

SUPPORT OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION FOR THE NEW TEACHERS

Augstākās izglītības iestādes atbalsts jaunajiem skolotājiem

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Abstract. *The article deals with the problem of the support of a higher education institution for the new teachers. The professional development is a complex and time-consuming process of a personality's self-perfection, self-development and self-training. The process of professional development begins with the obtaining of a diploma. The success in the professional activities and the progress in making a career depend on a person him/herself in various aspects. However, irrespective of the fact that a beginning teacher has the experience of practice, when starting professional activities in the respective working environment, he/she faces situations that demand immediate solution of a problem, but there is not always a person beside a beginning teacher, who could provide support regarding dealing with a particular situation and making a decision. The support, provided by a higher education institution, when a new teacher starts working, is very important. A beginning teacher can use the contacts established at the higher education institution and apply to the university lecturers for assistance.*

Keywords: *a new teacher (a beginning teacher), support, a higher education institution.*

Introduction

The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries brought the significant changes in all spheres of life, including also education, through the change of a paradigm that is related to the importance of education for the sustainability of society. In order to facilitate the quality of education, UNESCO launched the program "The Development of Knowledge-Based Society, Facilitating the Quality of Education and the Improvement of Educational System". The essence of the program is described in the report of the international commission on education for the 21st century "Learning: The Treasure Within" (2001). There were four support of education identified in this document that determine the development of mankind in the 21st century: learn to know; learn to do; learn to live together, learn to live with others; learn to be. B. Briede and L. Peks (2011), the Professors of the Latvia University of Agriculture, add one more aspect – learn to transform oneself and society. F. Capra (Capra, 1996), A. Sikorska (Сикорская, 2004) emphasize in their works the self-development with the aim to improve also the surrounding environment. Further changes in the educational system of Latvia and Europe were influenced by the micro- and macro-level documents – *The Bologne Declaration* (2000), *The Lisbon Strategy* (1999), *Guidelines of Education Development 2007 – 2013*, *Latvia 2030* (2010), *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000), etc., where there have been disclosed the developmental perspectives of education that are related to its sustainability. There is an idea emphasized in the European documents on the development of a common educational space, as well as there has

been a requirement set for a higher education institution to maintain contacts with the graduates for a period of three years. It is necessary in order to ensure the support and to decrease the number of the graduates who would not work in the profession they had chosen. This made to reconsider the possibilities of a higher education institution to ensure the support for the graduates.

Materials and Methods

Alongside with the development of society, the views on the characteristics of a teacher changed and these changes are still taking place. The requirements for a teacher's personality are set by the period of time, when a particular teacher lives. However, there are requirements that have been set for the representatives of this noble profession several centuries ago, and they have stood the tests of time. These requirements have preserved as the fundamental values of pedagogy.

The new teacher shall have to know these requirements in relation to the aims and objectives of his/her professional activities. However, it is important as well that an educator sets the requirements for him/herself that would be related to the personality's self-actualization, self-development and self-realization. This could be done, if an educator receives support from a higher education institution and a school, when he/she starts working. The Latvia University of Agriculture implements two study programs, where the teachers of Home Economics and Informatics and Home Economics and Visual Art are educated.

The aim of the research: to develop the model for the support of the graduates of a higher education institution.

Research issue: How a higher education institution can support its graduates (the new teachers)?

Research methods: 1.Theoretical research; 2.Reflection of personal experience.

Results and Discussion

A higher education institution as the educational environment is characterized by openness, development and support. *Higher education institutions* are the institutions of higher education and science that implement the academic and professional study programs, as well as are engaged in scientific, research and art activities. *Higher education* — the educational level, where, after the obtaining of secondary education, a personality's development, based on science or art, or on science and art, takes place in the chosen direction of academic or professional, or academic and professional studies, as well as the preparation for the scientific or professional activities takes place (Augstskolu likums, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967>).

The educational policy in Latvia, while integrating into the common European educational space, comprises also lifelong learning, mobility, integration, continuing education, self-evaluation and other fields. Irrespective of the fact that Education Development Concept (2002 – 2005) provides that “the focus of future education has changed from the national one, where every country sets its own aims of education and methods for obtaining education, to the international and

global that shall cover all those learning (www.izm.gov.lv); however, the pedagogical process nowadays is mostly based on the universal views on the ideal citizen of a particular country (Students, 1998; Богданов, 2005). The society has always expected the ideal from a teacher regarding character traits, professional activities and image. A school needs educators, who: are aware of a teacher's mission under the changing circumstances nowadays; perform their teachers' duties in good faith; are creative teachers; set the requirements not only towards others, but are also self-rigorous; respect their colleagues, pupils, parents and themselves in a modern school; are aware of their public accountability for the new generation's desire and ability to find its place in the life, for the destinies of their pupils in the future (Katane, 2006). Such teacher's features as love towards pupils, good sense of humour, righteousness, creativity, etc. have always had particular importance. Each era changes the most significant teacher's qualities. In the 21st century the following qualities have become more important: awareness of one's emotions, evaluation of one's actions (reflection), the ability to work in a team, independence.

Under the modern circumstances, the idea of John Dewey on the acquisition of such communication skills by pupils at school that help the pupils to live in the society and to achieve their goals becomes topical, because, alongside with the transition from the industrial to communicative society, there is an increase of the importance of such skills for an individual in everyday life and regarding professional activities. One of the essential indicators is the teacher's communication skills. The improvement of communicative activities could be viewed as a peculiar contribution to the development of an open society, the overcoming of communicative barriers between the generations, the representatives of different nations and cultures. The communication is the overcoming of the deafness towards the existence of strangers; it is the ability to take part in a discussion; these are the ways to establish links between the countries and centuries beyond the borders of the circles of all cultures. It is closely related to the teacher's mission, because the teacher is standing at the crossroads of different communication ways that unite people (Колесникова, 2007). Communication skills belong to the qualities that are professionally indispensable for a teacher. Communicative abilities manifest as the skill to develop the correct relationships with children, to feel the mood of all collective, and to understand each pupil. The ability to communicate does not mean only the need for communication – it provides also the sense of fulfilment that ensures working capacity and the teacher's creativity. A teacher shall be able to guide the pupils to the self-management level by developing the communication and cooperation, full of confidence (Сластѐнин, Исаев, Шиянов, 2002). However, not everybody manages to implement this in practice immediately. Кан – Kalik V. (according to Сластѐнин, Исаев, Шиянов, 2002), the scientist of pedagogy, while studying the new teachers' performance, drew a conclusion that most often they face the following obstacles: the discrepancy of dispositions; fear of the class; lack of

contacts; narrowing of communication function; negative disposition towards the class; fear of the pedagogical mistakes; imitation. In order this would occur more seldom in a new teacher's work, it is necessary to accept oneself and the pupils like we are. The teacher should not be afraid to admit his/her mistakes in front of the pupils — the mistakes that could be made by any person, who starts something new; the teacher should set clear and particular requirements for the pupils. There is always a possibility to apply to colleagues, course-mates and university lecturers for advice. It is important to maintain the contacts with the graduates also after they start their independent professional activities.

Having evaluated the data of the Ministry of Education and Science on the number and age of teachers working at the comprehensive day schools, we can draw a conclusion that it is mostly women who work at schools (See Table 1). In the study-year 2010/2011 there were three thousand and seventy-five (3,075) men and twenty-four thousand eight hundred and thirty-five (24,835) women working at the comprehensive schools of Latvia. Relative small number of new teachers have started to work at schools (in 2010 – 299 new teachers, in 2008 – 489 new teachers); however, it is more than in 2009 (134) (Table 1).

Table 1

Number of Educators at the Comprehensive (Day) Schools
(www.izm.gov.lv)

Study-Year	In Total	Women	Men	New Educators
2010/11	27910	24835	3075	299
2009/10	27250	24161	3089	134
2008/09	32236	28382	3854	489

There could be more new teachers, but the experience proves that the young people cannot always to find job. The teachers' average age could change, if the country would include the teacher's profession among the professions, the representatives of which could retire, for example, at the age of 55, because the teachers, who are working at schools now, started to work early and became the hostages of the national pension system. Working with people demands for the considerable endurance, balance, and keeping up to innovations in the field of one's professional activities. These people could be the mentors for the new teachers, performing certain amount of work in addition to their pension; there would be created vacancies for the new teachers, who, at the moment, lacking the workplace at a school, start working in a different field or studying in a master's study program, or they leave the country in order to work abroad. This was proved by the research performed by our master student Vuskane L. (2011). In some school subjects there is only the fulltime job possibilities for one teacher (Home Economics and Informatics, Visual Art, Social Sciences, Music, Physics, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, etc.). At present, the teachers, who can teach more than two subjects, are in a more favourable situation. The higher education

institution also should consider the possibility to offer the programs, after the graduation of which the prospective teacher could conduct classes and interest related classes (in our case, on the basis of existing resources, these could be art related hobby groups and optional subjects, career education, etc.). In addition to the diploma, the students obtain the certificates in the amount of 36 or 72 hours. This would increase the students' competences. Thus, a teacher ensures the sufficient amount of work for him/herself in order he/she could receive the appropriate remuneration for the qualitative performance of professional duties.

Therefore in the conclusions, drawn by many scientists, it is possible to find the idea on a teacher's ability to foresee the future. Under the present circumstances, a vision is necessary for any individual in order to find his/her mission and contribute to the society, where he/she lives. Under the present circumstances it is not only Latvia anymore. The evolution gradually advances the mankind towards the development of a united society; this, in its turn, influences the migration of the representatives of different nationalities from one country to another. It is an indication of environmental openness, when the borders between the countries are being destroyed. The idea about a global citizen becomes topical and an integral part of the context of sustainable education and lifelong learning. Destroying of borders enables an individual to obtain education in one country, higher or professional education in another country and to work in the third one, etc. At present, the emphasis is laid on these qualities of a future individual (Figure 1).



Figure 1. **The Qualities of an Individual as the Personality of the Future Society** (Bankauskienė, 2007)

So, a higher education institution shall create such educational environment, where it would be possible to achieve the goals set for the education by the

processes occurring in the society and the age. A teacher has an important role within the process of the achievement of these goals. If previously the most appreciated were the teacher's knowledge and skills regarding the particular school subject, then nowadays it is important that the teacher broadens his/her awareness that helps to understand the processes taking place in the Universe; it is important that the teacher keeps up with the latest achievements in his/her field and with those in another fields; it is important to develop the constructive communication with pupils, parents and colleagues; it is important to possess the skill to choose diverse methods for teaching and raising.

The professional development is a complex and time-consuming process of a personality's self-perfection, self-development and self-training. The process of professional development begins with the obtaining of a diploma. The success in the professional activities and the progress in making a career depend on a person him/herself (Лапина, 2006). The beginning teacher's developmental levels are as follows: initial stage – up to the 1st year; critical stage – the 1st – the 2nd year; stabilization stage – the 2nd – the 3rd year. Several authors (Beijaard, Meijer & Verlop, 2004; Flores & Day, 2006) (Marlow, 2007) emphasize that the new teachers have an idealistic view on the profession. But the reality often becomes the reason for disappointment, and a good teacher might leave the school. The feeling “I as a teacher” comprises the following factors – the historical, sociological, psychological and cultural one (Beijaard, Meijer & Verlop, 2004) (Marlow, 2007).

In relation to the support for a new specialist, the following words emerged in the pedagogy – tutor and tutorism, mentor and mentoring.

Mentoring is the provision of support for a student of a new teacher, thus ensuring his/her development and enabling to integrate into the specific society. In its turn, a mentor is an advisor, a wise and understanding assistant, who is ready to share with his/her experience without insisting that his/her work style is the only proper one, but enabling everyone to develop his/her abilities and make decisions independently (Kačķere, Odiņa, Grigule, 2008). In Latvia the mentoring in pedagogy is popularized by I. Odiņa and L. Grigule, the university lecturers of the University of Latvia, by developing within the framework of the ESF project the course programs for the education of the mentors of a higher education institution and schools. In the western countries the issue of mentors at a school was dealt with in 1980-ies (Peterson, 2005). The positive aspect is the fact that there has been developed also in Latvia the job description for a teacher's mentor. All the parties involved gain the benefit from the process of mentoring. The scientists emphasize the following mentor's functions — the supporting, counselling and encouraging one (Marlow, 2007; Kačķere, Odiņa, Grigule, 2008; Opincāne, 2008; Peterson, 2005; Schoroškienē, Stankevičienē, Monkevičienē, Šetkus, Šeškuvienē, 2006). The significance of a mentor cannot be overestimated, because a good mentor is more than a teacher. A mentor is a half-God and a half-human, a half-man and a half-woman, competent. A mentor is a personification of wisdom (Daloz, 1986). The university lecturers and teachers have an opportunity to obtain the certificate of

the mentor of a higher education institution or a school. It facilitates the maintaining of the contact between the higher education institution and the schools of practice, when the new teachers are ensured with an opportunity to cooperate not only with their mentors at a school, but also to maintain the contacts with the higher education institution after the graduation.

The normative documentation provides that a higher education institution shall maintain the contacts with the graduates for a period of three years. It is necessary in order to ensure the support and to decrease the number of the graduates, who would not work in the chosen profession. Therefore, on the basis of the evaluation of reports on practical training, the reflection on personal experience (the research, performed by the author of the article in 2010 – 2011 within the framework of doctoral thesis), the discussions with the supervisors of practical training at schools, the conclusions drawn by L. Vuskane, the graduate of our study program, in her master thesis (2011), we developed a model for the support of new teachers, where we included the following types of activities - supervisions, practical seminars, creative workshops, theme classes, master studies; discussions on the topical issues related to the teacher's work, involving experienced teachers from different regions; consultations of career counsellors regarding the career planning and development. The main keywords *in the cooperation* between the higher education institution and graduates could be mentoring, feedback, creativity, humanism within the context of teachers' sustainability and lifelong learning (Figure 2).



Figure 3.2.x. The Support for New Teachers at a Higher Education Institution

The cooperation between the higher education institution and graduates opens the educational environment wider, encourages the teaching staff to expand their experience and cooperation opportunities not only at the regional, but also at

the national level, and facilitates the recognition of the image of a higher education institution, the attraction of new students to the study programs. The author's experience proves that the graduates of secondary schools obtain information on a higher education institution, a particular study program from the home page, from the open-door days and career guidance days, from the students. Thus, as a result of cooperation, all the parties involved gain benefit.

Conclusion

- When starting to work independently, the new teachers need the support of the administration of school for their successful integration into the school environment and the readiness to show their professional competence.
- The requirements set for a teacher are related to the universal views on the ideal citizen of the country, but he must be ready to act both in the national and multicultural environment.
- During the study period the prospective teacher acquires the basic competences that ensure him a successful start for his professional activities. However, the teacher's profession belongs to the professions, where the continuous development is needed. The administration of the school does not always have an opportunity to offer possibilities for the beginning teacher.
- The support, provided by the higher education institution to the graduate, ensures him/her the developmental opportunities through the implementation of the different types of cooperation and integrating into the broader context of activities (a region, the interregional, a country).

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