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## IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON THE IMPROVING OF TEACHERS' TRAINING QUALITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

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*This article analyses the state of education in the Netherlands during recent decades to define the main reforms which led to growth of Dutch's proficiency according to the European ratings. The rapid increasing of English speaking people in the Netherlands caused an interest to educational approaches which have provided the high level of EL proficiency. The author shows positive role of connections between different stages of Dutch education, links between educational levels and employment. Much attention is given to the key components based on the formation of competencies necessary for successful professional realisation. This article outlines the peculiarities of secondary and higher education and the ways of teachers' training for different types of schools. The article presents definite interest to cultivating of the ability of new progressive teacher to respond to the recent challenges, which require the development of critical thinking and readiness to apply the innovative approaches which are relevant for democratic education. Selective approach of transferring between primary and secondary education is also described. The author points out the meaning of a binary Dutch higher education system for a distinction which is made between research oriented education in order to improve the level of training. It is emphasized a great diversity in Dutch education and the main drawback which can occur in teacher's training and the impact of university activity on quality of EL teachers training. The main steps which showed effectiveness in Dutch educational system defined in this article are as follows: consistent links between school stages, types of education and employment; support of common recommendations introduced by European Union countries; openness and free access to different resources; participation in European ratings; special attention to teachers' training, salaries, and courses for requalification. Positive Dutch experience could be treated like preferable to follow for Ukrainian education.*

*Key words: educational reforms, international ratings, stage of education, teachers' training development, value of knowledge and skills.*

*У статті аналізується стан освіти в Нідерландах протягом останніх десятиліть та визначення основних реформ, які призвели до зростання рівня володіння англійською мовою голландців, згідно з даними, що відображено у європейських рейтингах. Швидке зростання кількості англомовних громадян в*

*Нідерландах викликало інтерес до освітніх підходів, які забезпечили високий рівень знань у сфері англомовної комунікації. Автор вказує на позитивну роль зв'язків між різними етапами голландської освіти, зв'язками між рівнями освіти та працевлаштуванням майбутніх учителів. Велика увага приділяється ключовим компонентам, що базуються на формуванні компетенцій, необхідних для успішної професійної реалізації. Ця стаття окреслює особливості середньої та вищої освіти та способи навчання викладачів англійської мови різних типів шкіл. У статті виражений значний інтерес до формування здатності нового прогресивного вчителя реагувати на сучасні виклики, які потребують розвитку критичного мислення та готовності застосовувати інноваційні підходи, співвідносні з демократичною освітою. Охарактеризовано також селективний підхід переходу між початковою і середньою освітою. Автор вказує на значення бінарної системи вищої освіти в Нідерландах, яка відокремлює науково-орієнтовану освіту з метою підвищення рівня підготовки вчителів англійської мови. Підкреслюється значна варіативність в голландській освіті та її головний недолік, який може мати місце в підготовці майбутніх учителів та вплив діяльності університету на якість підготовки викладачів з англійської мови. Основні кроки, які продемонстрували свою ефективність у розвитку системи освіти Нідерландів, визначені у цій статті, полягають у наступному: послідовність зв'язків між шкільними етапами, рівнями освіти та працевлаштуванням; дотримання спільних освітніх рекомендацій, встановлених країнами Європейського Союзу; відкритість та вільний доступ до необхідних ресурсів; участь у європейських рейтингах; особлива увага до підготовки викладачів, визначення належного рівня зарплат і курсів для підвищення професійної кваліфікації. Позитивний голландський досвід можна визначити як пріоритетний для наслідування в реформуванні української освіти.*

*Ключові слова: освітні реформи, міжнародні відносини, підготовка вчителів, освітні рівні, знання та навички.*

## **Introduction**

The development of education is fast becoming a key instrument in a community for cultivating modern society and should occupy a privilege position among the areas of its functioning. A primary concern of educational development is to use all possible opportunities to make the progress the most effective and harmonious in close connection with other spheres of social life. This is also the reason why it is so important to activate educational processes by improving them along all levels of education from primary to adult one.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in reforming of education in Ukraine. There is an urgent need to teach a new generation of foreign language teachers who can provide radically other educational approaches. The first of the key components of the formula for refreshing schools in our country is the new content of education which is based on the formation of competencies necessary for successful professional realisation. This component was defined among the main principles of the concept «The New Ukrainian School» of 27. 10. 2016. In the State Standard for

Basic and Comprehensive Secondary Education and in the Law of Ukraine «General Secondary Education» (2011) the system of teaching foreign languages is mentioned as an opportunity to apply the communicative approach of language acquisition as an important means of intercultural communication. In addition it is noted that there is a great importance of students' acquaintance with the culture of nations whose languages are studied together with the knowing their own national culture.

Sectoral standards of higher education emphasize the relevant goals of high education and vocational training according to the qualified characteristics of a university graduate. It determines, firstly, the place of a specialist in the structure of the state economy branches and the requirements to his/her competence, secondly, other socially important qualities, thirdly, the system of functions production and typical tasks of activity and skills for their realisation. Higher education sector needs to address the issue of the requirements, standards, values that should be given to students alongside their new knowledge and skills.

Thus, modern society requires specialists who are able to adapt quickly to the new technological inventions. Teachers of new generation should have the ability to respond to the recent challenges, which require the development of critical thinking and readiness to apply the innovative approaches that are considered as main aim of democratic education. The European educational space, which can be definitely considered as a preferable example for Ukraine to follow, increases interest to the education of other countries that have succeeded in their reforms.

Education of teachers in different countries has been studied by many Ukrainian researchers: I. Biletska, Ya. Bondaruk (USA), I. Zaharova, L. Smirnova (Poland), S. Stavkova (Canada), Yu. Muzychenko, A. Sokolova (Great Britain), A. Roliak (Denmark), O. Avksentieva (France), S. Hryniuk (Finland), Ye. Protsko (Belgium), K. Kravchenko (German), etc. Several studies have examined school education in the countries of the European Union and have been carried out with the aim to compare benefits and problems of recent reforms in the mentioned countries (O. Zabolotna, O. Lokshyna, etc).

Teachers' training is a major area of interest within the field of European Union education, whereas only highly qualified teachers can fulfil ambitious ways of development in school policy. The past thirty years have been characterized by increasingly rapid advances in the school cooperation for working out common recommendations. In one of such document «Improving Competences for the 21-st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools» of 2008 the Commission proposes an agenda for cooperation, in three areas:

- a focus on giving all pupils the competences they need for life. This includes: increasing levels of reading literacy and numeracy; reinforcing learning-to-learn skills; and modernising curricula, learning materials, teacher training, and assessment accordingly;
- a commitment to provide high quality learning for every student. This includes: generalising pre-school education; improving equity in school systems; reducing early school leaving; and improving support within mainstream schooling for students with special needs;

- improving the quality of teachers and school staff. This includes: higher quality teacher education; more effective teacher recruitment; and help for school leaders to focus on improving learning [1].

Among the countries which are in the interest of our study are the Netherlands (Kingdom of the Netherlands), which is considered one of the founders of the European Union and has high educational standards. In addition, according to the English Proficiency Index (EF EPI), annually conducted by the international organization «English First», for three years (2014--2016), this country is ranked among the top three leaders.

The foregoing pages approved the necessity of studying and introducing the Netherlands experience in the future foreign language teachers training with the aim of approaching Ukrainian national education to European and world tendencies.

Necessity of open communicative society in a global environment is fluent speaking of several foreign languages. It is important for foreign language teacher to understand himself and enable his students to understand the importance of mastering the necessary skills of using foreign languages in the international business, economic, cultural and secular environment in order to overcome linguistic barriers in everyday communication. Among the main reasons for the popularization of learning foreign languages there is the need to meet the expectations of getting successful employment and career development. As the result, these opportunities can be used in any field of society not only in Ukraine but also abroad.

Well-developed countries of the world have already realized the need to change the minds on the level of learning, teaching and using of foreign languages, because the need for language proficiency is a proven factor in modern life. According to the results of the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) ratings, the Netherlands has a positive experience in raising the level of education among its population in general and the English proficiency particularly. Due to the International Association for the Assessment of Educational Achievement (IEA) more than 90% of Dutch speak the language of international communication. Such a large percentage of the population who speak English, while having Dutch as the official language, gives reason to believe that the high level of teaching foreign languages in this country is worth to be investigated.

The Dutch educational system operates rather effectively because of successful subordination to high educational standards of qualified teachers' training at all levels of education – from elementary to higher one. This success is conditioned by the continuity between its stages. Namely, the primary school system is provided with a well-organized curriculum that enables pupils to master all the necessary knowledge and skills that will be demanded at the next stage of studying.

After effective reforms the Netherlands educational system consists of 8 years of primary education, 4, 5 or 6 years of secondary education (depending on the type of school) and 2 to 6 years of higher education (depending on the type of education and the specialisation). Both public and private institutions exist at all levels of the education system; the private institutions are in most cases based on religious or ideological principles [3].

The system of pupils' professional abilities defining at the early stage of studying is absolutely extraordinary peculiarity for Ukraine. Such «selective» approach of transferring between primary and secondary education causes a great interest. Moreover, rather unusual for Ukrainian school system is program that gives opportunity for pupils of the last year of primary education to select a type of secondary education. This choice is made on the basis of a recommendation from their school, their own preference and in many cases a national test known as the *Citotoets*. Dutch pupils have 2 options to choose from: general secondary education (algemeen voortgezet onderwijs, HAVO or VWO) or preparatory secondary vocational education (beroeps gericht voortgezet onderwijs, VMBO) [3].

The most surprising aspect of Dutch selective system is the opportunity for pupils to repeat the course if it is necessary. After repeatedly taking selective test, the pupil has additional opportunities in choosing a direction in secondary school. The wide structure of these schools is set by the government and The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. They are also responsible for a large extent with the purpose of the financing of the education system. It defines the general education policy and specifies the admission requirements, structure and objectives of the education system on general lines.

Secondary education is intended for children in the age group of 12 to 16, 17 or 18. General secondary education lasts 5 or 6 years and is compulsory for pupils up to the age of 16. In Ukraine this stage starts earlier at nearly 11 but ends at the same age. What has more benefits in the Dutch school is that pupils can choose between two types of education, both of which start with a junior stage (*onderbouw*). This stage lasts 2 or 3 school years, depending on the type of secondary education. At the end of the second year pupils in most school types receive very helpful advice according to the type of education that can be the best for them to follow.

Another type of secondary education is Preparatory secondary vocational education (*voorbereid end middelbaar beroeps onderwijs, VMBO*), which replaced preparatory vocational education (*voorbereidend beroeps onderwijs, VBO*) and junior general secondary education (*middelbaar algemeen voortgezet onderwijs, MAVO*) in 1999, is vocationally oriented and lasts 4 years. Like the general secondary education, this type of education starts with a basic stage (*onderbouw*) and lasts 2 school years offering a broad range of subjects. At the end of the second class, pupils choose a learning track (*leerweg*) and a sector. The VMBO has 4 sectors: technology (*techniek*), health and personal care and welfare (*zorg en welzijn*), economics (*economie*) and agriculture (*landbouw*). Within each sector, pupils can choose from four learning tracks (*leerwegen*): the basic vocational track (*basis beroepsgerichte leerweg*), advanced vocational track (*kaderberoepsgerichte leerweg*), the combined track (*gemengde leerweg*) and the theoretical track (*theoretische leerweg*) [3].

Using the data of pupils' choice which was analyzed in 2003–2007, the researchers scored more than 2000 different directions in the system of secondary education. On the one hand these results are very encouraging because pupils can change the direction easily at this stage into any others. But on the other hand pupils can get lost and make wrong choice. Therefore Dutch teachers have to follow whether the chosen direction relevant to the pupil by analyzing his studying

especially during this year. Finally, in the end of the first year of secondary school, if any inconsistency between pupils' skills and educational direction are noticed, it is advisable for a pupil to change it into more preferable one. Sometimes such moving can lead to future profession choice change. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has reported that nearly 90% of Dutch pupils who get general secondary education at the same time have vocational qualification and this is one of the highest results in the recent years [5].

Both types of schools are treated as great for studying, as half of pupils choose schools of preparatory secondary vocational education while another part prefer general secondary education. The choice of school type also depends on level of basic pupils' knowledge and skills. There is notably large variation in the performance of secondary-school pupils at the same educational level, and as a consequence, a lot of pupils at different levels are achieving similar results. This becomes clear when you compare the PISA scores between the different levels. The infographic clearly shows that the top 50% of VMBO Basic pupils achieve the same results as the average VMBO pupil and that the top 50% of HAVO pupils achieve similar results to the average VWO pupil. The results of other tests display the same level of overlap [2].

This drawback may be the result of the diversity in Dutch education in general and quality of teachers training in particular. The last aspect depends on university activity. Dutch higher education has a binary system, which means that a distinction is made between research oriented education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs) and higher professional education (hoger beroepsonderwijs). This difference in orientation has continued to exist after the introduction of the bachelor's-master's degree structure in 2002. Research-oriented education takes place primarily at research universities and the higher professional education at universities of applied sciences (hogescholen). As well as the different objectives, each of the two types of education has its own admission requirements, programme duration and titles [3].

Dutch government controls organizations which are responsible for level of teachers' training for the definite educational stage; teachers' employment criteria, set of training courses, salary, and work conditions. For studying future teachers can choose research universities but mostly they choose universities of Applied Sciences which number is larger. Together with close connection between stages, effective education is impossible without links between the last level of education and employment. Recruiting, retraining, and paying high salaries for teachers make the profession of a teacher competitive in the labour market in comparison with other professions. In 2015 the Netherlands took the 4<sup>th</sup> place in teachers' salary rate according to OESD data among European Union countries. Moreover the wages of primary teachers with 15 years' experience are lower (55 141 US dollars) than upper secondary teachers with the same experience (69 298US dollars), and such a great gap places the Netherlands on the first position according to this aspect [6].

Choice of university and training course depends on type of school in which the future specialist intends to teach. Applicants for teaching in senior secondary vocational education and higher education try to get education in prestigious national research universities. Research-oriented education (wetenschappelijk onderwijs - WO) is given at 14 Dutch research universities (universiteiten) in the Netherlands,

including the Open Universiteit, but collaboration with universities of applied sciences (hogescholen) is becoming increasingly common. Moreover they need to get Bachelor's degree in subject they are going to teach. One fourth of all graduates with high marks becomes teacher in universities and later gets Doctorate degrees. Those future teachers who are going to teach in primary or secondary education can choose higher professional education which is primarily offered by universities of applied sciences (hogescholen). HBO has 7 educational sectors: economics, health care, agriculture, teacher training, social work, arts and engineering. Within these sectors, students can choose from various educational profiles. Almost all types of study programme can be followed at universities of applied sciences, located all over the Netherlands. Some hogescholen primarily offer study programmes in the field of agriculture or art, or specialise in teacher training. Research-oriented education is divided into three study cycles. Study programmes are divided into a bachelor's programme of 3 years (180 ECTS) followed by a master's programme that lasts 1 year (60 ECTS), 2 years (120 ECTS) or 3 years (180 ECTS), depending on the specialization. This can be followed by research for a doctor's degree, which generally lasts 4 years. Higher professional education is divided into 2 cycles: a bachelor's programme lasting 4 years (240 ECTS) followed by a master's programme of 1 year (60 ECTS) or 2 years (120 ECTS), depending on the specialisation. A master's degree obtained at a university of applied sciences can give admission to the doctoral programme, the third cycle in higher education [3].

Despite the high positions in the international ranking, the Dutch government is striving for further improvement and innovation. Since 2006 the Dutch Government has introduced a series of reforms considering the European Union's education goals for 2010. They included more autonomy for schools, steps to support smaller schools, free textbooks, and streamline funding. One important factor for development is openness and free access to the information. As the result of this view, on 03 February 2011, the Education Council in the Beurs van Berlage launched the website [www.schoolvo.nl](http://www.schoolvo.nl) with the performances of all schools for secondary education in the Netherlands. This is the first time that an education sector has presented its own performance in a broad, unambiguous way. The website is the result of the project «Windows for Accountability» of the Education Council, where all statistical information about schools for secondary education, is collected in one system. The information comes from the Education Executive Agency (Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs DUO), the Education Inspectorate and from the schools themselves. It is possible for schools to provide the published information with explanations, which gives a nuanced and honest picture of what a school actually does. Publication of school achievements on the website is not an end in itself, but serves as a basis for horizontal accountability, the dialogue on the quality of education with stakeholders of the school process.

The launch of such website is an important instrument for the quality assurance of the schools themselves. Schools participate on a voluntary basis in Windows for Accountability. Meanwhile, 90 percent of the schools have joined the project, of which 41 percent have published all data. Of the schools that do not (yet) participate or have not yet published all the data, half of the results can be seen. These reforms

were aimed at improving the existing education system, rather than overhauling the system. In 2008, the government also presented an action plan aimed at combating the lack of teachers, improving the quality of teaching and raising the prestige of the teacher's profession. The plan envisaged the strengthening of a professional organization for teachers and opportunities for a continuous one [4].

The positive impact of last reforms in Dutch educational system is obvious. Among the most effective steps which influenced successful growth of education are as follows:

- ✓ consistent links between school stages, types of education and employment;
- ✓ support of common recommendations introduced by European Union countries;
- ✓ openness and free access to different resources;
- ✓ participation in European ratings;
- ✓ special attention to teachers' training, salaries, courses for requalification, etc.

### **Conclusions**

The recent views show that the study of teachers' training in the Netherlands is a source that can help in solving a number of problems in high-quality training of specialists in the field of foreign language linguistics in Ukraine according to new challenges. Positive Dutch experience will assist to overcome the drawbacks and contradictions which exist in the educational system of Ukraine. Therefore, the relevance of this problem and its socio-pedagogical significance need to be investigated. There is an urgent need to study the pedagogical principles of the professional training of foreign language teachers in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and to determine the prospects for implementing the innovative ideas of the Dutch system of professional higher education into Ukrainian one.

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