

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN THE CONDITIONS OF MILITARY REALITY: REGIONAL ASPECT

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of professional development of teachers in the conditions of military reality. The experience of the Kherson Academy of Continuing Education as a regional institution of postgraduate education is presented. The most significant changes that have taken place in the postgraduate education system over the past 5 years are: the mass transition of postgraduate pedagogical education institutions to distance learning, the intensive implementation of digital platforms and applications to support this learning, the introduction of artificial intelligence, and personnel shortages. Additionally, there is a pressing need to implement reforms.

The article defines the professional development of pedagogical staff, describes the main challenges faced by teachers in terms of their professional growth. The author also points out promising directions for improving the professional development of teachers at the regional level.

Keywords: professional development, challenges, opportunities, teaching staff.

DEZVOLTAREA PROFESIONALĂ A CADRELOR DIDACTICE ÎN CONDIȚII DE REALITATE MILITARĂ: ASPECT REGIONAL

Rezumat. În articol se tratează problema dezvoltării profesionale a cadrelor didactice în condițiile realității militare. Este prezentată experiența Academiei Kherson de Educație Continuă ca instituție regională de educație postuniversitară. Cele mai semnificative schimbări care au avut loc în sistemul de învățământ postuniversitar în ultimii 5 ani sunt: tranziția în masă a instituțiilor de învățământ pedagogic postuniversitar la învățământul la distanță, implementarea intensivă a platformelor și aplicațiilor digitale care să susțină această învățare, introducerea inteligenței artificiale și lipsa de personal. În plus, există o nevoie presantă de a implementa reforme.

În articol se definește dezvoltarea profesională a personalului pedagogic, se descrie principalele provocări cu care se confruntă cadrele didactice în ceea ce privește dezvoltarea lor profesională. De asemenea, autorul indică direcții promițătoare pentru îmbunătățirea dezvoltării profesionale a profesorilor la nivel regional.

Cuvinte cheie: dezvoltare profesională, provocări, oportunități, cadre didactice.

Today, Ukraine, more than ever before, feels an acute need for qualified teaching staff who strive for self-development and self-improvement, and who are able to implement key aspects of reforming the education sector. State policy in the field of education is aimed at ensuring continuous development of teachers. This is declared in a number of regulatory and legal documents: The Laws of Ukraine «On Education» (2017),

«On Higher Education» (2014), «On Comprehensive General Secondary Education» (2020), Concepts of the New Ukrainian School (2016), etc.

An important aspect of continuing education is postgraduate pedagogical education, which involves acquiring new competencies and improving previously acquired ones based on higher education, professional (vocational-technical) training, or specialist higher education and practical experience. This program is designed to create favorable conditions for the professional development of educators [1].

The events of the last five years, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, have led to fundamental changes in postgraduate education. Among these changes, the most significant include the mass transition of postgraduate pedagogical education institutions to distance learning, the intensive implementation of digital platforms and applications to support this learning, the introduction of artificial intelligence, and personnel shortages. Additionally, there is a pressing need to implement reforms. Currently, postgraduate education is in a state of constant search for effective, proactive responses to the challenges posed by the war. Within the national education system, it remains a central element capable of driving educational reform, particularly in general secondary education, as it is through postgraduate education that the professional development of teaching staff – the key drivers of this reform – is facilitated.

The Kherson Academy of Continuing Education, as a regional institution of postgraduate pedagogical education, implements all types of professional development defined by regulatory documents. In particular, these include training under the qualification improvement program, internships, and participation in seminars, workshops, training sessions, webinars, master classes, and more.

The training of students at the second and third educational and qualification levels includes the «Master» program in the specialty 073 «Management», with a specialization in «Educational Institution Management», and the «Doctor of Philosophy» program in the specialty 011 «Educational Pedagogical Sciences» in the field of knowledge 01 «Education/Pedagogy».

We understand the professional development of teachers as a complex concept. First, it involves the formation of the subject of professional activity. Second, it encompasses the acquisition of new competencies by the employee. Third, it includes training, retraining, and upgrading qualifications to perform new functions, tasks, and responsibilities for different positions [3].

Since February 24, 2022, teachers have faced unprecedented challenges. At the same time, these challenges have created new opportunities for their professional growth and development.

Among these challenges, in particular, are:

- unstable psychological state of pedagogical workers.
- permanent changes in the organization of the educational process caused by the war, including distance learning, mixed learning, the movement of students and teachers, unstable Internet access, and frequent power outages – all of which create additional obstacles for professional development.
- technical problems: Not everyone has access to reliable Internet and the necessary equipment for online learning.
- lack of funding: Many educational institutions face financial difficulties, limiting their ability to pay for courses, training, and other forms of professional development.
- implementation of the large-scale reform «New Ukrainian School» and constant changes in the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, leading to frequent shifts in the direction of innovation implementation.

Note that these are just the challenges our institution has faced; many more exist throughout Ukraine. At the same time, we recognize that challenges create opportunities, allowing us to rethink and overcome obstacles. Therefore, starting in September 2022, the academy resumed the educational process. During these two years, significant changes have occurred within our institution, enabling pedagogical workers in our region to pursue professional development in the future.

In 2023, for example, 5,323 teaching staff received advanced training at the academy, with 1,930 of them being teachers funded by the educational subvention from the state budget. In addition to planned professional development, many certified events take place at our institution. Overall, during the inter-attestation period in 2023, we conducted:

- 74 certified events, primarily scientific-practical and scientific-methodical seminars and training sessions, in which 4,327 participants took part.
- 34 seminars without issuing an academy certificate, along with more than 100 consultations and online meetings requested by regional educators, attended by 2,087 participants.

All these figures are significantly lower than pre-war data. However, it is important to note that much of the Kherson region is temporarily occupied, while active military operations are ongoing in the remaining areas.

Prospective areas of professional development of teachers in wartime are: psychological support, digital literacy, implementation of pedagogical innovations, inclusive education, media literacy and critical thinking. A bit more detail about each of these areas will follow.

Psychological support. Teachers, like all citizens, experience stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions, which can impact their ability to work effectively and develop professionally. Recognizing the current realities and the needs of those involved in the educational process, the academy places significant emphasis on providing psychological

support to pedagogical workers in the Kherson region. Courses and certified events on this topic are held every month at the academy. Programs such as «Psychological Stability and Steps to Recovery» and «Psychological Assistance and Emotional Support for Participants in the Educational Process» are just a few examples. During these training sessions, teachers learn not only methods for maintaining their mental health and overcoming stress but also how to provide psychological first aid to students and their parents.

The development of skills in using various digital tools and platforms is essential for organizing effective distance learning. Therefore, starting in 2020, even during the pandemic, the academy launched comprehensive courses to enhance digital literacy for teachers. In 2024, teachers will have the opportunity to take courses on the following topics:

- Digital Tools for Organizing Distance and Blended Learning
- Creating Educational Videos and Presentations for Lessons
- Modern Digital Data Visualization Tools
- Neural Networks in Education
- Protection of Children in the Digital Environment
- Artificial Intelligence in the Educational Process.

Inclusive education. Providing quality education to all students, regardless of their characteristics, is essential. The Kherson Regional Resource Center for the Support of Inclusive Education was established based on the academy. Its staff offers educational and methodological support for inclusive education, which includes:

- Supporting inclusive education in educational institutions.
- Enhancing the system for delivering educational services to children with special educational needs during wartime.
- Preparing pedagogical personnel to work with children with special educational needs in remote settings.

In 2023, four large educational and methodological seminars were held for pedagogical workers of inclusive classes (groups), special education teachers, specialists from the IRC, and teachers from educational institutions. A total of 383 staff members from inclusive resource centers, general secondary education institutions, and preschools with inclusive education received training certificates.

Critical thinking and media literacy. In Ukraine, there is an ongoing information war, making the development of skills in analyzing information and forming independent opinions crucial. During training, we emphasize techniques for recognizing propaganda and fostering critical thinking as essential, cross-cutting topics.

It is important to note that, in addition to courses and seminars, the academy supports the professional development of pedagogical workers through:

- creative groups

- schools of advanced pedagogical experience
- school of young teacher
- vocational school
- various competitions, for which the academy provides organizational and scientific-methodical support.

Participation in international projects and programs is a significant incentive for the professional development of teachers of Kherson Oblast. During 2023, the academy participated in the implementation of international projects: All-Ukrainian program of support for educational reforms in Ukraine «Democratic School»; National project on financial literacy; The Swedish-Ukrainian project «Supporting decentralization in Ukraine»; Study and differentiate: infomedia literacy (Ukrainian Press Academy); USAID program «Dream and act»; The program within the framework of the Ukrainian-Japanese project with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Ukraine «Strengthening the potential of practical psychologists of the education system»; The project «Development of the system of prevention and response to violence in educational institutions and increasing the resilience of adolescents» (UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and NGO «La Strada-Ukraine»); The UNICEF project together with the All-Ukrainian Foundation «Step by Step» on the topic «Psychological and pedagogical support of children, parents and teachers in emergency situations» and others.

As part of the British Council project in Ukraine, a teacher from the academy participated in the training program «Learning and Teaching in Difficult Times» for English language teachers in Krakow, Poland. Currently, three such courses for English language teachers have been held at the academy.

To exchange experiences and develop partnerships within the framework of the Czech-Ukrainian project «Support for the Restoration of Ukrainian Education», supported by the Transformational Cooperation Program of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, several educational visits were made by academy employees and teaching staff from educational institutions in the Kherson region to the Czech Republic throughout the year. These visits included programs for education managers focused on «Crisis Management», as well as for social pedagogues and psychologists aimed at supporting the integration of children into new schools, teams, and local communities (STRONG program).

Supervision is another important incentive for the professional development of teachers. We understand supervision as «a set of measures to provide professional support and assistance to teaching staff on a voluntary basis, which will contribute to the improvement of their professional activity and professional development» [2]. In October 2024, the academy plans to train 75 supervisors for basic secondary school (grades 5-9), who will provide professional support and assistance to teaching staff.

An important aspect of professional improvement is the need for information and awareness about available opportunities. Currently, the academy operates a website and a number of online platforms. In 2023, the Educational Hub of the Kherson region was launched – this is a portal that can be useful to everyone who is interested in education and upbringing and contains: informational materials in text, presentation and video formats; educational and language courses; psychological consultations; calendar of events with consolidated information on professional development opportunities for educators <https://sites.google.com/academy.ks.ua/eduhub/>.

To strengthen communication with educators, the academy organized the moderation of 15 professional communities on Facebook and other information resources, engaging over 3,000 participants.

The professional development of teachers during wartime is crucial. Despite the numerous challenges, there are still opportunities for growth and development. Through our collective efforts, we can ensure quality education for future generations. Prospective directions for enhancing the professional development of teachers at the academy include making courses even more convenient and practically oriented.

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