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TENDENCIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

ABSTRACT

This paper represents an attempt to conduct research of modern tendencies, strategies and directions of education development within the perspective of the European Union. The main aim of the research is to learn more about the policy of the European Union concerning the general development of education, forming of favorable educational environment and protecting the rights of its citizens for education and professional development. The study relies on the theoretical methods of scientific research. The main source of the analysis, generalization and description is represented by various documents, recommendations, programmes, and guidelines issued by the European Commission, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Educational Area, the European Research Area, the European Skills Agenda, Europe 2020.

In the course of the study, the works of foreign researchers have been analyzed, which helped to view the topic of interest from different perspectives. The results of the study highlight the fact that the sphere of education has undergone its major changes due to the circumstances caused by the pandemic. In Ukraine, the great number of obstacles in education has appeared due to war, which made qualitative education impossible for many Ukrainians. Because of this, it is certainly important to study foreign experience in order to develop new working schemes and models for the sake of keeping education abreast of time and being in line with students' and teachers' needs. In the result of the conducted research, it is found that the European Commission has managed to develop a programme to support the future of its education. The main tendencies, strategies and priorities of the European Union concerning the further development of education are represented and described.

Key competences and basic skills for people's personal and professional development throughout life developed by the European Commission and EU Member States are analyzed.

Keywords: *higher education, educational strategy, educational framework, European Union, European Commission, learning outcomes, professional development, sustainable development.*

ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ РОЗВИТКУ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ: ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКА ПЕРСПЕКТИВА

АНОТАЦІЯ

Стаття є спробою дослідити сучасні тенденції, стратегії та напрями розвитку освіти з перспективи Європейського Союзу. Основною метою цієї наукової розвідки є дізнатися більше про політику Європейського Союзу щодо загального розвитку системи освіти, формування сприятливого освітнього середовища та

захисту прав громадян Європейського Союзу на отримання освіти та професійний розвиток. Представлене дослідження спирається на базові теоретичні методи наукового дослідження. Основним джерелом аналізу, узагальнення та опису є різноманітні офіційні документи, рекомендації, програми та керівні принципи, затверджені Європейською комісією, Європейською опорою з соціальних прав, Європейським освітнім простором, Європейським дослідницьким простором, Європейським планом навичок, програмою «Європа 2020».

У ході дослідження були ґрунтовно проаналізовані результати досліджень зарубіжних дослідників у цій галузі, що допомогло поглянути на тему вивчення з різних точок зору та опрацювати різні судження з цього приводу. Результати проведеного дослідження підкреслюють той факт, що сфера освіти зазнала серйозних безповоротних змін через обставини, спричинені пандемією. В Україні велика кількість перешкод у сфері освіти виникла через повномасштабну війну, яка унеможливила якісну освіту для багатьох українців і, таким чином, ускладнила якісну підготовку майбутніх фахівців. У зв'язку з цим, безумовно, важливо вивчати успішний зарубіжний досвід на шляху розробки нових робочих схем і моделей, щоб навчання йшло в ногу з часом і відповідало потребам студентів та викладачів. У результаті проведеного дослідження було виявлено, що Європейській комісії вдалося розробити розгалужену програму підтримки своєї майбутнього освітньої системи. Представлено та описано основні тенденції, стратегії та пріоритети Європейського Союзу щодо подальшого розвитку освіти.

Проаналізовано ключові компетентності та базові навички для особистого та професійного розвитку людей протягом усього життя, розроблені Європейською Комісією та державами-членами ЄС.

Ключові слова: вища освіта, освітня стратегія, освітня система, Європейський союз, Європейська комісія, результати навчання, професійний розвиток, сталий розвиток.

INTRODUCTION

The sphere of education undergoes the process of current transformations due to numerous factors, which are inevitable. In this context, it is important to develop new strategies and working schemes to keep education abreast of time, to eliminate the barriers to learning and to provide the opportunity for quality education for all the citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have proved the necessity to work for ensuring equal access to learning process. Obstacles in the global and local context have become a stalemate for educators across the world. In Ukraine, the crisis is even deeper due to the war, which makes it impossible for thousands of people to use their right to get education and for teachers to perform their professional duties and maintain professional development. All these factors considerably contribute to the topicality of the issue of finding new ideas to enhance the educational process and create new educational environment for the sake of professional training, as well as social and economic stability.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The paper presents the research the aim of which is to learn more about modern tendencies in the development of education from the perspective of the European Union and its strategies used to create favorable environment for effective educational system within the European Educational Area. The study of the European experience and its expertise is the fruitful source for future development of education in Ukraine.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The given research predominantly relies on the methods of theoretical study, namely: the analysis of the recent and valuable researches in the field, generalization of the main facts, beliefs and assumptions, description of basic facts and principles. The basis of the theoretical framework of the study is represented by numerous recommendations, guidelines and programmes by the European Commission, namely the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Educational Area, the European Research Area, the European Skills Agenda, Europe 2020, International Association of Universities, etc. Moreover, there are many researches on modern trends and strategies in higher education by F. Amiti (2020), J. Crawford (2020), R. Curtin (2021), J. Rudolph (2020) and others. Despite the numerous studies in the field, the further research of the European perspective on the future development of education is of obvious importance.

RESULTS

Education is the basis for personal development, career progress and engaged, responsible citizenship. It is of importance to the longevity of the European communities and economies. All European citizens should have the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong sustainable learning. This right is enshrined by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the understanding that it is essential to eliminate barriers on the way to get education and develop skills for the sake of employment prospects and civic engagement (Curtin, 2021).

The European Education Area collaborates with the European Research Area and the European Skills Agenda to build the strong foundation for knowledge, Europe's recovery and prosperity (European Education Area, 2023).

There are several focus points on agenda when discussing the development of education, namely: improving the quality of education; providing for the equity of education; inclusive education; multilingualism; defining key competences of future professionals.

The European Pillar of Social Rights has established the right for all citizens of the European Union to obtain the inclusive education of high quality, training, and lifelong learning. The basic principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights states: "Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market" (European Pillar of Social Rights, 2018).

These approaches as well as promotion of the common European values are crucial for sustainable development and growth of cohesive society. The main issues concerning equity in education are those connected with social patterns as students with lower social status or from rural areas tend to fall behind in studies. Sexism is another obstacle curbing the educational progress. According to the given statistics, such fields of studies as engineering, construction and manufacturing experience the gender gap with only 26 % of female students and Information and Communication Technologies – 18 % correspondingly (European Research Area, 2020).

Numerous measures are taken to deal with inequalities and to separate educational achievements from economic, cultural, social status, ethnic background, gender, etc.

The main role of education is to provide people with knowledge, skills and attitudes to ensure the resilience of the society they are a part of and to build social prosperity. To become successful, it is important to master key competences. The European Union thrives to improve the average achievement rate among learners.

The results of the analysis of the European Union education policy show the following initiatives: fostering multilingualism and promoting common values in educational sphere; encouraging investment in education and training professionals; developing the Jean Monnet Actions; elaborating common approach to micro-credentials; stimulating the inclusive approach in the Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps programmes; strengthening young volunteers mobility in cross-border activities; developing the European quality framework in the fields of early childhood education and care systems; the establishment of vocational excellence centres.

All the above-mentioned initiatives promote mutual learning and information exchange implementing the best practices between Member States, the Commission and stakeholders. These measures in turn will result in better learning outcomes and equity.

Two main targets have been set by the Europe 2020 strategy to be achieved all around Europe by 2020: the rate of the early leavers from education aged 18–24 should be less than 10 %; at least 40 % of population aged 30-34 should have some form of higher education (Europe 2020, 2020).

The common work of the European Commission and EU Member States has led to the development of key competences and basic skills for people throughout life. Eight key competences have been identified as needed for personal growth, sustainable lifestyle, career, active citizenship and social engagement. They include: literacy; multilingualism; numerical, scientific and engineering skills; digital and technology-based competences; interpersonal skills; active citizenship; entrepreneurial mindset; cultural awareness.

The European Union also widely promotes the principles of green education. The transfer to a climate-neutral European Union will have vital economic, social, and employment influences. Europeans need to gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be aware of and tackle the profound change. Education and its institutions can act as media in support of developing a more sustainable society.

Numerous initiatives and strategies on the sustainability and environment protection are taking place in training around Europe. Among them there are Education for Climate Coalition, Council Recommendation on Learning for the Green Transition and Sustainable Development, European Sustainability Competence Framework, Erasmus+ Discover EU Green Route, European Solidarity Corps, InvestEU programme. They represent progress and public interest, but far more is to be done to encourage learning for sustainability as a systemic practice in the European Union.

The European Union is thriving to develop the efficient system of digital education and is trying to enhance citizens' skills and competences for the digital transition.

Digital literacy and digital skills are necessary to give every person an equal chance to succeed in life, find job and to be an active part of society. Therefore, developing digital competences and creating digital infrastructure and tools have become of major relevance since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Crawford, 2020)

According to the European Skills Agenda (2023), all future education and job market will require considerable level of digital litaracy and skills. Ongoing technological development requires the constant progress of knowledge, competences and skills to stay competitive and to take part in social life. According to the recent findings, on average two in five Europeans aged 16–74 still lack these skills.

The importance of digital literacy is further highlighted by the relevance of wide implementation of distance learning in different forms and with different approaches. Distance learning (e-learning) takes place in a virtual classroom environment where both

parties (students and teachers) cooperate. The teacher is as an instructor who tries to use different strategies to convey the right amount of input, and, on the other hand, students are as participants, who try to get as much information as possible, and participate to develop skills and abilities (International Association of Universities, 2020).

Online learning is important for the economic development of society. The modern global economy needs educated, highly qualified, technically literate specialists. As the labor market evolves in line with changes in the economy, professionals must learn new skills and abilities throughout their lives (OECD, 2020).

Numerous studies in this field conducted by various scientists confirm the effectiveness of combining synchronous and asynchronous models of online learning and their communication tools to develop an optimal environment for online learning. Survey respondents said they were comfortable using asynchronous communication tools compared to synchronous communication tools because they could easily access them. In addition, students strongly agreed that the presence of an instructor and feedback during the class make them learn better. Asynchronous mode is obviously more comfortable for introverted students, but group work and discussion are complicated in this case. Based on such results, it can be argued that since synchronous and asynchronous online learning methods and corresponding interaction tools have their advantages and disadvantages, a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous models should be used (Amiti, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

Overall, our findings contribute to theoretical study of the European perspective concerning the development of education, its priorities, trends, and focuses. Since there is no uniform European educational environment, which can be viewed as an epitome to analyze, the variety of different guidelines, strategies and approaches suggested by the European Commission has been studied. Our research focuses on teaching and learning process, which has faced the drastic changes and challenges due to the 2020 lockdown. As a result, the post-pandemic educational environment has transformed and developed new forms of realization. This experience has produced a vast number of approaches and strategies to organize the effective educational process in order to satisfy the needs of all the participants (teachers and students), labour market and modern communities. The European Commission has elaborated the extensive vision on the educational future and has developed numerous steps, measures and recommendations to help to adjust education to new reality and to maintain the sustainable growth of its citizens as professionals.

The prospects of further researches in the given field are connected with the study of the ways to improve and optimize teaching of foreign languages in higher education institutions. The main focus of interest in this domain concerns the elaboration of new methods of online teaching and strategies of organizing the online learning environment.

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