

PRACTICAL COMPONENTS OF STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR ENHANCING FUTURE EMPLOYABILITY

ПРАКТИЧНІ КОМПОНЕНТИ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ СТУДЕНТІВ ДЛЯ РОЗШИРЕННЯ МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ МАЙБУТЬОГО ПРАЦЕВЛАШТУВАННЯ

The article discusses the role that practical training and internships play in the future employability of students and graduates. The significance of taking into account the experience of European organizations regarding the role of higher education institutions in meeting labor market needs is highlighted. The practical components considered include both academic and industrial internships, as well as work practice by students in their field of study during their education. Attention is also drawn to the necessity of productive connections between higher education institutions and potential employers. It is asserted that it is justified to involve employers in discussions of the draft educational programs. The importance of ensuring that the educational program should meet the demands of employers and prepare competitive professionals for the labor market is emphasized. It is suggested that higher education institutions can help both students preparing to enter the workforce and mature workers seeking retraining or higher qualifications. The necessity of finding mechanisms to expand the base for conducting academic internships through the involvement of European countries and other partner countries of Ukraine in solving this problem is noted. It is emphasized that industrial internships are part of the educational process. By conducting internships, students deepen and consolidate the knowledge and professional skills acquired in the learning process based on practical situations. It is asserted that properly organized and conducted academic and industrial internships contribute to strengthening the coordination of the theoretical component of education with the demands of the labor market and do not create additional obstacles to obtaining higher education.

The conclusion is drawn that one of the main reasons for the gap between the higher education system and the labor market is the lack of practical knowledge and skills among graduates. The recommendation is made regarding the necessity of establishing close connections for internship placement not only between universities and enterprises in Ukraine, but also between universities and enterprises in European countries and other partner countries of Ukraine, in order to provide students with the opportunity to obtain practical knowledge and skills that meet the demands of the modern labor market.

Key words: employability, higher education system, internship, potential employers, labor market.

У статті розглядається роль практики та стажування під час навчання у майбутньому працевлаштуванні випускників. Висвітлюється досвід європейських організацій щодо ролі вищих навчальних закладів у задоволенні потреб ринку праці. Розглядаються практичні компоненти, які включають як академічну практику, так і виробничу стажування, а також виробничу практику студентів за фахом під час навчання. Стверджується, що є виправданим залучення роботодавців до обговорення проектів освітніх програм. Визнається важливість того, щоб освітня програма відповідала вимогам роботодавців та готувала конкурентоздатних фахівців для ринку праці. Констатується, що вищі навчальні заклади повинні використовувати всі можливості, щоб допомагати у працевлаштуванні як студентам, які тільки готуються до вступу на ринок праці, так і вже працюючим, які прагнуть перепідготовки або підвищення кваліфікації. Вказується на необхідність дослідження шляхів розширення бази проведення академічних та виробничих стажувань за рахунок залучення європейських країн та інших країн-партнерів України. Нагадується, що виробничі практики є невід'ємними складовими освітнього процесу. Саме під час виробничої практики студенти отримують можливість розширити, вдосконалити і закріпити знання та професійні навички. Зазначається, що за умов доладно спланованих навчальної та виробничої практик забезпечується поліпшення узгодженості освітніх програм із запитами ринку праці. Належно організована практика не повинна заважати отриманню передбачених навчальною програмою обсягів знань. У підсумку констатується, що однією з основних причин розриву між системою вищої освіти та ринком праці є недостатність практичних знань та навичок у випускників.

З огляду на вітчизняний та закордонний досвід робиться висновок про необхідність налагодження тісних зв'язків між університетами та підприємствами для проходження практики не тільки в Україні, але й в європейських країнах та інших країнах-партнерах України, що надасть студентам можливість отримання практичних знань та навичок, які відповідатимуть запитам сучасного ринку праці.

Ключові слова: можливість працевлаштування, система вищої освіти, стажування, потенційні роботодавці, ринок праці.

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Formulation of the problem. The full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine changed the scale of Ukrainians' planning and affected all the spheres of life. Issues related to the need to restore the economy and ensure the country's survival in the long term come to the fore. The ambitious goal of the reconstruction of Ukraine is the comprehensive modernization of the country, instead of only the

restoration of the pre-war state. The main asset of the modern economy is human capital, so the need to continue reforming the education system is of paramount importance. In addition, in June 2022 Ukraine received the status of a candidate state for EU membership. From now on, certain reforms should be carried out in Ukraine, the implementation of which will enable the country to become a full-fledged member

of the EU. Further support for the education and science sphere of Ukraine on the way to transformation was discussed during the meeting of the Director of the World Bank for Eastern European Affairs, Jordan Schwartz, with the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Oksen Lisovyi [7]. Oksen Lisovyi named, first of all, the safety of the educational process, as well as «restoration of damaged and destroyed educational institutions, analysis and continuation of reforms of general secondary education, professional and higher education» among the paramount priorities. He noted that: «A complex of reforms aimed at saving higher education is one of our priorities» [7].

«Increasing the quality of higher and vocational education, orientation of educational programs towards the needs of employers and prospects for the development of the labor market» are mentioned in the Manifesto prepared by Ukrainian employers, who, along with other issues, are concerned about «the implementation of an education model aimed at meeting the needs of the labor market and employers for professional competitive personnel» [4, p. 3].

The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022–2032, published in April 2022, is focused on the period of Ukraine's accession to the EU and envisages the implementation of strategic goals for the reconstruction and continued reform of the higher education system in the post-war period [5]. Among the stated goals are such as «training highly demanded professionals to meet the needs of the economy for qualified specialists», the preparation of graduates for «life and work in a multicultural environment» [5]. Serhiy Kvit, president of the National University «Kyiv-Mohyla Academy», points out: «Currently, Ukraine needs qualitative growth in higher education and scientific research» [1]. In particular, he draws attention to those universities that in the Western system are identified as «universities of research type» and closely cooperate with the labor market.

Of particular importance is the study of the causes of a certain gap between the higher education system and the labor market, the search for solutions aimed at reducing this gap, in particular, orienting educational programs to the needs of employers, as well as further improving the quality of higher and vocational education under martial law with the aim of increasing the potential for the formation of state orders and prospective development of the labor market.

Analysis of basic research and publications. It should be noted that numerous studies by scientists, methodologists and teachers, both domestic (Popova V. V., Kulalayeva N. V., Hayduk O. I., Isakov O. S., Nizhegorodtsev V., Yorke M., Knight P. T. and others). Kulalayeva N. V., Hayduk O. I. in their works insist on the need to develop a model of professional competence of future skilled specialists oriented towards sustainable development [2].

Popova V. V. comments on the fact that demand for those working in the field of public education exceeds the supply [3]. Popova's analysis of the modern labor market of Ukraine by types of economic activity provides grounds to emphasize a special role played by education in the labor market [3]. V. V. Popova notes that eliminating the disparity between personnel potential and existing vacancies is, in particular, «the prerogative of the educational sector in terms of achievement» [3, p. 100].

Mantz Yorke and Peter Knight, the representatives of the Enhancing Student Employability Coordinating Group (ESECT), which aims to support the higher education sector in its efforts to produce highly skilled, employable graduates who can make effective contributions to national prosperity in the 21-st century, on the example of Great Britain emphasize the importance of including employment opportunities in educational programs [12]. They state that some employers prefer to recruit students from interns because they have had the opportunity to assess them in the job and «know a lot more about their suitability for a particular job than any recruitment or assessment center can tell them». Yorke M. and Knight P. also point out problems with this approach, in particular, that «employer and academic schedules may not dovetail» or small- and medium-sized enterprises «may be inhibited by the costs and time-commitment involved» [12, p. 13]. Stanić and other authors claim that «after graduation, students face an increasingly challenging and demanding job market» [11, p. 64]. The experience of British specialists is of interest, some proposals and solutions can also be borrowed for implementation in the higher education system of Ukraine.

The purpose of the article. The article points out the role played by the practical component in educational programs in further employability of students and graduates. As a practical component, both educational and production practices, as well as employment of students during their studies, are considered. Attention is also drawn to the need for productive communication between higher education institutions and potential employers. A set of theoretical methods was used in the study of the topic, in particular, qualitative research using field methods and with a non-standardized form of their analysis, comparison, generalization and systematization.

Presentation of the main research material. In the Strategic Plan of the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022–2032, among the identified problems under point IP1.3, the problem is stated as: «The gap between the higher education system and the labor market, the imbalance of demand and supply of innovative specialties, the lack of feedback mechanisms between employers and institutions of higher education» [5]. The result of solving this problem is seen as providing the needs of the economy

with qualified specialists. For this purpose, it is proposed to create systems for monitoring the demand and supply of specialists with higher education in the labor market, to determine the priorities of training specialists, as well as to provide graduates of budgetary specialties with the first jobs. Inadequate expectations of future graduates from employers should also be noted among the components of the problem of employment of university graduates. According to the 2020 EY «Best Employer» study, among 70% of students, the most important criterion for choosing an employer is the possibility of career growth [9]. 67% of students strive for personal and professional growth, so they expect this to be supported by the employer. 62% of respondents dream of a favorable image of the employer company and the corresponding salary [9].

In order to familiarize future employees with the features of their profession and working environment, as a rule, educational and production practices are used. Practice or practical training of education seekers is an integral part of the educational and professional program of training specialists. The choice of bases for conducting practical training is carried out by the head of the university. However, students can independently choose the place of practice, provided that this choice is approved by the supervisor.

In addition to formal internships, some students also seek employment during their studies and combine study and work. Among the positive aspects of such a combination, students mention saving time, financial independence from the family, gaining experience, facilitating employment after graduation, career growth and growing authority. However, there are negative aspects of combining work and study: physical fatigue, additional expenses, lack of time to communicate with relatives and friends, besides, not everyone manages to successfully combine work and study without deterioration of academic performance.

Linguistics students often have a wealth of knowledge about the language, literature, culture, and other humanities. This knowledge can be useful for many professions, such as journalism, advertising, marketing, translation and others. However, their expectations and preferences when choosing a job and what vacancy they would like to fill may differ significantly from what the employer can offer them.

It is justified that draft educational and professional programs should be submitted for discussion with the participation of employers. For example, at Kharkiv National Automobile and Highway University in 2021, when the draft educational and professional program «Philology (Applied Linguistics)» for the first (bachelor) level of higher education was submitted for public discussion, the guarantor of the program, members of the project group, employers, graduates of similar OPP and teachers participated in the discussion [8]. Along with teachers and philologists, the

director of a travel agency and the commercial director of an enterprise engaged in the wholesale trade of parts and accessories for motor vehicles, as well as graduates of the «Applied Linguistics» specialty, were present. Those present considered in detail the validity of the developed educational and professional program, its logical structure, the list and volume of mandatory and optional components. Such a meticulous approach will contribute to providing students with systematic and high-quality professional knowledge, competence and skills, as well as help in acquiring in-depth knowledge of applied linguistics. The participants of the meeting emphasized the importance of ensuring the compliance of the educational program with the demands of employers and the training of specialists in applied linguistics who are competitive on the labor market [8].

The experience of the British Coordination Group for Enhancing Student Employability (ESECT) is useful [12]. ESECT consists of people with extensive experience in the field of employment. The group includes representatives of interested organizations including the National Union of Students (NUS), the Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR), the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), the Teaching and Learning Support Network (LTSN) and the Center for Record of Achievement (CRA)). The ESECT Group believes that the complexity of employability issues and the diversity of UK HE curricula means that there is no single ideal recipe for incorporating employability into the curriculum. However, they emphasize that employability increases a graduate's potential for graduate-level positions. Employability is considered a more complex construct than «basic» or «key» skills. ESECT proposes the introduction of a curriculum audit to check how and where employability training can be included in curricula.

In 2019, the European Commission and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) initiated the Partnership Initiative «Meeting Labor Market Needs and Higher Education Outcomes» (LMRO), a joint project with Austria, Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia. The initiative aims to help governments and higher education institutions in the four countries and beyond develop effective ways to match the skills cultivated by higher education systems with the skills employers' need [10]. The implementation of the initiative is carried out through country-specific analysis, mutual learning activities and the development of a questionnaire for self-analysis addressed to higher education institutions to identify and remove barriers at the institutional level and implement innovative practices. It is seen that higher education institutions can help both students who are preparing to enter the labor market and mature workers who seek to retrain or improve their qualifications. In 2020, the LMRO Partnership Initiative

brought together representatives from twenty countries to discuss how higher education institutions use labor market information to develop their educational offers and provide guidance to prospective and actual students [10].

The experience of European organizations regarding the role of higher education institutions in meeting the needs of the labor market seems to be useful, in particular, considering the existence of similar problems in the higher education system of Ukraine, which in conditions of martial law have undergone additional aggravation, due to the «narrowing of the base for educational practice as a result of the curtailment of work of educational and production plants (centers, complexes, etc.) and leading Ukrainian enterprises» [6, p. 163]. In order to solve the issues of ensuring practical training of education seekers the information and analytical collection «Education of Ukraine under martial law» proposed to «search for mechanisms for expanding the base for educational practice by involving European countries and other partner countries in solving this problem» [6, p. 188].

Considering the above, it should be noted that work practice, in particular, the practice of students in linguistics is an integral part of the educational process. During the internship, the knowledge and professional skills acquired in the training process based on practical situations are deepened and consolidated. Today, students already understand well that it is too late to take the first professional steps after graduation, so they try to find a job that can be combined with university studies or, at the very least, try to work as freelancers, remote translators. Not everyone manages to successfully combine study and work, rationally allocate their time without deteriorating accomplishment. Therefore, only properly organized and conducted educational and industrial practices contribute to strengthening the coordination of the theoretical component of training with the requirements of employers and do not create additional obstacles on the way to obtaining higher education. Taking into account the realities of today, representatives of government structures and teams of higher educational institutions should make efforts to ensure that graduates acquire knowledge, skills and competencies relevant for today's and tomorrow's sphere of work, as well as for their integration into society. And an important place in training highly qualified specialists is occupied by educational and industrial practice.

Conclusion. The article notes that one of the main reasons for the gap between the higher education system and the labor market is the lack of practical skills among graduates. It is argued that this may be due to insufficient focus on the practical component in training programs and limited access to workplace practice. In order to reduce this gap, the role of the practical component in training programs

should be increased, as well as providing students with more opportunities for industrial and educational practice. In addition, it is necessary to establish close links not only between universities and enterprises of Ukraine, but also between Ukrainian universities and enterprises of European countries and other partner countries of Ukraine, in order to ensure that students have the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge and skills that meet the requirements of the modern labor market.

A promising topic for further research is the issue of graduate employment in view of the state/regional sphere, given that it seems impossible to ensure the existing requirements and recommendations for employment under martial law.

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