



[https://doi.org/10.31891/2308-4081/2024-14\(1\)-9](https://doi.org/10.31891/2308-4081/2024-14(1)-9)

PhD in Pedagogy, Research Fellow at the Laboratory of Professional Training Technologies of the Institute of VET (NAES of Ukraine), **IRYNA DROZICH**  
Khmelnyskyi Centre for Vocational Education in the Field of Services, Ukraine  
Email: [irina.drozich@ukr.net](mailto:irina.drozich@ukr.net)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8881-9314>

## ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTRUCTORS IN UKRAINE AND EU COUNTRIES: GENERAL ASPECTS

### ABSTRACT

*Vocational training serves as a cornerstone in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge for successful integration into the workforce. The competence of instructors tasked with imparting essential training is crucial for the effectiveness of vocational education. This article embarks on an extensive exploration into the realm of competence development within training programmes for vocational training instructors, focusing on the practices and methodologies employed in Ukraine, as well as prominent European Union (EU) nations such as Germany, Finland and the Netherlands. Drawing upon a synthesis of existing literature, the study meticulously examines the multifaceted challenges encountered by vocational training instructors. From outdated curricula to limited resources and inadequate professional development opportunities, the hurdles are diverse and complex. However, amid these challenges, the article offers a beacon of hope through actionable recommendations aimed at bolstering the professional competence of vocational training instructors. Noteworthy among these recommendations is the pivotal role of international partnerships and initiatives, which are instrumental in fostering collaboration and facilitating knowledge exchange to address the pressing issues faced by vocational training instructors. Moreover, the study delineates future research directions that hold promise for further enriching of the field. Longitudinal studies promise to provide invaluable insights into the sustained efficacy of development programmes for vocational training instructor over time. Comparative analyses across varied socio-economic contexts and educational systems offer a broader understanding of effective practices. Additionally, researches on the integration of technology stand poised to revolutionize instructor development, paving the way for innovative approaches and enhanced educational outcomes. Through this comprehensive exploration, the article not only sheds light on the challenges but also illuminates a pathway towards a more robust and dynamic vocational education opportunities.*

**Keywords:** vocational training instructor, professional competence, Ukraine, European Union, professional development, international partnerships, comparative analysis.

## РОЗВИТОК ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ ПЕДАГОГІВ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО НАВЧАННЯ В УКРАЇНІ ТА КРАЇНАХ ЄС: ЗАГАЛЬНІ АСПЕКТИ

### АНОТАЦІЯ

*У статті порушено проблему розвитку професійної компетентності педагогів професійного навчання в Україні та країнах ЄС (Німеччині, Франції та Нідерландах). Проаналізовано загальні аспекти програм підготовки педагогів професійного навчання в Україні та обраних європейських країнах, зокрема їхній зміст, педагогічні методи та практики оцінювання. З'ясовано особливості інституційної підтримки професійного*



*розвитку педагогів професійного навчання. Водночас у статті розглянуто мультирівневий спектр проблем, з якими стикаються педагоги професійного навчання в Україні та країнах ЄС. Відповідно, надано дієві практичні рекомендації, спрямовані на підвищення професійної компетентності педагогів професійного навчання в Україні та країнах ЄС. Серед цих рекомендацій варто виділити спільні наукові проєкти між установами з різних країн, які сприятимуть вирішенню актуальних проблем професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти. Крім того, міжнародні партнерства сприяють мобільності педагогів професійного навчання, дозволяючи їм здобути міжнародний досвід і набути нових навичок. Відтак, впровадження рекомендованих стратегій може суттєво вплинути на розвиток професійної компетентності педагогів професійного навчання в Україні та країнах ЄС. Стандартизація рамок компетентностей, розширення можливостей для професійного розвитку, сприяння галузевим партнерствам, інтеграція технологій, сприяння співпраці між країнами та адвокація політики та фінансування є важливими кроками до покращення якості професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти. Також у статті визначено напрями майбутніх перспективних досліджень за відповідною науковою проблематикою.*

***Ключові слова:** педагог професійного навчання, професійна компетентність, Україна, Європейський Союз, професійний розвиток, міжнародне партнерство, порівняльний аналіз.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Vocational training instructors play a crucial role in shaping the skills and competencies of the future workforce. As industries evolve and technology advances, the need for competent vocational instructors becomes increasingly paramount. While vocational education in Ukraine historically faced challenges in terms of outdated curricula and limited resources, recent reforms have aimed to modernize the system and align it with international standards. In contrast, EU countries have developed more comprehensive vocational education frameworks with strong industry ties and robust support systems for vocational instructors. Despite these differences, both Ukraine and EU countries share common goals of enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education to meet the demands of the modern economy.

Simultaneously, by learning from each other's experiences and promoting international partnerships, they can accelerate progress towards ensuring that vocational training instructors are equipped with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to prepare students for successful careers in diverse industries.

## **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

Therefore, this article explores the efforts and approaches undertaken to enhance the professional competence of vocational training instructors, with a comparative focus on Ukraine and selected EU countries.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

Existing literature on the development of professional competence among vocational training instructors in Ukraine and the EU provides detailed insights into their training, skills enhancement and pedagogical practices. Below is a concise summary outlining key themes and findings.

1. **Competency Frameworks and Standards.** Numerous studies focus on developing, validating and integrating competency frameworks and standards for vocational training instructors. These frameworks outline essential skills, knowledge and attitudes for effective teaching in vocational education. Researchers examine framework



development processes, validation methods and integration strategies into vocational instructor training programmes (Eliström & Kock, 2012; Rauner et al., 2012; Lakalla & Lakalla, 2019; Zhou et al., 2023).

**2. Professional Development Programmes.** Relevant research rigorously examines professional development programmes for vocational training instructors. These programmes include workshops, seminars and courses, mentoring and coaching. Researchers assess their impact on instructor competence and student learning outcomes (Broad & Lahiff, 2019; Guthrie, 2010; Holstein et al., 2021).

**3. Pedagogical Practices.** Corresponding studies meticulously explore pedagogical strategies used by vocational instructors to engage students and foster skill development. This includes experiential learning, project-based approaches, competency-based education, flipped classrooms and technology integration. Researchers evaluate the efficacy of these practices and propose evidence-based strategies for instructional improvement (Hager, 2012; Radkevych et al., 2021; Tran&Le, 2017).

**4. Industry Engagement and Collaboration.** The literature emphasizes the crucial role of industry engagement in vocational instructors' professional development. Researchers analyze partnerships between educational institutions and industry stakeholders, including employers and professional bodies. They examine how these collaborations enhance curriculum development, facilitate work-based learning and ensure the relevance of vocational education programmes to industry needs (Anyshchenko, 2019; Guile, 2018; Kovalchuk et al., 2023).

**5. Assessment and Evaluation.** Assessment and evaluation methods for vocational instructor competence are central in the literature. Researchers rigorously explore diverse strategies to measure teaching effectiveness, subject matter expertise and professional conduct. They assess the efficacy of performance-based assessments, self-assessment tools, peer evaluations and student feedback in guiding professional development interventions (Ecclestone, 2013; Isaacs et al., 2013).

**6. Cross-Country Comparisons.** Some studies conduct cross-country comparisons to highlight differences and similarities in vocational instructor training practices. These analyses reveal factors influencing competence, such as cultural nuances and policy frameworks. Researchers distil actionable recommendations to foster global best practices in vocational instructor development (Bastiaannet, 2017; Kaleja & Egetenmeyer, 2017; Kryvolapchuk, 2014).

Despite efforts to address it, the problem of enhancing the professional competence of vocational training instructors in Ukraine and EU countries remains open for discussion. Several factors contribute to the ongoing relevance and complexity of this issue. Firstly, the dynamic nature of vocational education and training (VET) necessitates continuous adaptation to evolving industry needs, technological advancements and changing educational paradigms. Secondly, the diversity of educational systems, policies and practices across Ukraine and EU countries presents unique challenges and opportunities in vocational instructor training and development. Finally, globalization and internationalization trends highlight the importance of benchmarking vocational instructor competence against global standards and best practices.

By employing a combination of relevant research methods (literature review, document analysis, comparative analysis), this study attempted to provide a comprehensive understanding of developing vocational instructor competence in Ukraine and EU countries,



identify effective strategies for improvement and contribute to informed policymaking and practice in the field of vocational education.

### **RESULTS**

An overview of training programmes for vocational training instructors in Ukraine and EU countries (Germany, Finland and the Netherlands) reveals a diverse landscape shaped by varying educational systems, policies and practices.

In Ukraine, these programmes often consist of specialized courses offered by vocational schools, colleges and universities, aiming to equip instructors with pedagogical skills, subject matter expertise and industry-relevant knowledge. However, challenges such as outdated curricula, limited resources and insufficient professional development opportunities persist, necessitating ongoing reforms and investments in vocational instructor training (Kovalchuk et al., 2023; Radkevych et al., 2021).

In contrast, Germany, Finland and the Netherlands have well-established vocational instructor training systems characterized by comprehensive programmes, strong industry partnerships and robust professional development initiatives. Vocational instructors in these countries typically undergo extensive training, including apprenticeships, specialized degree programmes and continuous professional development courses. Close collaboration between educational institutions, employers and industry associations ensures alignment with current industry needs and standards (Bastiaannet, 2017; Holstein et al., 2021; Lakalla & Lakalla, 2019).

Despite these differences, both Ukraine and EU countries recognize the importance of vocational instructor training in enhancing the quality and relevance of vocational education. Efforts to strengthen vocational instructor training programmes include curriculum modernization, expansion of professional development opportunities and closer collaboration with industry stakeholders.

Assessment practices within training programmes for vocational training instructors typically involve a combination of formative and summative assessments to evaluate student's mastery of course content and teaching competencies. In Ukraine, assessments may include written exams, practical demonstrations and teaching observations by faculty members. In EU countries, assessments may also incorporate peer evaluations, self-assessments and reflective portfolios to encourage ongoing professional development (Ecclestone, 2013).

An in-depth exploration of successful practices and innovative approaches to competence development within training programmes for vocational training instructors provides invaluable insights into strategies for enhancing instructor skills and elevating the quality of vocational education.

In Ukraine, successful practices revolve around the integration of industry-relevant practical experiences into curriculum design. For instance, vocational training programmes may forge partnerships with local businesses, facilitating apprenticeships, internships or practical projects that enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings (Anyshchenko, 2019). Furthermore, leveraging technology for interactive learning experiences is increasingly recognized as a successful practice. For example, vocational schools may utilize online platforms or virtual reality simulations to supplement classroom instruction, providing students with immersive learning experiences.

Moreover, innovative approaches in Ukraine could involve the incorporation of competency-based education models and flipped classroom techniques, emphasizing skill mastery and active student engagement. Additionally, continuous professional development



through online platforms or blended learning approaches ensures that instructors stay abreast of evolving industry trends and pedagogical innovations.

Similarly, in selected EU countries such as Germany, Finland and the Netherlands, successful practices often centre around robust collaboration between educational institutions and industry partners, ensuring alignment with current industry needs and standards. Innovative approaches also include competency-based assessment methods that focus on practical skills mastery, along with mentorship programmes for new instructors, ensuring a smooth transition into the teaching profession (Bastiaanet, 2017; Guile, 2018; Holstein et al., 2021; Lakalla & Lakalla, 2019).

Overall, by adopting and adapting these successful practices and innovative approaches, training programmes for vocational training instructors in both Ukraine and EU countries can effectively enhance instructor skills, improve vocational education quality and better prepare students for success in their chosen fields.

International partnerships and initiatives are crucial for addressing challenges faced by vocational training instructors in Ukraine and the EU. These collaborations foster knowledge exchange, share best practices and provide support to enhance vocational education quality and instructor competence.

By collaborating with institutions and organizations from different countries, vocational training programmes gain access to a wealth of knowledge, expertise and resources, facilitating the exchange of innovative teaching methodologies, curriculum development strategies and assessment practices (Kaleja & Egetenmeyer, 2017). Furthermore, international partnerships offer opportunities for vocational training instructors to engage in professional development programmes, workshops and conferences, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality instruction.

Joint research projects between institutions from different countries also contribute to addressing common challenges in vocational education, driving continuous improvement in vocational education systems. Moreover, international partnerships facilitate the mobility of vocational training instructors, enabling them to gain international experience and acquire new skills (Zhou et al., 2023).

Practical recommendations for enhancing professional competence development programs in both Ukraine and EU countries are essential for improving vocational education quality and instructor effectiveness:

1. **Standardization of Competency Frameworks:** Developing unified competency frameworks for vocational training instructors in Ukraine and the EU, ensuring consistency and facilitating instructor mobility across regions.

2. **Robust Professional Development Opportunities:** Investing in comprehensive professional development programmes tailored to vocational training instructors' needs, focusing on teaching enhancement, subject knowledge updates and innovative pedagogical methods.

3. **Industry Partnerships and Work-based Learning:** Fostering closer collaboration between vocational schools, industries and employers to provide hands-on, work-based learning opportunities, enhancing instructors' understanding of industry practices.

4. **Integration of Technology:** Embracing technology-enhanced learning tools to enhance professional competence, providing training on educational technology tools and integrating digital literacy into professional development programmes.



5. **Peer Learning and Mentoring:** Facilitating peer learning and mentoring among vocational training instructors, enabling the sharing of best practices and experiences.

6. **Continuous Assessment and Feedback:** Implementing continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms to evaluate instructor competence, providing constructive feedback for ongoing growth.

7. **Cross-Country Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange:** Fostering cross-country collaboration and knowledge exchange between vocational education institutions to share best practices and research findings.

8. **Policy Support and Funding:** Advocating for policy support and funding to prioritize professional competence development, allocating resources for instructor training, curriculum development and infrastructure upgrades.

By implementing these practical recommendations, vocational education stakeholders in Ukraine and EU countries can enhance the professional competence of vocational training instructors, ultimately improving the quality and relevance of vocational education programmes.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the state of professional competence development among vocational training instructors in Ukraine and EU countries, offering valuable insights and recommendations for improvement.

Through the analysis of training programmes for vocational training instructors, successful practices and innovative approaches, several key findings have emerged. Notably, there are both similarities and differences in the vocational education systems of Ukraine and EU countries. Challenges such as limited resources, outdated curricula and insufficient professional development opportunities persist in both contexts. However, successful practices and innovative approaches, such as industry partnerships, technology integration and peer learning, offer promising avenues for improvement.

Comparative research plays a crucial role in advancing professional competence development by providing a nuanced understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities within different vocational education systems. By examining similarities and differences between Ukraine and EU countries, this study has highlighted areas for mutual learning and collaboration. Comparative research allows to identify the best practices that can be adapted and implemented across contexts, ultimately contributing to the continuous improvement of vocational education worldwide.

Implementing the recommended strategies outlined in this study has the potential to affect the development of professional competence of vocational training instructors in Ukraine and EU countries significantly. Standardizing competency frameworks, enhancing professional development opportunities, fostering industry partnerships, integrating technology, promoting peer learning, facilitating cross-country collaboration and advocating for policy support and funding are all crucial steps towards improving vocational education quality and instructor effectiveness. By investing in these strategies, stakeholders can ensure that vocational training instructors are equipped with the skills, knowledge and support necessary to deliver high-quality instruction and prepare students for success in the workforce.

In conclusion, by addressing the identified challenges and leveraging successful practices and innovative approaches, vocational education systems in Ukraine and EU countries can enhance the professional competence of vocational training instructors, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and increased opportunities for students in the ever-evolving global economy.



Future research in vocational training instructor development could explore:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** It is important to track the effectiveness of instructor development programmes over time to understand their long-term impact on instructor competence and student outcomes.

2. **Comparative Analysis:** It is essential to broaden comparative research to include countries beyond Ukraine and the EU, examining instructor development practices in varied socio-economic contexts and educational systems.

3. **Technology's Impact:** It is crucial to study how digital tools such as online platforms and virtual reality simulations contribute to enhancing instructor skills and knowledge in vocational training.

#### REFERENCES

1. Anyshchenko, T. (2019). Vprovadzhennia innovatsiinykh tekhnolohii v suchasnyi urok vyrobnychoho navchannia [Implementing innovative technologies in industrial training lessons today]. In V. A. Kruchek et al., (Eds.), *Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Web-Conference on Relevant Issues of Professional Development among Vocational Training Instructors in Vocational Education Institutions* (pp. 12–14). The Institute of VET of the NAES of Ukraine.
2. Bastiaannet, H. (2017). Internationalization in senior secondary vocational education in the Netherlands. In K. Dempsey & L. T. Tran (Eds.), *Internationalization in Vocational Education and Training: Transnational Perspectives* (pp. 209–228). Springer International Publishing.
3. Broad, J. H., & Lahiff, A. (2019). Capturing the elusive: how vocational teachers develop and sustain their expertise. In D. Guile & L. Unwin (Eds.), *The Wiley Handbook of Vocational Education and Training* (pp. 433–454). Wiley.
4. Ecclestone, K. (2013). *How to assess the vocational curriculum*. Taylor & Francis.
5. Eliström, P.-E., & Kock, H. (2012). Competence development in the workplace: Concepts, strategies and effects. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Competence Development: Developing Skills and Capabilities* (pp. 34–54). Taylor & Francis.
6. Guile, D. (2018). Work experience and VET: Insights from the connective typology and the recontextualization model. In G.-B. Wärvik, S. Choy & V. Lindberg (Eds.), *Integration of Vocational Education and Training Experiences Purposes, Practices and Principles* (pp. 41–62). Springer Nature Singapore
7. Guthrie, H. (2010). *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
8. Hager, P. (2012). Towards a new paradigm of vocational learning. In Ch. Winch & L. Clarke (Eds.), *Vocational Education: International Approaches, Developments and Systems* (pp. 105–117). Taylor & Francis.
9. Holstein, A., Prilop, Ch. N., Kleinknecht, M., & Weber, K. E. (2021). Innovative approaches for teacher professional development: Examples of blended, video- and coaching-based professional development programmes in Germany. In J. Chi-Kin Lee & T. Ehmke (Eds.), *Quality in Teacher Education and Professional Development: Chinese and German Perspectives* (pp. 287–301). Taylor & Francis.
10. Isaacs, T., Zara, C., Herbert, G., Coombs, S.J., & Smith, C. (2013). *Key Concepts in Educational Assessment*. SAGE Publications.



11. Kaleja, K., & Egetenmeyer, R. (2017). Internationalization in European vocational education and training. In K. Dempsey & L. T. Tran (Eds.), *Internationalization in Vocational Education and Training: Transnational Perspectives* (pp. 63–76). Springer International Publishing.
12. Kovalchuk, V. I., Maslich, S. V., & Movchan, L. H. (2023). Digitalization of vocational education under crisis conditions. *Educational Technology Quarterly*, 2023(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.55056/etq.49>
13. Kryvolapchuk, M. V. (2014). Zarubizhnyi dosvid stanovlennia ta rozvytku profesiino-tekhnicnoi osvity [Exploring the development of vocational education in foreign countries]. *Aktualni problemy derzhavnoho upravlinnia, pedahohiky ta psykholohii* [Current Issues in Public Administration, Pedagogy and Psychology], 1, 101–104.
14. Lakalla, P., & Lakalla, S. (2019). Finnish vocational education and training in transition. In M. Paksuniemi & P. Keskitalo (Eds.), *Introduction to the Finnish Educational System* (pp. 15–32). Brill.
15. Radkevych, V., Kravets, S., Herliand, T., Radkevych, O., & Kozak, A. (2021). Modern technologies in the development of professional competence in teachers from professional (vocational) education schools. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1840, Article 012041. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1840/1/012041>
16. Rauner, F., Heinemann, L., Maurer, A., & Haasler, B. (2012). *Competence development and assessment in TVET (COMET): Theoretical framework and empirical results*. Springer Netherlands.
17. Tran, L.T., & Le, T. T. (2017). *Teacher professional learning in international education: Practice and perspectives from the vocational education and training sector*. Springer International Publishing.
18. Zhou, Q., Diao, J., Wang, Yu., Chen, M., Yang, Ch., Li, M., & Zhang, T. (2023). Strategies for developing TVET teachers' professional competencies. In M. Li, Q. Zhou, X. Han & Y. Wang (Eds.), *Handbook of Technical and Vocational Teacher Professional Development in the Digital Age* (pp. 75–90). Springer Nature Singapore.