Topical Issues of Forming Professional Competences in the Training of Bachelors of Tourism at the Far Eastern Federal University

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Abstract: The higher vocational education in Russia has moved to new education standards. Essentially the changes that take place in the higher education establishments boil down to forming professional qualities in a graduate based on competence approach. The training of a competent specialist should be characterized by integrated nature, ensure uniform standards, take into consideration regional component of education. At the Far Eastern Federal University the implementation of the basic education program in “Tourism” degree can serve as a reference of the said approach.

Key words: Higher vocational education • Federal state educational standard • Basic education program • Competence • Competence approach • Common cultural and professional competences

INTRODUCTION

The reforms affected all the aspects of the modern Russian society. It can be referred in full to the higher vocational education system as well. Starting from 2009 so called third generation standards or Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) were introduced into the higher vocational education system in Russia. They differ from the previous education standards in the fact that the academic activities are aimed at forming common cultural and professional competences of the students. Thus, the competence approach, as a way to train personnel for different economy fields, has entered the implementation stage.

The new approach led to appearance of publications covering wide range of issues in the said problem domain. One of the most prominent include the works by V.I. Baydenko, I.A. Zimniaya, M. Filatova [1-3].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article uses comparative approach (method). Based on that the differences between the requirements to the organization of the educational process in compliance with the education standards, dedicated to forming knowledge and skills (the state education standard of the second generation) and competences (the federal state educational standard of the third generation) are identified. As the target of research the education program for bachelors of tourism training was adopted. The subject of research are professional competences, formed by educational subjects of the basic education program aimed at training bachelors of tourism at the Far Eastern Federal University.

RESULTS

It should be mentioned that even before the transition of the vocational education system to the new standards, the conceptual framework used in the theory and practice of organising the educational process in higher education institutions was substantially expanded. These are the concepts representing the essence of the changes taking place in the modern education (“competence”, “expertise”, “key expertises”, “competence approach”). Their active use stemmed from the discussions and publications of foreign and national researchers about the ways of upgrading the higher vocational education [1-8].
The analysis of the publications on competence and expertise (V.I. Baydenko, I.A. Zimniaya, M. Filatova, etc.) shows that in the national educational practice it is customary to differentiate between the concepts of “competence” and “expertise”.

The authors of the article use the definitions and representations offered by the academician of the Russian Academy of Education I. A. Zimniaya as interpretation of the concepts of competence and expertise: "Competences are some inner potential hidden psychological new formations (knowledge, ideas, action programs (algorithms), sets of values and relationships), which are subsequently revealed in expertises of a person as their actual, practical demonstration" [2]. The same author understands expertise as the measure of educational success of an individual, which is demonstrated in the actions of the individual in professionally ans socially significant situations [2].

The competence-based nature of the new education standards is oriented towards acquisition of certain competences, which is regarded as a result of the education. The competence approach appears as modeling the results of education and representing them as the norms to evaluate the educational process quality. The competences are mastered by living through the experience of activity. Thus, competences and activity are interrelated. The competences are formed as a result of active performance on part of the students. The educational process turns into process of acquiring knowledge and skills in conjunction with the experience of activity aimed at mastering professionally and socially significant competences. The competence approach in education requires the modification of the whole framework of higher education, including the teaching methods, evaluation standards and a means to ensure the quality of education.

The competence approach which is being implemented in the higher vocational education system is characterized by the following features:

- Developing the students’ ability to solve problems in different spheres and kinds of activity independently based on social experience, the students’ own experience being regarded as an element of the latter;
- The education content represents didactically adapted social experience of solving cognitive, worldview, moral, political and other issues;
- Organization of the educational process consists in creating conditions aimed at forming the experience of resolving cognitive, communicative, organizational and moral problems independently by the students;
- The results of education are evaluated based on the analysis of the knowledge level achieved by the students at a certain education stage [3].

The new educational standards differentiate between common cultural and professional competences. Common cultural competences are directly related to the skill of putting knowledge to use, professional ones represent the ability of the graduate to operate in a certain professional field. V.I. Baydenko, mentioning different classifications of competences, believes that the most significant one is their breakdown into common (universal, key, transprofessional) and domain-specific (professional). Given the changeability and unpredictability at the modern labour markets, common competences are of paramount importance. They serve as a basis or fundamental principle to build on new domain-specific (professional) competences in case of changing a job profile. Professional competences are just as important.

In the national psychological and pedagogical literature professional competence is regarded as quality, characteristic or state of a specialist, which ensures his physical, mental and moral correspondence to the requirements of a certain profession. Professional competence is understood as a set of professional knowledge and skills, as well as of variants of professional performance [1].

Let’s review some issues of implementing the competence approach, in terms of forming professional competences while training personnel for tourism activity. The Federal State Education Standard of the higher vocational education for the degree in Tourism (100400.62) was approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on October 28, 2009, put into effect starting from January 01, 2011. It makes provisions for awarding bachelor qualification (degree) to a graduate based on the results of mastering basic education program.

The requirements stipulated in the Federal State Education Standard for the degree in tourism identify common cultural competences (16) and professional competences (14), a total of 30, as the results of mastering the basic education program (Chapter V). Formation of the said competences ensures that a graduate is
The structure of the basic education program includes three tracks (nonscience and socioeconomic; natural-science; professional track). Every track has basic and variable part and is oriented at forming certain competences (see Table 1). Thus a specific outline for the educational process as a whole and for every educational subject is defined.

Each track serves its purpose. The subjects of the arts track (philosophy, history, Russian language and culture of speech, foreign language, etc.) place an emphasis on the formation of common competences through the educational process (9 competences, or 64% of their total number).

The educational subjects of the professional track make just as important contribution to the formation of the universal competences, that is 2/3 of their total number. At the same time it is impossible to overstress the importance of the said track in formation of the specific (professional) competences, as they amount to 12, or 75% out of their total number. Out of the total number of competences 70% accrue to the professional track.

Modest effective period and, therefore, little experience in implementing basic education programs of the Federal State Education Standard, as well as lack of bachelors’ classes, trained under the standards of the third generation, nevertheless allow shaping some estimates of the educational innovations with regards to formation of professional competences.

- The Federal State Education Standard, which represents a certain outline (model) of the educational process, holds the potential for being filled with more profound functional content, for example, subject-oriented or consistent with region specific features of the labour market. The educational subjects of the variable part of the educational program can serve this purpose. The competences, formed by variable subjects while keeping in line with the standard, will be regionally “tinged”.

- The competences specified for each track of the educational program are tackled by the basic subjects in the first place, provided that each track is characterized by a certain structure of competences. It appears that the variable educational subjects of each track with their academic framework shall ensure efficient formation of correspondent competences and function as supporting structure.

- Similar tasks can be tackled by “clusters” of educational subjects, marked by intersubject communications. This ensues from the very nature of competence which consists in its integral character (formation of one and the same competence may require efforts of more than one educational subject, occasionally coming under different tracks).

It is worth mentioning that at the Far Eastern Federal University the practice of bachelors of tourism training had taken shape earlier than the third generation standards were adopted. Thus, in 2008 the first classes under the education program 100200.62 “Tourism” were formed. The implementation of the program was based on the curricula of the second generation (approved from 2005). The standard did not contain the competence aspect, it guided the students towards acquiring knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, it allowed elaborating the educational program the content and structure of which proved to be useful in transition to the new education standards for higher vocational education at the Far Eastern Federal University. In particular, the correlation between the graduate training and the requirements of the labour market was ensured which due to cultural and historic, socioeconomic and geographical reasons is characterized by pronounced regional peculiarities. The region’s specific demand for the personnel of the tourism and hospitality industry was taken into account while drawing up new curricula and implementing competence approach in the graduate training. The foundation for this was laid not only by the market characteristics but also by the provisions stipulated by law for federal universities [10].

It should be mentioned that the law itself guides higher vocational education towards implementation of education programs taking into account regional, national and ethnocultural specifics. For the Far Eastern Federal University its position in Asia Pacific region (APAC) serves as an important regional aspect of the education

Table 1: The structure of the basic education program 100400.62 Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>CC %</th>
<th>PC %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Nonscience and socioeconomic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Natural-science</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Professional</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CC – common cultural competences
PC – professional competences
strategy. This is the most dynamic center of the world economy. The general social and economic progress is accompanied with vigorous growth of tourism. At present the share of the APAC in the international tourism makes 1/5 considering that in the middle of XX century it was 1%. The main partners of the Far Eastern regions of Russia in the tourism industry are China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines. These countries belong to a different civilization domain, to regions and types, contrasting with the Far East of Russia. At present code and content of the competence (common cultural or the share of the APAC in the international tourism professional) targeted by each educational subject. It is to make 1/5 considering that in the middle of XX century be recalled that the competence codes in the Federal State Education Standard are identified only for the subjects of the basic part. It appears that to keep the educational process at the top level and as consistent with the new requirements, working curricula for the educational subjects of the variable part should contain some «marking», that is not only the codes for competences, but also specification of their scope in terms of regionally significant bachelor training.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, a number of competences having high professional significance for the training of bachelors of tourism may be shaped by several subjects characterized by intersubject communications. In the curriculum of the basic educational program for Tourism this covers the subjects of “Geography” (natural sciences track, basic part) and «The culture of the APAC countries» (non-science and socioeconomic track, variable part). Both educational subjects contribute significantly to formation of both common cultural competences and professional ones. Among the common cultural competences it is worthwhile singling out the following: CC-1 – ability for intellectual, cultural, moral support of the subject was ensured as well (teaching materials, textbooks and study guides).

During the period of transition to implementation of competence approach the training of tourism industry personnel at the Far Eastern Federal University maintains the continuity of education programs in the first place, in the second place the regional aspect of the training remains unchanged, notwithstanding the fact that the new education programs while keeping the basic part do not provide for singling out the regional one. The functions of expanding and deepening the knowledge and skills are passed over to the variable (specialized) part, defined by the higher educational institution [9; p.7].

During the transition period of the higher vocational education in general and tourist education in particular, aspects of methodology, especially development of teaching materials, comprising the curricula of educational subjects, textbooks, study guides and materials for monitoring and testing take on enormous significance. The elaboration of such teaching materials in general is not something innovative. Nevertheless, some elements appear for the first time owing to the introduction of competence technologies. For instance, specifying the code and content of the competence (common cultural or professional) targeted by each educational subject. It is to be recalled that the competence codes in the Federal State Education Standard are identified only for the subjects of the basic part. It appears that to keep the educational process at the top level and as consistent with the new requirements, working curricula for the educational subjects of the variable part should contain some «marking», that is not only the codes for competences, but also specification of their scope in terms of regionally significant bachelor training.
sources to develop tourism product, targeted for the tourists from the APAC countries, as well as for Russian tourists visiting Asia Pacific region (this specification can be defined as subcompetence level).

From the same perspective other professional competences or their parts should be made more specific. PC-2 – ability to process and interpret data (about natural, cultural, historical, socioeconomic, political and other specifics of the APAC countries), necessary to carry out development activities in tourism. PC-4 – willingness to implement projects in tourism industry (targeted for the tourists from China, the Republic of Korea, Japan and other APAC countries). PC-11 – ability to build effective communication with the consumers of tourism product (representing the APAC countries, taking into consideration the peculiarities of the national character and mentality). Likewise, PC-12 – ability to arrange the process of servicing a customer, meaning, in the first place, a tourist from the countries which visit the Far Eastern regions of Russia most frequently and willingly, that is China, the Republic of Korea, Japan. By way of conclusion it should be mentioned that the maximum potential for the two above subjects to influence the formation of competences is centered in such kinds of professional activity as development and service (comprising 1/3 of all professional competences). While developing tourism product the knowledge serving as a foundation for the ability for choosing tourist destination, substantiating the route, defining its characteristics take on special significance. This is the knowledge about natural diversity, ethnic identity, way of living of different nations, specific character of their socioeconomic development. The service component in the bachelors’ of tourism professional activity under the conditions of the regional tourism market shall definitely require knowledge and skills of communication with bearers of different cultural values and traditions. These are actually the tasks set for the subjects “The culture of the APAC countries” and “Geography”, that is to expand and deepen the knowledge about the diversity of the world, on the one hand, to outline the concept of its specific features as applied to the most dynamic tourist region in the world.

REFERENCES