Continuous teacher education: quality assurance

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Abstract

The modern context of social development lies in the concept of continuing education as a fundamental imperative of education strategy globally and nationally. Continuing education must be seen as a crucial principle of constructing a new model of education with integrity as a factor, regulating the activities of various educational institutions: main and complementary; basic and optional; state and public; formal and informal. In putting forward the idea of continuous education, most teachers agreed that the initial teacher training should be seen as a first stage in the professional teacher education. There is no mistaking that constant updating and development of general professional and pedagogical knowledge, adopting new challenges in education, are likely to disclose future teacher professional skills and efficiency to the full.

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Introduction

Analyzing the achievements of civilization, the acceleration of information society, we are to note that a man is unadapted to a new rate of its development. The phenomenon of continuous education has appeared in the world pedagogics as a reaction to the problems and requirements of developing society and social production. Spiritual and moral bases, responsibility for the events, competence, aspiration for self-development and full self-realization in work and life have become the main values of personal development along with traditionally esteemed and priority knowledge, abilities and experience.

Continuous education provides possibilities for advanced development, formation of the person of culture, his spirituality and morality.

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It has lately been stated that a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society must be accompanied by a process of continuous education, which, in its turn, is an implementation of a new paradigm of lifelong learning, proposed by UNESCO.

1.1. The Phenomenon of Continuous Education

It is important to mention that the phenomenon of continuous education is conceptually associated with the doctrine of the "learning society", leading to the unification of all educational activities with the resources of the society and, ultimately, to the harmonious development of individual potential.

The hallmarks of this approach are:

1) including all specially organized and established impacts and processes, which influence a person, his formation and development into the concept of "education";

2) recognizing the priority of educational process over the result, which is not strictly associated with the way of receiving it;

3) accent shift from teaching to learning;

4) expansion of the educational system by means of including non-institutional forms of education, such as cultural institutions, books, media [Sabirova, 2009].

Advantages of such interpretations of lifelong learning are evident: it highlights a person, the conditions and factors contributing to his development, whereas the objectives and results are described in terms of spiritual, rather than material values.

Moreover, the educational system should be mobile, changeable, multifunctional and integrated. It is important to maintain the dynamic balance of integrity and contradictory qualities of education, to which both infinite openness (which may lead to its fragmentation), and restriction of openness, with stagnation and fossilization, are contraindicated.

It should be mentioned that a phenomenon of continuous education has already ceased to be a new interpretation of the educational system. In many developed countries it has been reflected in various state educational projects and has become one of the strategic directions of the state policy.

Since the last quarter of the XX century many international organizations functioning in education and culture, have actualized the problem connected with need for continuous education, in particular, continuous pedagogical education.

At turn of the XX-XXI centuries it became a phenomenon of continuous pedagogical education and began to be considered as effective means of improvement of training quality. It is known as one of the components of school modernization programme, a source of teacher’s self-development and self-updating [The Teaching of .., 1986].

1.2. Developed Continuous Education and Teacher Training

As for the characteristics of the developed continuous education essential from the organizational and pedagogical point of view, the well-known are:

- providing education through life;
- vertical (continuity within separate stages, education levels) and horizontal (educational influence of school, family, informal environment, mass media, etc.) integration;
- establishment and inclusion of non-institutional and informal forms, such as creation of alternatives, into a complete educational system;
- coordination of general, polytechnic and professional education;
- openness, flexibility of an educational system, variety of the content, means and techniques, time and communication place;
- pupils’ free choice possibilities;
- equal assessment and educational recognition by the final result;
- stimulation mechanisms, motivation both by material values and by means of cultural influence, spiritual and moral values, dominating in the society.
Application of best foreign experience in pedagogical training and professional development becomes one of the possible ways to improve Russian system of continuous pedagogical education. From the point of view of universal requirements to competences and functions of the teacher he has to possess high degree of autonomy and creativity, mobility and adaptability to innovative situations of professional activities, readiness for continuous self-development.

The quality of teacher training and the level of professionalism are social criteria of the effectiveness of education.

The search for new forms and methods of improving the quality of initial and in-service training of teachers is caused by increased autonomy and responsibility of schools, as well as the changing role of the teacher in the teaching process [Coolahan, 2002].

Several principles seem the most important in the present context:

• in focusing the system of education on the new trends it’s indispensable to consider unique individuality and basic need for continuous self-improvement and self-expression of a teacher;

• accessibility and openness of all stages and forms of further education for every individual, regardless of his social status and physical state;

• flexibility of educational system, its prompt response to new educational demands and interests;

• diversity of educational forms, the right of teacher to choose his own strategy for further education and development;

• integration of formal and non-formal types of education, creation of a integral educational field, which transforms society into a "learning" and "teaching" one [Sabirova, 2009].

For example, British educators came to the conclusion that the professional development of the teacher remains invariable in the atmosphere of creative and scientific search. H. Tyrell writes: "… teachers are the most effective vehicles for change and development in schools… Consequently, the continuing professional development of heads and teachers is to be a fundamental part of any strategy designed to meet the consequences and the challenges presented by change" [Tyrell, 1991].

1.3. Quality of Teacher Training Education Assurance

Special comparative studies carried out on clear criteria and methodologies brought us closer to the scientific background of specific recommendations on the organization, content and future teachers training technologies in the worldwide context.

World educational experience shows that large-scale activities aimed at improving the effectiveness of education, are generally accompanied by the improvement of national systems of quality evaluation of the educational process and results of educational activities. Moreover, more than 2 decades ago due to Bologna process quality evaluation system of higher education was brought beyond national borders and set a number of requirements and criteria for national systems. Eventually, it led to the need to reform the traditional models of assessment, both in its form and content.

Ensuring quality of teacher training is indeed one of the leading tools for internal national policy and a significant factor of the international influence and prestige. The problem becomes of special scientific interest and social importance, as theoretical knowledge in quality assurance of education is of incomplete character. It makes a search for adequate characteristics of scientific categories particularly popular.

In putting forward the idea of continuous education, most teachers agreed that the initial teacher training should be seen as a first stage in the professional teacher education. There is no mistaking that constant updating and development of general professional and pedagogical knowledge, adopting new challenges in education, are likely to disclose future teacher professional skills and efficiency to the full [Sabirova, 2009].

We consider quality of teacher training education as an integrated characteristic of indicators showing the status and effectiveness of professional initial and in-service training of teachers, its compliance with the needs and expectations of the state, the public, students and their parents.
1.4. Conclusion

Thus, the system of teacher education is to create a set of flexible organizational forms of learning, creating the most favorable conditions for making progress in the education field. There remains a problem of developing criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of various forms of continuing education [Petty, 2004].

We are optimistic about the fact that acquiring advanced technologies in teaching and training continuously, modern teacher gains an excellent ability to adapt that knowledge to practice, to his individual needs, and thus to be in the process of continuous self-improvement.

References