIONES DE LOS DOCENTES UNIVERSITARIOS EN UN ENTORNO EDUCATIVO EN CAMBIO



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ABSTRACT: The growing change in standards in higher education is a consequence of the improvement of technologies, social trends, and growing digitalization. Professional development, which is becoming increasingly important in the field of higher education, is aimed at adapting to such a dynamic development, especially affecting teachers. The purpose of this article is to consider the demand for advanced training of university teachers and efforts aimed at meeting the increased requirements for advanced training of personnel in the higher education system. Thus, the authors consider the process of professional development in the field of improving subject knowledge. The authors conclude that professional development becomes a strategic necessity for teachers in a specific context and can be implemented, on the one hand, by considering the expectations and wishes of the participants and, on the other hand, by ensuring the sustainable institutionalization of the concept of professional development.

KEYWORDS: Teacher. University educational process. Professional development. Improvement of professional competencies.

RESUMO: A crescente mudança nos padrões do ensino superior é consequência do aprimoramento das tecnologias, das tendências sociais e da crescente digitalização. O desenvolvimento profissional, cada vez mais importante no âmbito do ensino superior, visa adaptar-se a esta dinâmica de desenvolvimento, afetando especialmente os professores. O objetivo deste artigo é refletir sobre a demanda por formação avançada de professores universitários e os esforços para atender às crescentes exigências de formação avançada de pessoal no sistema de ensino superior. Assim, os autores consideram o processo de desenvolvimento profissional na área de aprimoramento do conhecimento da disciplina. Os autores concluem que o desenvolvimento profissional se torna uma necessidade estratégica para os professores em um contexto específico e pode ser implementado, por um lado, considerando as expectativas e desejos dos participantes e, por outro, garantindo a institucionalização sustentável do conceito de desenvolvimento profissional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Professor. Processo educacional universitário. Desenvolvimento profissional. Melhoria das competências profissionais.

RESUMEN: El creciente cambio de estándares en la educación superior es consecuencia de la mejora de las tecnologías, las tendencias sociales y la creciente digitalización. El desarrollo profesional, que cobra cada vez más importancia en el ámbito de la educación superior, tiene como objetivo adaptarse a esta dinámica de desarrollo, que afecta especialmente a los docentes. El propósito de este artículo es considerar la demanda de formación avanzada de los docentes universitarios y los esfuerzos encaminados a satisfacer los crecientes requerimientos de formación avanzada del personal del sistema de educación superior. Así, los autores consideran el proceso de desarrollo profesional en el campo de la mejora del conocimiento de la materia. Los autores concluyen que el desarrollo profesional se convierte en una necesidad estratégica para los docentes en un contexto específico y puede implementarse, por un lado, considerando las expectativas y deseos de los participantes y, por el otro, asegurando la institucionalización sostenible del concepto de desarrollo profesional.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Docente. Proceso educativo universitario. Desarrollo profesional. Mejora de las competencias profesionales.

Introduction

The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) for 2016 confirms that education is at the heart of sustainable development (SDGs). It is clear how far humanity is from achieving SDGs, which should serve as an alarm signal on a global scale and cause a significant intensification of actions aimed at achieving them (UNESCO, 2017).

Rapid development in the field of information and communications technologies and digitalization of all spheres of the economy require constantly increasing indicators of adaptation on the part of all employees. In particular, this concerns teachers of educational institutions of advanced training throughout their working life and is an absolute necessity for job retention (SEKERIN *et al.*, 2022).

Teachers are required not only to have the subject knowledge but also to comply with the changing educational environment in terms of professional flexibility and mobility, foreign language proficiency, and intercultural competence due to the trend of converging community in the civilized world, cultural preferences and standards, orientation to the world market, its scale, and focus on competitiveness (ZUEVA *et al.*, 2022). The growing mobility of the demand factor for quality education across national and, consequently, language borders is also one of the reasons to undergo teacher training. There is no spatiotemporal communication problem in its accessibility because there is involvement with the simultaneous presence of all parties involved and their interaction at a distance (DZASEZHEVA *et al.*, 2023).

Considering the heterogeneity of participants in the professional development program, in terms of age, level of proficiency in the subject, work experience, and quality expectations, recommendations on the organization, content, and approaches to the implementation of programs are needed to have a positive effect in motivating them to participate in training.

Thus, a professional development program can be based on the results of a survey and can be used as a fundamental guide for the use of acquired knowledge in professional activities at different stages of educational demand arising as a result of social changes, in research and innovation activities and other interests, prospects for the future, or to cope with growing difficulties and adapt to dynamic changes (GADZAOVA *et al.*, 2022). From this point of view, programs to improve the qualifications of university teachers are becoming increasingly important in the field of work and must meet these requirements.

Foresight and forecasting is a strategic tool of a long-term approach to professional development, which is used all over the world to obtain innovative future-oriented knowledge and management information in making strategic decisions at an early stage according to

current trends, in particular, internationalization of markets, digitalization, changing ways of communication, access to knowledge, individualization of society, shocks in professional and personal life, etc. Changes are manifested in daily innovations in the field of information and communications technologies, as a consequence of the need for professional development aimed at systematically solving systemic problems of accelerated mastery of new technologies and their application in the educational process (PIVNEVA *et al.*, 2023; TOLMACHEV *et al.*, 2022).

The literature used is selected in the context of the professional development of specialists in the field of education, based on subject quantitative and qualitative data covering various perspectives in the framework of continuing education, as well as some issues related to recruitment and deployment structures, initiatives to improve the skills of specialists in the field of education, as well as the level of competence of the teaching staff. The authors of these studies were selected taking into account specific targets, prospects of their projects, and expectations and requirements for specialists considered against the background of professional aspects of the activity.

Methods

To conduct this study, authors did a systematic literature search. The databases accessed for this research included databases such as Web of Science and Scopus. The material retrieved from these databases was evaluated and chosen based on specific criteria. First, the relevance of each source to the research topic and objectives was assessed. Only sources directly related to the professional development of specialists in the field of education and its connection to digitalization were considered. Next, the quality and credibility of the sources were evaluated. Preference was given to peer-reviewed articles published by experts in the field.

The authors, in this article, employed several approaches to investigate the professional development of specialists in the field of education and its relation to digitalization. The following research methods were utilized:

1. A conceptual approach to the content of professional development aimed at identifying existing contradictions in this educational structure.
2. The empirical institutional approach to the applied methods characterizes the relationship between digital and traditional learning. It consists of forms of training, the

development of tasks, and appropriate training activities. Based on this, the goal is achieved – the correctness of the program and its compliance with the competencies.

3. The communicative method and the method of visibility are actively used, meaning that each subject area is processed and explained as much as possible with the help of real authentic objects and phenomena from the environment. In this method, the main attention should be paid to the self-improvement of the student's personality as a whole, since they are given the freedom to independently solve various problems and come to certain conclusions. Partner and group work contributes to the effectiveness of the professional development process of training.

Teachers are currently faced with the task of adapting to the new conditions of digitalization through advanced training, which allows them to cope with the difficulties of the growing importance and use of professional knowledge in the workplace, in the educational context, and in other fields of activity. This stimulates the demand for additional subject qualifications that contribute to entering new labor markets, which should also be targeted by the applied approaches from a methodological point of view, the effectiveness of the results, and the possibilities of a comprehensive improvement in the quality of vocational training.

Results

To meet the educational policy requirements imposed on an educational institution, state educational institutions organize professional development activities for teachers. "As a subsystem of the institution of education, continuing professional education is not limited to an educational function, but also performs an important social role. When a person needs, the subsystem of continuing professional education takes over the baton of secondary education and considering one's identity preserves and develops the adaptive abilities of the individual" (ANTIPINA, 2017).

Professional development programs have the goal of constantly developing professional competence and contributing to the sustainable professionalization of a profession that requires special attention to achievements in a particular field in professional contexts and the ability to place fundamental accents in the educational process. The main task of professional development is purposeful planning, organization, and reflection of teaching and learning processes based on scientific knowledge, as well as individual and systematic evaluation.

Flexibility in the forms of professional development is a key advantage over other competitive means.

Higher school teachers face special expectations in their daily professional activities. They are part of a society that has shown itself capable of innovation, always considering the social challenges of the time, and trying to embody concepts acceptable from pedagogical and didactic points of view. "The purpose of professional development is the development of the teacher's personality in the unity of its biological, psychological, and socio-cultural factors, the reflexive model of teaching focuses on the development of the reflexive culture of the teacher, their ability and willingness to continuously analyze their pedagogical activity" (ABDUNAZAROVA, 2015). A special place in the professional development program is occupied by prospective training of the intercultural competence of participants, emphasizing the need for improvement in this area, discussing national differences and institutional and structural-innovative conditions for developing recommendations for planning professional development activities to promote an international vision with a wide geographical spread, and improving the quality of teaching. "Mit der Nähe zum Gegenstand ist insbesondere die Nähe zur Alltagswelt der beforschten Subjekte gemeint" – "Proximity to an object is, in particular, proximity to the everyday world of the subject" (our translation) (STITZ, 2017).

Teacher training courses have been tested following the preparation and introduction of new content aimed at improving the quality of teaching, considered as a strategy, model, and its integration into the educational process of teaching. Participants can be involved in educational practice following professional development programs to bridge the gap between theory and practice and for the formation of basic concepts of professional competence, defining learning as a social process, contributing to the sustainable improvement of the quality of education and based on specific methods and innovative basic concepts of the educational process, highlighting the prospects for expanding the scope of teaching, as well as developing professional skills and orientation in the modern digital environment.

Constant monitoring of immediate effectiveness and sustainability (long-term results) is needed to develop and implement professional development measures for teachers. Surveys and questionnaires are conducted to achieve these goals, during which participants evaluate their motivational attitudes, expectations, satisfaction with relevant activities, and acquired competencies.

The initial situation and the position of the participants should be recorded during the survey. It is assumed that the time of the survey covers both aspects of the conduct (assessment

of the professional development process) and the direct impact of professional development activities (evaluation of results) in terms of expanding knowledge and skills, opportunities for improvement, and the predicted use of the content, materials, and didactic guidelines for teaching practice, as well as for the development of a teacher training system.

As a result, the following main factors that have a significant impact on the participation of teachers in professional development should be identified, namely:

External factors:

- duration;
- informational content;
- number of participants;
- matching expectations and suggestions.

Internal factors:

- organization;
- the intensity of classes;
- options for compensating for absences and failed classes;
- priority mutual obligations;
- professional development budget;
- availability of information.

Individual factors:

- motivation;
- striving for self-improvement;
- the possibility of expanding competencies and replenishing knowledge;
- the possibility of mutually beneficial social contacts;
- familiarity with other programs;
- non-standard thinking;
- ideas, incentives, and food for thought;
- readiness for additional time and material costs;
- personal reasons;
- dissatisfaction (satisfaction) about the organization of the promotion qualifications;
- professional experience;
- responsibility.

As a rule, teachers positively evaluate professional development programs. This requires detailed awareness. "Herausgestellt wird in diesem Zusammenhang die erforderliche hohe Eigeninitiative, um sich selbst Informationen zum Lehrerfortbildungsangebot zu beschaffen. Dies bedingt einen erheblichen Mehraufwand, der somit bereits vor der Teilnahme an einer Lehrerfortbildung geleistet werden muss. Mit anderen Worten: müssen Lehrkräfte demzufolge zusätzlich motiviert sein, um die vielfältig vorliegenden Informationen zum Angebot an Lehrerfortbildungen zu sichten" – "In this context, the necessary high degree of personal initiative is provided to obtain information about the services offered to improve the qualifications of teachers. This requires significant additional efforts, which, therefore, must be undertaken even before participating in the advanced training program. Teachers need to be further motivated to analyze the variety of available information on proposed teacher development" (our translation) (RICHTER; VIGERSKE, 2011).

The exchange of views on the possibilities of professional development in the field of improvement in the relevant professional field is favorable. Teachers point out the specific advantages and disadvantages of advanced training programs: some refer to the cumbersomeness of the information since it contains few details, so it is difficult to draw the necessary conclusions from them. This is due to insufficient training of participants, which is not combined with really good content of the educational program, which turns out during the discussion of the sources used following the numerous requirements of the daily work of a teacher who is motivated to study a variety of available information.

Didactic and methodological professional developments are the main areas in which professional development can be carried out. An important goal of training is the formation of the competence of participants in the field of subject teaching in the context of modern challenges and the integration of competencies into the university educational process at seminars, in public institutions, and in some cases in distance learning courses.

Technological innovations, social changes, and international competition require teachers who are able and willing to study and improve professional knowledge, social and communication skills, as well as, possibly, correct attitudes and tenets that allow preserving cultural identity and internal cohesion characteristic of the university educational environment. In social terms, further development of the qualification potential is a key factor in successful professional activity, meeting the requirements for maintaining competitiveness in the subject area in the shortest possible time, and the ability to flexibly cope with unforeseen circumstances and adapt to new conditions.

The discussion of the presented research concerns the interaction of the target program and the audience of university teachers, which allows for improving the basis for understanding and differentiating professional development and focusing in detail on the basic conditions of participation in continuing education (including training and selection of specialists). This allows getting a detailed look at professional development activities, providing a deeper understanding of participants, their labor relations, motives for choosing a profession, professional stability, and self-esteem, as well as adjusting existing tasks and setting new ones.

We discuss the importance of the process of professional socialization for decision-making and how interactions in the process of professional development affect a different perception of oneself and assumed role expectations so that professional identity is formed.

Conclusion

Professional development of teachers in the higher education system is a serious problem since it is the largest in number, socially complex structure of our society, showing by its existence that vocational education is not once and for all complete and perfect and needs constant improvement and development. Certain periods of the development of our society subject the educational process to rethinking. However, there is no final or finishing stage at which perfection could be achieved. Each achieved state is the initial condition for its further development. This gives meaning and importance to continuing professional education and advanced training of teaching staff.

We conclude that practical measures in the field of professional development should be based on methodological understanding and evaluation of the process and results.

The learning process can be conditionally divided into five stages:

1. Development of issues that need to be resolved.
2. Planning/implementation of the training project (selection, strategy, tools).
3. Collecting the necessary training content (survey, interview, questionnaire).
4. Data analysis/interpretation (data management, analysis, synthesis).
5. Discussion, conclusions, processing.

Concerning the topic of improving the subject qualifications of teachers, the focus is on a scientific approach that combines the methodological advantages of various approaches with integration into teaching practice.

Based on this, there are various requirements for higher education at various stages and the need for advanced training. In this context, the quality of teaching in schools and universities is an important factor, and only motivated, and qualified teachers are the key to improving the quality of an educational institution, which means increasing the level of training for all sectors of the economy and industry and improving products and maximizing profits. Consequently, the professional development of teachers is a way to competently perform complex tasks in a changing environment, since the requirements are changing not only in the professional workplace and all knowledge is developing exponentially.

Thus, professional development is no longer an option, but a strategic necessity. The possibilities of rational use of simple logistics systems with relatively low costs that pay off with an effective result, at least in the long term, are crucial for the creation or expansion of centers for advanced training of personnel. A teacher after graduation is not a fully formed specialist but a student throughout their professional life and a practitioner who constantly reflects on the perfection of their activity, who goes a long way from a beginner to an expert.

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