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## **PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION**

*The aim of the article is to point out the practical aspects of teachers' professional training for character education. It was found out that the increase in the importance of character education in the educational surrounding of the United States is mainly caused by the youth's moral illiteracy. The situation demands an appropriate training of future teachers in this field. We detected that section "Character Education" was introduced and added to the general university curriculum of the future teachers in a number of American universities. Except that, the importance of character education programs evaluation was noticed.*

*The article looks at the integration of particular character education elements peculiarities and new studying program development requirements which are based on structural and complex approach so as to be added to the general degree curriculum. The emphasis was also made on the fact that future teachers master their character education professional skills by learning and analyzing the level of students' moral education, as well as practical application of their knowledge.*

*Practical experience of character education component integration was extensively studied on the example of bachelor degree programs at Boston University and St. Francis University. Major ways of character education training for future teachers were determined: university value-oriented education, service-learning and character education itself; adding term paper topics which are directly related to character education and its implementation at schools; aiming faculty activity at the help for school districts and communities in the process of introducing character education in schools.*

*The article states the goals of Character education-oriented courses: to identify the philosophical and psychological foundations of the character education; to compare and contrast pedagogical peculiarities that characterize each of the value-based learning approaches; to provide the examples of effective forms, methods and educational activities for classroom use, to provide teachers with educational materials that can be used to list the values and character traits in the school curriculum. It was revealed that the microclimate in the class is rather important; a specially designed course 'The course 'Discipline and Classroom Management Techniques in the Inclusionary Classroom' that is devoted to the importance of creating a friendly and caring atmosphere in the class was reviewed.*

**Key words:** *professional training, character education, values, future teachers, preservice teachers, character education courses.*

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## **ПРАКТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ ПІДГОТОВКИ ВЧИТЕЛІВ ДО ЗДІЙСНЕННЯ ВИХОВАННЯ ХАРАКТЕРУ**

*Статтю присвячено аналізу практичних аспектів підготовки вчителів до здійснення виховання характеру. Вивчено досвід американських університетів, які інтегрували компонент «виховання характеру» в навчальний план підготовки майбутніх педагогів. Також виокремлено основні способи інтегрування елементів виховання характеру в програму підготовки майбутніх учителів: загальноуніверситетський курс на виховання характеру і практичне навчання; додавання до переліку тем курсових робіт, есе й довгострокових проєктів, таких, які безпосередньо пов'язані зі здійсненням виховання характеру в навчальних закладах; участь майбутніх учителів у розробці та вдосконаленні програм «Виховання характеру». Детально проаналізовано мету й завдання академічних курсів, які присвячені вихованню характеру.*

**Ключові слова:** *виховання характеру, майбутні вчителі, вчителі-асистенти, курси, зорієнтовані на виховання характеру, професійна підготовка, цінності.*

**Introduction.** Today's military conflict in Ukraine draws attention not only to the political or economic issues, which are considered to be of a great importance, but also it provides us with the chance to look at our youth more closely and analyze what future they bring. Today we must admit that not all the representatives of Ukrainian youth, particularly students, are patriotic citizens we could be proud of. A considerable number of teenagers are not Ukrainian-oriented and their moral values are substituted with the well-being and financial stability ones. Most students dream about leaving their Motherland in search of a better place to develop and live.

The situation is related to moral decline among youngsters. Regrettably, it is proved to take place in other countries likewise, even in such highly-developed countries as the USA, for instance. The numerous cases of cruelty at schools reported almost every single day. Consequently, it catches the attention of the domestic and foreign scholars who strive to look into this acute matter thoroughly and provide us with the solutions. In order to manage this insoluble problem, it is advisable to address to the world's experience. American scholars have advanced knowledge in the sphere of moral and civic education which helps to bring up decent citizens. In particular, character education is one of the working ways for that. We consider the experience of the USA extremely valuable and worth studying. These days character education is an inevitable part of American studying and educational process, accordingly, it is vital for us to understand how the teachers' professional training is completed.

**Analysis of relevant research.** Character education and its realization have become the objective of a great number of researches and scientific articles. The matters of teacher's social behavior models are investigated by R. Weissberg and M. Greenberg; the lack of character education constituent in future teacher's curriculum was discussed by M. Fine; teacher's influence on child's general social, emotional and cognitive development was studied by R. Coles, J. Cohen and L. Nucci. However, practical aspects of future teachers' training for character education were not analyzed thoroughly enough.

**Aim of the study** is to study practical aspects of future teachers' training for character education and analyze the practical experience using the example of American universities.

**Presentation of the results.** Regarding the increase in the importance of character education in the educational space of the United States, appropriate training of teachers in this field in higher education establishments became significant. Consequently, the section

"Character Education" was introduced and added to the general university curriculum of the future teachers. Except that, the importance of the character education studying programs evaluation was emphasized. A. Milson reckons that there is a glaring discrepancy between poor character education professional preparation and rather high expectations of the state authorities and local school districts. The teachers are expected to be good at character education, although they do not receive proper training to that. Meanwhile, another American scholar M. Berkowitz claims that there exist a number of other difficulties within the process of character education training. The integration of particular character education elements and new studying program development need structural and complex approach to be added to the main degree curriculum and meet general requirements. Mainly teachers' training includes studying brief aspects of person's moral and personal development only within the academic courses "Educational Psychology" and "Developmental Psychology". A rather complicated situation arose with the teachers' preparation in urban areas, where there is extremely high criminal rate and a wide range of other social problems that are not covered by them. The training of future teachers should include value-oriented courses to improve the situation. In this regard, much attention is paid to the teacher's role in urban schools where there a lot of problematic students (Goodlad, 1990).

According to the poll conducted by the Phi Delta Kappa (a professional educational organization) three quarters of the respondents mentioned that the lack of moral discipline at school is a very serious issue that directly affects the quality of education. The manifestation of student's antisocial behavior can be reduced or eliminated with the help of a series of measures, in particular, character education-aimed programs and positive social models of behavior following teacher's example. At the same time, it was found that teachers do not have comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical skills to prevent students' deviant behavior (Weissberg et al., 1998). Nonetheless, it was found that teachers do not have sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skills to prevent deviant behavior of students. M. Fine notes that the reason is the lack of particular courses in the future teachers' training curriculum that would instruct the students in the field. Regarding this matter the future teachers' training in character education encourages higher educational establishments to change the current situation, distinguishing character education as the major constituent of preservice teachers' training. According to K. Whitmer and T. Forbes' findings in 1997, Simpson College in Redding (California)

enriched their curriculum with the character education courses (Whitmer, 1997: 110–112).

Another bright example is University of Illinois in Chicago, which is widely known as one of the major American universities aimed at training future teachers of Chicago. The university received the Character Education Partnership grant in order to design a special curriculum emphasizing character education peculiarities and its influence on students' social, emotional and cognitive development. It was also pointed out that teachers are responsible for youth's development. In such a case the improvements mentioned, will provide the advanced training of future teachers whose behavior can become a model to be followed by the students. Moreover, that is bound to develop an ethical, caring and responsible personality who is ready to take part in all spheres of the adult life (Stallions, 2001).

Continuing growth of the youngsters' moral illiteracy and ethical unawareness caused the initiative of character education integration in the training program of the future teachers.

Barry University professors (the USA) M. Stallions and K. Yeatts in cooperation with the The Connected Learning Community Center designed the curriculum based on the innovational approach including joint work and responsibilities of educational establishments, families, communities and teachers' training curriculum designers.

The following goals were set (ESOL Annual Report, 1999):

- to develop additional methods of effective character education for preservice teachers, in-service teachers and students' families;

- to improve and diversify the content of character education studying materials;

- to ensure non-stop learning and teaching including community and family representatives;

- to contribute to group character education training.

Future teachers master their character education professionalism by learning and analyzing the level of moral education, as well as practical demonstration of their knowledge. That, in its turn, enables students to shape their lifestyle, distinguish main constituents of character education process which demonstrates the knowledge and the understanding of moral, physical, cognitive and cultural development of the students. It is considered that such knowledge is gained through completing various projects, writing term papers and carrying out scientific researches that are included in the curriculum, the practical value of which is to apply theoretical knowledge in real life situations in the future teacher's job.

Scientists D. Narvaez and D. Lapsley (University of Notre Dame, Indiana) reckon that neglecting character education training can result in inevitable destructive consequences (Narvaez, 2008). The educators suggested using two approaches in teachers' training – “minimum and maximum” ones. The first one means combining the most prominent methodological aspects and character education basics. Meanwhile, the “maximum” – states that there are enough modern ways of training future teachers that already include character education in them.

Taking into consideration the real experience on how some American universities implemented character education in the studying process of the future teachers and their curricula, it is necessary to analyze bachelor degree programs at Boston University and St. Francis University.

First year of primary teachers students' study at Boston University starts with an obligatory course ‘Cultural Foundations for Educators’ (CC101). The lecturer includes in the syllabus the tasks related to the analysis of important terms and notions by Aristotle, such as: ‘intellectual virtue’, ‘moral virtue’, ‘friendship’; the ways of developing and improving these qualities are directly connected with the teacher's responsibility concerning pupil's development as a personality. Apart lectures, disputes, seminars and other educational activities, the students have a long-term project task. At the end of the first semester future preservice primary teachers design their own fragments of the lessons for secondary students including character education elements; afterwards, they conduct the lessons using their notes at Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Bohlin et al., 2002: 12, 14).

The second studying semester begins with one of the obligatory courses ‘ED100’ that is based on the previous professional practical training. This course was designed by the university professor K. Bohlin so as to enable students to learn about the advantages, challenges and duties of the teacher. The other matter included in the course is the ability to demonstrate future teachers that moral awareness and responsibility is faced by the teacher every single day while working. Introductory lectures are devoted to the history, evolution and the content of character education. Detailed information on the following matters is included in the course: teacher's responsibility in terms of moral and character education in state school; teacher's influence on the personality development; intellectual value of Ethics approaches; moral and positive atmosphere maintaining; practical advice for a preservice teacher how to help students develop some character traits within core subject studying.

The studying process of the second year students begins with the course 'The Social and Civic Context of Education' (ED 410/412) which is aimed at social, political and economic matters; the particular attention is drawn to social responsibility, education equality and studying the notion 'character education' in the wider context. Almost before the graduation the students have teaching internship at schools. In order to have effective practical experience the University also offers optional course 'Elementary Education Methods'. The goal of which is to study various polls data and be able to use them while integrating character education into core school subjects (Bohlin et al., 2002:14).

One more example of the university we would like to analyze is St. Francis University in Joliet, Illinois. The administration of Faculty of Pedagogics integrates character education into curriculum in three different ways: 1) university value-oriented education, service-learning and character education itself; 2) adding term paper topics which are directly related to character education and its implementation at schools; 3) aiming faculty activity to help for school districts and communities in the process of introducing character education at schools. The University has always worked on the questions related to ethics, values and students' civic active position. In order to have it as one of the key areas of work, in 1999 'Values 99 Committee' was established to explore the values that characterize the mission of a school such as 'respect', 'compassion', 'honesty', 'helping others' and 'service learning'. Having studied these aspects they were made the compulsory constituents of the curriculum by adding them to the term paper list of topics (University of St. Francis, 2016).

Character education is the part of a conceptual framework of the Faculty of Pedagogics including students' understanding, service-learning and self-determination throughout the entire period of study. In general, the courses are devoted to studying of ethics, moral development, the responsibility of the teacher as a 'character educator', while extracurricular activities induce community involvement and community engagement in the educational process. There is also the course 'History and Philosophy of Education' which is obligatory for the pedagogical faculty students during the first semester. It studies the content and historiography of character education. The teacher focuses on the history of character education implementation in state schools further proceeding to its practical application, dividing the course into two parts:

– express studying – analyzing the role of philosophical views (Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus of Rotter-

dam, Calvin, Russo, Locke, Jefferson, Mann, Montessori, Dubois) in the history of ethics and education. At this stage students work in the groups of four, create the presentation on one of the main historical figures in the field of education which is then demonstrated during the lesson;

methodology – studying the common curriculum problems related to character education integration in all types of school activities used by the teacher. Having studied various methods, students write an article that highlights their own philosophy of learning regarding the elaborated theoretical material, provide their own examples and ideas of character education implementation while working with students in the future (Bohlin et al., 2002: 16–17).

Within the obligatory courses 'Educational Psychology' and 'The Psychology and Development of the Middle School Child' students first learn the theories of moral development by J. Piaget and L. Kohlberg and after that they receive individual task to make their own moral dilemma up for the particular age group. As it is mentioned in the syllabus of another course 'Teaching Methodology' – the students need to create a thematic block integrating character education principles into it according to the plan given. The course 'Discipline and Classroom Management Techniques in the Inclusionary Classroom' is devoted to the importance of creating a friendly and caring atmosphere in the class. Students also have the opportunity to attend the lessons of experienced in-service teachers who are skillful to integrate character education while teaching core subjects. If the students attended the necessary number of classes and passed all the assignments they are allowed to start their internship. They are sent to the local state schools where they apply the character education theoretical knowledge and ideas, design the lesson materials and use them in a real classroom during the lessons. Every student has a mentor teacher for more effective cooperation with children, parents and school (Bohlin et al., 2002), University of St. Francis, 2016).

Except future teachers' training the university offers a one-week intensive advanced summer training course for the professional development. The main objective is to familiarize in-service teachers with the basic aspects that will help to teach character while studying any school subject; to teach them how to create comfortable and friendly moral climate in the classroom and in the whole school. The program of the course aims to achieve the following tasks: to identify the philosophical and psychological foundations of the character education; to compare and contrast pedagogical peculiarities that characterize each of the value-based learning approach;



to provide the examples of effective forms, methods and educational activities for classroom use; to provide teachers with educational materials that can be used to list the values and character traits in the school curriculum.

To provide the teachers with the possibility to share their practical experience there is particularly allocated time for presenting their own methodological recommendations concerning specific moral values integration into the subject curriculum they teach. In 2002, the University Center for Character Education initiated the annual closing conference after the intensive summer school training course. All the teachers who took the course and the Faculty of Pedagogics of St. Francis University members are invited to share their practical knowledge and impressions.

The University pays a lot of attention to social involvement during the future teachers' training. In this regard, starting in 2002, there was an obligatory requirement for the service-learning constituent in an introductory course on pedagogy 'Teaching in a Diverse Society' (Elementary Education (K-9), 2016). The university also has an optional communi-

ty-based service-learning program that sends students to local school as Junior Achievement Instructors to assist students in their studying.

**Conclusion.** The analysis of the researches of American scientists, the study of future teachers' curricula and the pedagogical higher educational institutions experience in character education integration in the training process allows us to argue that there are insufficient resources to prepare a teacher for character education. Consequently, we found out that there is not enough character education practice within training programs for future teachers. It was also revealed that there is lack of character education in most educational institutions, so the teachers are not competent enough in this matter and while working with students they can only use their own knowledge and experience. Two approaches of character education integration during students' training whose major is pedagogy have been analyzed – the minimum- and the maximum-approach. The practical experience of the Boston and St. Francis University regarding the ways of character education curriculum design is studied.

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