

The Establishment and Development of Professional Training for Preschool Teachers in Western European Countries

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Abstract: The problem of providing lifelong learning opportunities at the present stage of global community development remains relevant and is a top-priority agenda for practically all civilized countries. Positive experience in organizing professional training of preschool teachers in European countries requires that perspective trends in the modernization of future preschool teachers' professional training should be specified following European standards of teacher education and the most significant achievements of higher education, its peculiarities and specifics should be preserved. Conceptual principles, peculiarities of historical development and key trends in the system of professional teacher education in Germany, France and the UK have been analyzed and determined; professional profiles, professional competency profiles and qualification requirements have been characterized; both national specific and general common trends in development of preschool teachers' professional training in European countries have been outlined. The development of professional standards for teacher education in European countries contributes to specifying and developing professional profiles of preschool teachers in Europe that are rather diverse and determine the multifacetedness and multifunctionality of professional training. The main trends in education policy and qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries include: providing public sector specialists with initial training; adjusting consecutive education to the provisions of the Bologna Declaration; ensuring continuing professional development of specialists involved in educational activities in preschool institutions; implementing the European conception of professional training with the use of competency-based approach.

Keywords: *preschool teachers, Germany, France, the UK, professional training, European experience.*

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Introduction

The ever-increasing demands of the modern labour market, rapid technologization and overwhelming flows of information, changes in the cultural, social and political life of the country, globalization in the field of education, growth of academic and labour mobility within Europe and the world result in new needs to change the system of professional training for preschool teachers.

Many scholars have explored the issue of studying innovative teaching experience of foreign countries and implementing the conception of professional teacher education (Bakhmat, 2018; Gerasymova et al., 2019; Green, Leney & Wolf, 1999; Haddad, 2002; Lukianova, 2015; Maksymchuk et al., 2018; Melnyk, 2015; Melnyk et al., 2019; Morin, 2001; Nychkalo, 2000; Pukhovska, 2013; Rinland, 1998; Sheremet, Leniv, Loboda, & Maksymchuk, 2019; Byvalkevych, Yefremova, & Hryshchenko, 2020; Sebalo & Teslenko, 2020; Makoviichuk, et al., 2020; Koziuk, Hayda, Dluhopolskyi, & Kozlovskyi, 2020; Kozlovskyi, 2010; Kaletnik, Zabolotnyi, & Kozlovskyi, 2011).

The process of professional training of preschool teachers in the countries of Western Europe is holistic, continuous, differentiated, covering a set of interconnected structural elements (legislative base, educational institutions and centers, national and state programs of development of preschool education and training of specialists, educational programs; content, forms, principles of the organization of training, innovative technologies, methods and teaching aids of pedagogical workers, scientific and methodological support, etc.) that influence the quality assurance of the profession training of preschool teachers in general. Positive experience in organizing professional training of preschool teachers in European countries requires that perspective trends in the modernization of future preschool teachers' professional training should be specified following European standards of teacher education and the most significant achievements of higher education, its peculiarities and specifics should be preserved. Of great scientific interest is professional training of preschool teachers in European countries, namely, Germany, France and the UK, which, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), are leaders in the field of teacher education in higher education. Thus, there appears to be a need to study these countries' experience since they are leading and highly developed countries with generally accepted traditions and high-quality indicators in the field of teacher education. Besides, they are well-recognized for their outstanding achievements in pedagogy and high-

quality professional performance of teaching personnel, provided with proper professional teacher training.

The study of documentary, psychological and pedagogical sources gives grounds to state that the priority in the study of the problem of vocational training of preschool teachers in the countries of Western Europe belongs to foreign scientists. Among European researchers the problem of preschool teachers vocational training was investigated: in Germany – F. Arning (2010), J. Bauer, U. Diercks, & L. Rösler (2012), M. Romano (2002), H.-G. Kotthoff, & E. Terhart (2014) et al; in France – F. Dajez (1994), S. Kyvik (2009), B. Cornu (2015), E. Fraisse (2010), Y. Kaga, J. Bennett, & P. Moss (2010) et al.; in the UK – B. Moon (2003), L. Barton (2003), L. Barton, E. Barret, & G. Whitty (1994), G. Whitty, L. Barton, & S. Miles (1997), J. Furlong (2005) et al.

Special attention should be paid to fundamental studies by J. Gonzalez, & R. Wagenaar (2003), F. Caena (2011), C. Cameron, & P. Moss (2007), M. Neuman (2005), P. Oberhuemer (2011), G. Ostinelli (2009), which present findings on teacher training in European countries.

The research on professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries mainly focuses on trends in its development since their analysis makes it possible to highlight some positive aspects in the training of specialists in preschool education. A holistic study of principal, content-related, procedural, organizational and structural trends and features of professional training for preschool teachers can serve as a source of information for comparativists and specialists who study the international experience in providing preschool education, professional training for teachers and practitioners who can employ European approaches and practices, educational technologies and methodologies in their professional activities.

Given the above, *the paper aims to present an analytical and comparative overview* of the leading trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in the leading countries of Europe, revealing its implementation in higher practice educational institutions of pedagogical profile of Germany, France and Great Britain.

It is essential to gradually study certain vital aspects to conduct a qualitative analysis of the trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries. They are as follows: conceptual principles of such professional training in each of the countries selected for analysis; the characteristics of the development of professional training for preschool teachers in Germany, France and the UK, which allows one to determine the conditional historical periods in the

development of professional education in Western European countries; professional profiles and qualifications in Western European countries to identify general structural and content-related trends in professional training for preschool teachers.

Material and methods

The paper applies relevant methodological approaches and research methods to achieve the set objectives of the research. It should be acknowledged that *the leading idea of the research* indicates that professional training of preschool teachers in Western European countries is an intricate socio-historical phenomenon, whose development depends on globalization and integration processes, precise internal and external socio-political, economic, socio-cultural and educational factors, the dynamics of educational needs, the national traditions of each country's education system. Professional training of preschool teachers in higher education institutions in Germany, France and the UK is a component of continuing education and a regular pedagogical process characterized by both dialectic establishment and development of social life and educational activity, theoretical and practical principles, socially motivational pedagogical conditionality, as well as a particular structure (goals, objectives, content, technologies of realization, quality assessment, general social and pedagogical mechanisms of effective functioning). Professional training of preschool teachers in Western European countries is a holistic, continuous and differentiated process, encompassing a set of interrelated structural elements (legal framework, educational institutions and centres, national and state programmes for developing preschool education and professional training of preschool teachers, curricula; the content, forms, principles, innovative technologies, methods and means of teacher training, scientific and methodological support,), which generally influence the quality assurance of professional training for preschool teachers.

The conceptual principles of the research

The crucial elements ensuring a comprehensive study of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries are the following:

- professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries is based on philosophical, socio-economic, psychological and pedagogical principles aimed at meeting the social, state and individual needs of individuals; conceptual id

- the system of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries is characterized by specific features, predetermined goals and patterns of the development of European society and is interconnected with the social, political, cultural processes taking place in it;

- the analysis of organizational and content-related characteristics of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries reveals specific innovative ideas, whose implementation in Ukraine can improve the modern system of professional training for specialists in preschool education;

- professional training for preschool teachers is an integral part of preschool education, whose innovative processes highlight the issues of updating and optimizing curricula taking into account current European strategies for developing preschool education and teacher education.

The concept of the research includes interconnected methodological, theoretical and technological concepts which contribute to the implementation of the leading idea of the research.

The methodological concept of the research is based on the principles of a scientific theory about the unity of processes, mutual influence and interdependence of phenomena of objective reality; general theoretical and methodological principles of philosophy on the unity of theory and practice, ideas of the neo-pragmatic concept of philosophy of education (Rorty, 1997) and conceptual principles of philosophy, sociology, psychology, pedagogy and other sciences, caused by the interdisciplinary character of philosophical and psychological concept of activity, conceptual provisions of methodology of comparative pedagogy; a philosophical understanding of professional training as a social phenomenon based on sociological, cultural, psychological, pedagogical and other paradigms.

The primary methodological approaches which serve as a basis of the study on trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries are defined as follows:

a systematically historical approach to evaluating the international pedagogical experience of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries involves the study of individual invariant and integrational sides of the educational process, as well as a holistic coverage of preschool, pedagogical, formal (university) and non-formal (extra-university) education in the unity of its internal relations;

a macrostructural approach allows one to analyze trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries in the context of global progress.

a paradigmatic approach to analyzing different models of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries allows one to create various systems of teacher education with different goals, identify specific issues in their functioning, predict the results of professional education;

a comparative approach makes it possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries as a whole and in each country individually; identify common trends in professional training for preschool teachers in Germany, France and the UK to highlight some promising ideas of Western European countries and implement them into teacher education in Ukraine;

a parametric approach contributes to a structural and functional comparative analysis of education systems in different countries based on the results of the parametric evaluation;

a narrative approach helps to reflect historical phenomena.

The specifics of the research determines the use of particular **theoretical research methods** which are based on the above-mentioned general methodological approaches:

- general methods of analysis, synthesis, interpretation, abstraction, generalization, analogy, which help to clarify characteristics of the development of theoretical approaches underlying the development of strategies for professional training for preschool teachers;

- the comparative problem-oriented method which allows one to describe educational, political, structural, cultural and human dimensions in the context of developing theory and practice of teacher education, transformational changes introduced in Western European countries and identify trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in pan-European and national contexts;

- the structural method which helps to identify different strategies and approaches to professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries and their interconnected overview together with the approaches in the national system of teacher education;

- the following methods related to goals and objectives of the research are employed to achieve the set objectives and verify the initial assumptions: chronological and diachronic methods, the comparative structural analysis of pedagogical, scientific literature and documentary materials, cross-study of scientific literature;

- analysis, synthesis, classification, unification, comparison and systematization of empirical data on the functioning of education systems in

Western European countries to determine methodological principles of professional training for preschool teachers in these countries.

Empirical methods serve as a source for an objective evaluation of findings. The authors' study of the experience of professional training for preschool teachers in higher education institutions in Western European countries has helped to formulate the conclusions regarding the effectiveness, validity and quality of the educational process in the context of professional training for preschool teachers. They are as follows:

- both observation and study of practical experience gained by higher education institutions, centres for professional development of teachers, developmental and transcultural centres for development of preschool education, centres of inclusive education, representative offices of associations of preschool education and social support, preschool centres, which include the direct observation of the educational process in formal, non-formal and informal institutions providing professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries;

- interviewing of students from departments of preschool and social pedagogy and education in higher education institutions, practising preschool teachers, employees of developmental and transcultural centres for the development of education;

- tests applied to verify the expediency and effectiveness of implementing the experience of the proposed technologies and methods of professional training for preschool teachers in educational institutions in Western European countries and higher education institutions in Ukraine.

The paper employs specific *prognostic methods* to justify the prospects of introducing positive international experience in the theory and practice of Ukrainian education system. They are modelling and independent expert assessments to determine the maximum dependence of the development level of professional competency and the quality of socio-pedagogical educational conditions.

The stages of the research. The research, which took place between 2011 and 2019, covers three stages of scientific, pedagogical search:

- 1) *the first stage* (2011-2013) involves studying the development and current conditions of teacher education in Western European countries, analyzing scientific literature, determining the object, subject, goals and objectives of the research, elaborating the concept and methodological principles of the research; scientific trips to European formal, non-formal and informal institutions providing professional training for preschool teachers, which incorporate direct observations on the process of organizing educational activities in these institutions, including a 10-day business trip in

October 2011 and a month-and-a-half internship at the Heidelberg University of Education in November-December 2012, Germany, which helped to improve a system of distance cooperation with colleagues from the UK and French higher education institutions providing teacher education; publishing the first results of a comparative research (speeches and participation in national and international conferences, publications in professional publications in Ukraine);

2) *the second stage* (2013-2016) includes analyzing and summarizing the sources of the research and processing the obtained data; a trip to higher education institutions in Western European countries, centres for professional development of teachers, developmental and transcultural centres for development of education, centres of inclusive education, representative offices of preschool education and social support, which provide professional training for preschool teachers (June 2013-2014, Germany, France); organizing a distant study of the experience of modern universities and other educational institutions in the UK regarding developing professional competency (using e-correspondence, Skyping and a social network of European and national scientific communities); publishing the practical experience of educational institutions in Western Europe (participation in national and international conferences, publications in international professional editions, as well as journals indexed in abstract and citation databases, a direct use of various forms, methods, techniques, methods of professional training for preschool teacher, which are rather typical in Europe).

3) *the third stage* (2016-2019) covers a comparative analysis of the characteristics of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries, systematizing and summarizing the obtained data, formulating the necessary provisions, general conclusions and prospects for further research, publishing the main findings (participation in national and international conferences, publications in international professional editions, as well as journals indexed in abstract and citation databases (Melnik et al., 2019); a direct use of various forms, methods, techniques, methods of professional training for preschool teacher, which are rather typical in Europe, introducing the Western European experience in organizing training sessions and workshops for different specialists in preschool education to develop their professional competency).

The sources of the research are as follows:

- international documents: UNESCO official documents, International Standard Classification of Occupations, reference books of the European Center for the Development of Vocational Education (Cedefop);
- common European official documents: regulations, decrees, conclusions, recommendations, materials of the permanent conferences of the European Ministers of Education, reports on the development, provision and improvement of higher education, including: White Paper of the European Commission "Education and Training: teaching and training education for the study of economics", document "Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council", 2001 European Center for Vocational Education Program; reports from each of the countries of Western Europe on the development of the pedagogical education system: "Annotation by country: educational policy in the field of pre-school education, upbringing and care in France" for 2004, "Annotation by country: educational policy in the field of early childhood education, upbringing and care in Germany" for 2012 and "Country Summary: Educational Policy in the Field of Preschool Education, Nursing and Care in England (Scotland, Ireland, Wales)"; European Commission document 2005 on Common European Principles for Teaching Competences and Qualifications;
- official documents of international organizations: UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Commission of the European Communities (European Communities), European Parliament (European Parliament), Council of Europe;
- German, French, British official documents, government regulations and educational materials - laws, regulations, committee reports, government commission instructions;
- 18 curricula and 54 pre-service teacher training programs in Western European countries, documents on requirements for gaining a bachelor's, master's degree in Germany, France, the United Kingdom;
- monographic studies of German, French, British and Ukrainian scholars on the theory and practice of pre-service teacher training in Western Europe;
- European Pedagogical Periodicals: European Journal of Teacher Education, International Journal of Educational Research, Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Children and Youth Services Review etc.

Conceptual principles of preschool teachers' professional training

Conceptual principles of modern professional training for preschool teachers in European countries are defined by a comprehensive goal of teacher education, namely, training a highly qualified, competent teacher, who can respond to the rapidly changing demands of society, to act flexibly and qualitatively in order to solve teaching problems arising in professional activities, to provide high-quality preschool education, to contribute to preserving their psychophysical and spiritual health and to ensure their comprehensive harmonious development.

The multifacetedness of approaches to the professional training of preschool teachers causes their broad variety. Thus, the essential approaches are the following: humanistic; culturological; competency-based, in the context of which technological, communicative, practical and research-oriented approaches and a module-based conception connected with the integrated approach are realized. Among innovative approaches, the following are singled out: the conception of professional training, based on social interaction, in the context of which dialogic approach is realized, based on the concept of “knowledge exchange” and culturological approach; coaching approach; one-shot approach; approaches to realizing the concept of inclusive education.

A necessary means of implementing pan-European education policy in professional teacher education is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which defines the standards of professional training for teachers in general and preschool teachers in particular. Professional standards of teacher education in European countries ensure the quality of professional training, expertise and responsibilities of teachers; contribute to improving the quality of education (organizing the education process) and positively affect the social status of the teaching profession. Critical components in the quality of the education process are presented in the national teacher education standards in Germany and the UK; in France, they define the knowledge, skills and responsibilities of teachers at each stage of their professional growth: at the stage of obtaining initial teacher training, a postgraduate degree, as well as at professional and practical stages. The process of developing the standards for preschool teachers’ professional training in European countries is consistent with practical professional activities of teachers in educational institutions and theoretical and practical training of future specialists in higher education institutions, departments for professional accreditation and registration authorities, employers and professional associations.

Professional training of preschool teachers in European countries involves providing them with initial training, facilitating their professional

and career development and increasing social status of the teaching profession. Also, the professional education of preschool teachers is regularly modernized, which is explained by intensive transformations in higher education in European countries. It has been found that crucial changes are taking place in the four main areas: adjusting professional training to a three-cycle system of higher education (a bachelor's degree – a master's degree – a doctoral degree); ensuring the quality in higher education through introducing the standards consistent with the European Qualifications Framework; recognizing qualifications and study periods offered by various higher education institutions in European countries; professionalization, which consists in creating favourable conditions for professional development and career growth of preschool teachers in the system of postgraduate education in the context of both formal and non-formal professional training.

Developing professional training for preschool teachers

It has been clarified that specificity of modern preschool education in Germany dwells in its innovative development, which is connected with dynamic economic, political, social, ideological and psycho-pedagogical reorientation and reconsideration. Practical activities of preschool educational institutions involve implementing a situation-oriented concept that actualizes the practice-oriented concept of preschool teachers' professional training. The network of preschool educational institutions, as well as their diversity in terms of types and forms of ownership, contribute to a wide range of areas in professional training of preschool teachers and their profiles. The realization of the European approach in preschool education influences a continual process of developing, analyzing and improving the standards for professional training of preschool teachers and the requirements for their qualifications.

In France, the system of preschool education is characterized by gradual development: first, they established a charitable sector of public financing for preschool education (the middle 18th century), which mainly dealt with children from dysfunctional families (in knitting schools) and orphans (in orphanages). The system of preschool education, originated in the middle 18th century, was initially aimed at providing religious education. With the introduction of the ascetic conception, there appeared the so-called "maternal schools", which retain their name to this day. The private sector of preschool education developed in the early 19th century in order to

ensure comprehensive intellectual development of children from wealthy families.

In France, professional training of preschool teachers is based on general organizational and functional features of higher education. It must be noted that the system of preschool teachers' professional training has become unified quite recently. At the present stage of its development, the French system of preschool teachers' professional training is characterized by centralization of general teacher education, which is typical for the national, regional and local levels. The state regulates professional training of preschool teachers at the national level: the Ministry of National Education develops both curricula and training content; since France is divided into 30 academies, each region is run by a representative of the Minister (Recteur d'Académie). It has been defined that one of the features in the French system of professional training (unlike the German system) is the rank of higher education institutions, which provide teacher training (regarded as equal to universities, however not classical ones) and are research-oriented in the context of the educational process organization. An example of such a higher education institution is the National Center for Scientific Research (Center National de la Recherche Scientifique). In 2013, 23 years since its foundation, the University Institute for Teachers' Training (The Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres – IUFM) was eliminated and replaced with new institutions called Higher Schools for Professorship and Education (Écoles supérieures du Professorat et de l'Éducation – ESPE). It signifies a considerable difference between professional training in France and other European countries, which in turn shapes a specific dimension of French higher education.

In the UK, the modern system of preschool education is characterized by the following features: preschool children have been attending preschools for more than a century already, which positively influences the microeconomic situation at the local level. Preschool education is rather diverse and is not regulated by the government (public, private and charitable representations offer different forms of preschool education). The network of preschools, which varies by type of organization, form of ownership, subordination and activities, aims to solve fundamentally different tasks: some institutions strive to create the most comfortable and environmentally relevant conditions for developing preschool-age children keeping with the traditions of R. Owen and M. McMillan (so-called preparation for life in society); other institutions attempt to prepare children for school, namely, academic education. In the country, there is still a long

tradition of hiring private tutors for children between birth and the age of three.

Based on generalization, structural analysis and systematization of actual material, it has been clarified that the process of developing professional training in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the UK (on the example of England) dates back to the mid-1990s. It must be noted, however, that the British model of preschool teachers' professional training dramatically differs from those in European countries (Germany and France), since it is somewhat centralized than decentralized. In the UK, there has been the shift from full autonomy to strict regulation, control and monitoring by the government; at the present stage, autonomy is preserved only in the sources of funding.

The analysis of legal documents and historical facts has singled out the following events, which are essential for the process of developing preschool teachers' professional training: education reforms (the late 1990s – the early 2000s) introduced several qualifications in preschool education, namely, the introduction of Early Childhood Studies Bachelor Degrees and the National Professional Qualifications in Integrated Center Leadership (NPQICL) to support managers of children's centres. Since 2005, the conditions and methods for obtaining education and employment for preschool teachers and the "general core of teachers' professional competency to ensure the quality of educational services in preschool education have been developed and implemented through the Integrated Qualifications Framework.

Stages involved in developing the modern system of professional training for preschool teachers

Based on systemic historical, retrospective, interval and historical analysis, systematization and periodization methods, the following main stages involved in developing the modern system of preschool teachers' professional training in European countries have been distinguished:

– in Germany: the first stage (since 1990 up to 2000-2002) – the stage involved in integrating the system of preschool teachers' professional training based on democratic principles; reorienting different strategies for professional training of preschool teachers towards one common strategy; the second stage (since 2000-2004 up to 2010) – the introduction of the framework agreements, according to which professional training of preschool teachers is mainly aimed at developing a highly qualified and competent specialist in education and development of preschool children,

who can work with children in public and private institutions; the creation of the “umbrella” for professional teacher education, which provided for introducing the standards; the third stage (since 2010 up to the present) – at the legislative level, there appeared to be reorientation towards “professionalization”, which specifies professional competencies at the national and federal levels, as well as reconsideration of professional training for continuing professional development, following the provisions of the Bologna Declaration and the European documents (The Bologna Process 2020 – The European Higher Education Area in the New Decade (2009), Budapest-Vienna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area (2010), Teacher Education Curricula in EU: Final Report (2010));

– in France: the first stage – until the 1991-1992 reforms – the elimination of colleges for training primary school teachers (ENI), regional educational centres (CPR), which trained middle school teachers, the National teacher training schools (ENNA), training centres for technical education teachers (CFPT) and university-based reorientation of teacher education; the second stage – after the reforms (1991-1992 – 2010-2011) – the integration of preschool and primary school teachers’ professional training, the agreement of profiles, areas, degree programmes, programmes, plans, qualification requirements; the third stage (2011-2013 – up to the present) – the implementation of the New Programme for School Reform and the establishment of higher education institutions for training professional educators;

– in the UK: the first stage – (1990-2000) – the introduction of the Integrated Qualifications Framework, aimed at creating a structure of equivalence for qualifications of all professions related to preschool education; the second stage (2000 – up to the present) – the introduction of the Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

Profiles of professional training for preschool teachers

It has been indicated that the development of preschool teachers’ professional training in European countries has resulted in the appearance of the following professional profiles: early childhood and preschool education specialists – specialists who work in the system of preschool education, which involves children of any age between birth and school admission; early childhood education and child development specialists – specialists who obtained education oriented towards working with children under the age of three (they may not have the qualification, but they must have certificates, which enable them to work with preschoolers); pre-primary

education specialists – qualified specialists who obtained teacher education in teacher education colleges or schools, which is associated with pre-primary education of children immediately before compulsory education and can work with children aged between three and six; preschool teachers and primary school teachers – specialists who are qualified at the level of higher education (institutes, colleges) and are trained to implement the education process in various institutions of preschool education and primary education; preschool child health and care specialists and special education teachers (in France and Germany) – specialists who work with children under the age of three and are qualified nurses (for instance, a children's nurse / nurse), therapists or social welfare specialists and can work with people of all ages; family teachers; social educators – specialists who obtained higher education and are allowed to work not only with children of preschool age, but also with children of school and senior school age, occasionally with adults; assistants – trainees and interns who assist more experienced teachers.

The results of the analysis show that in Europe the profiles of professional competency are divided into four groups, namely, the profiles of professional competencies that operate at the national and regional levels (Germany, France, the UK – England and Wales); the profiles of preschool teachers' professional competencies, which operate without any formulated official profiles of such teachers' initial training (Romania, Finland); the profiles of preschool teachers' teacher education formulated at the national and regional levels, yet no professional profiles (competency requirements) (Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland); the profiles of professional activities that are formulated neither at the national level nor at the regional level; there are also no profiles of initial teacher training (Italy).

It has been found that the profiles of preschool teachers' professional training in Germany, France and the UK remain authentic and original, reflecting the national traditions and the features of preschool teachers' professional training; however, the profiles are sufficiently integrated into the pan-European educational space, meet the modern requirements for professional training of teachers in Europe and are consistent with the European Qualifications Framework, which reflects the qualification requirements for preschool teachers.

Qualification requirements for the professional training for preschool teachers

It has been found that the category of qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries mainly ensures the quality of teacher education; it is the way through which the pan-European conception of professional competencies is transformed and the means of adjusting the national professional standards to the European Qualifications Framework. It has been determined that qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries are implemented within the framework of initial, postgraduate formal and non-formal forms of education. The overview of qualification requirements for preschool teachers in European countries proves a variety of their types, as well as the peculiarities of their formation and development. The main qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries are its implementation at three stages: the first stage implies obtaining a bachelor's degree, the second stage – a master's degree, the third stage – a doctoral degree (it relates to only those individuals who obtained a master of research degree and chose a career in scientific research). However, there is an essential difference not only between the levels of teacher education (academic) and professional training (based on previous practical experience), which are required for working with children of preschool age but also professional profiles of preschool teachers: in the UK – early childhood education and care specialist (a nurse), a qualified (or certified) preschool teacher, a children's nurse; in Germany – a pre-primary education teacher, a preschool education and primary education teacher, a social educator, a social education teacher; in France – a preschool teacher, a children's nurse.

Trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers

The following common trends in the development of preschool teachers' professional training in European countries have been singled out: at the strategic level – conceptualizing professional training towards professionalization – developing professional competency of preschool teachers; determining the priority of high-quality multifunctional teacher education and continuing professional development, which takes into account dynamic changes in the development of European society and its requirements; creating flexible conditions for professional training of

preschool teachers; at the functional level – increasing the duration of preschool teachers' education, according to which the top priority is a master's degree; ensuring continuing development and transformation of the network of educational institutions, which offer professional training preschool educators so that the latter may obtain university education; creating flexible mechanisms for professional training of preschool teachers; implementing the conception of lifelong learning through designing and implementing the routes to professional and career development; at the contextual level – expanding the content of preschool teacher training programmes in European countries depending on the education policy of each country involved in the analysis and the national provisions for the content of professional training; shifting emphasis towards practical training; developing the mechanisms for transforming the content of education in order to ensure mobility and continuity in obtaining preschool and primary education professions.

Discussion & Conclusions

Perceptivity of research's results implementation into the practice of the educational system of Ukraine and other countries. The elaborated methodology for studying trends in the development of professional training for preschool teachers in Western European countries has made it possible to highlight the positive experience of assuring the quality of teacher education and outline the prospects of implementing the European experience into the system of professional education at the national, administrative, institutional or structural, procedural levels.

At the national level, the prospects imply providing legal framework of professional training for preschool teachers based on the principles of the Bologna process, including a further expansion of conceptual approaches to developing professional competency in preschool teachers, the implementation of the education policy regarding further integration of Ukrainian higher education in the European Higher Education Area and elaborating the National Qualifications Framework following the European Qualifications Framework.

A practice-oriented approach requires further promotion and expansion in the Ukrainian system of professional training for preschool teachers. In Western Europe, this approach is marked by a shift in emphasis from theory to practice, justification of scientific provisions regarding developing professional competency during professional activities and its constant improvement.

It is essential to identify the principles which affect adaptability for effective development of the National Qualifications Framework. The analysis on the implementation of professional standards of preschool teachers' education in Western European countries allows one to determine the following basic principles of adaptability (according to the materials of the European Commission on the development of professional standards): the interdependence between different key educational elements and their consequences; a comprehensive view of the specifics of professional activities in the context of using the European Qualifications Framework; a focus on learning outcomes; the elaboration of mutual recognition of diplomas between different educational institutions; the involvement of stakeholders (employers) in the development of standards and their specific interests and stances.

In this context, the European experience is a complex process which covers all aspects of national education and the qualifications system. The compatibility of the European Qualifications Framework with national systems cannot be characterized solely by professional standards. In this process, it is crucial to take into account such aspects of qualifications systems as curricula, content, forms, methods, tools, evaluation, consideration and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, quality assurance. Therefore, the mentioned above is closely related to the typology of professional standards, as one of the critical elements of qualification systems that must be taken into account in the process of their adaptation to the European Qualifications Framework. There are the following types of professional standards for preschool teachers in Western Europe: early childhood and preschool education specialists, pre-primary education specialists, preschool teachers and primary school teachers, social educators, early childhood education and child development specialists, preschool child health and care specialists, assistants, family teachers.

At the administrative level, it is crucial to develop relevant mechanisms for a comfortable decentralization and self-government in higher education. The experience of Western European countries makes it possible to distinguish the adoption of new statutes of higher education institutions, the establishment of independent associations and communities of specialists, which act as experts in different areas of professional training for preschool teachers, conduct independent research, work on educational and scientific research projects, search for professional and financial partners (to provide fund projects or research). The mutual recognition of diplomas at the inter-university level can help to promote academic mobility of students.

At the institutional level, the promising areas include expanding the network of higher education institutions and other educational institutions providing vocational training for preschool teachers in Ukraine. In this regard, the experience of Western European countries is somewhat relevant since they provide extensive opportunities for obtaining both initial and basic teacher education in the field of preschool education while studying in professional schools, upper teacher training schools, gymnasiums, technical schools, special schools, technical and social upper schools, professional training centres at universities and regional centres for professional training.

At the procedural level, it is essential to do the following:

1) to ensure *an equal proportion between theoretical and practical training* of preschool teachers, especially in the content of curricula, syllabi, programmes for professional training since the ratio between theory and practice should be up to 50%; therefore, one should refer to the model of training in Germany, when practice is one of the equivalent stages of gaining a teaching profession.

2) *to create relevant conditions for high-quality basic education* in the context of the Bologna tricycle training of bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees to further remove the degree “specialist” from syllabi, which means that undergraduate education should adequately provide professional training for teaching in preschools.

3) *to elaborate strategic areas and degree programmes* which take into account all the features of preschool education to increase the number and variability of teaching staff in preschools and, as a result, enhance their competencies; the mentioned above is not related to choosing between different levels of professional teacher training; it is a matter of introducing different variants of degree programmes when it is necessary to train unqualified staff in preschool education (e.g., when an individual works as a teacher assistant in a preschool and then decides to obtain teacher education); in this regard, recommendations should support the idea of variability and diversity of degree programmes offered in Western European countries and, at the same time, take into account the national context, traditions and specifics of professional training; it seems necessary to create systemic conditions to improve professional practice and training, as well as to develop and support several ways of professionalizing all employees working in preschools, including unqualified staff.

4) *to reconsider constant professional development of teachers* since the quality of services and the level of preschool teachers’ professional competency depends not only on the results of individual basic training; the

diversification and introduction of innovative forms of professionalization ensures positive results in further development and improvement of preschool teachers' professional competency: short-term on-the-job retraining (e.g., *specialized* or *direct professional training, coaching*); several weeks of training in *the community of practitioners*; the involvement of practitioners in research and project development can significantly enhance their professional results; direct professional activities and work in centres for professional development at the premises of specific educational institutions can be productive, too; internships aboard or in other regions funded by the state are also promising.

5) **to promote academic mobility** of students and lecturers in higher education institutions through involving students and teaching staff in international projects, providing free grants for study and professional trips, namely programmes of collaboration and cooperation between universities (ERASMUS, ERASMUS MOONDUS +, PISA).

6) **to promote academic mobility of nursery teachers** under the conditions of constant professional development, namely re-qualification, re-certification, acquisition of additional degrees (in higher education institutions, training centres) to achieve career growth.

7) **to motivate assistants of nursery teachers to obtain basic professional teacher education**; in Ukraine, assistants of nursery teachers usually do not have any qualifications related to preschool education, or may only have a certificate in general education; in this context, the education policy of the institution in which they work should be aimed at the professionalization and mobility of such employees, encouraging them to pursue higher education.

The development of professional standards for teacher education in European countries contributes to specifying and developing professional profiles of preschool teachers in Europe that are rather diverse and determine multifacetedness and multifunctionality of professional training. The main trends in education policy and qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries include: providing public sector specialists with initial training; adjusting consecutive education to the provisions of the Bologna Declaration; ensuring continuing professional development of specialists involved in educational activities in preschool institutions; implementing the European conception of professional training with the use of competency-based approach.

The peculiarities of preschool teachers' professional training in European countries at the stages of initial and postgraduate training have been explored. It has been determined that its development and functioning

are influenced by the process of developing preschool education, which in turn defines both professional profiles (the names of professions) and profiles of professional training (qualification requirements).

It has been concluded that professional training of preschool teachers in European countries is regularly modernized, which is explained by intensive transformations in higher education systems of European countries. It has been found that crucial changes are taking place in the four main areas: adjusting professional training to a three-cycle system of higher education (a bachelor's degree – a master's degree – a doctoral degree); ensuring quality in higher education through introducing the standards consistent with the European Qualifications Framework; recognizing qualifications and study periods offered by various higher education institutions in France, Germany and the UK; professionalization, which consists in creating favourable conditions for professional development and career growth of preschool teachers in the system of postgraduate education in the context of both formal (university or institute certificates, diplomas, certificates upon completion of advanced training) and non-formal professional training (centres for professional development and retraining, associations, public organizations and corporations).

It has been specified that qualification requirements for professional competency of preschool teachers in European countries are designed not only to develop criteria for determining the quality of professional teacher training, but also to implement the concept of “continuing teacher education”, in particular, “life-long learning”. The overview of qualification requirements for preschool teachers in European countries proves their variety and peculiarities of formation and development. Based on the analysis of various components in teacher education that regulate professional training of preschool teachers in European countries, it has been found that the primary qualification requirements for professional training of preschool teachers in European countries are its implementation at two stages: 1) obtaining a bachelor's degree, 2) obtaining a master's degree. Obtaining a doctoral degree is the third stage in professional training of preschool teacher and involves completing doctoral programmes, which is a requirement only for individuals who work in higher education institutions. However, the conducted analysis also confirms that there is an essential difference not only between the levels of teacher education (academic) and professional training (based on previous practical experience), which are required for working with preschool children, but also professional profiles of preschool teachers. The profiles of preschool teachers' professional training in Germany, France and the UK remain

authentic and original, reflecting the national traditions and the features of preschool teachers' professional training; however, these profiles are sufficiently integrated into the pan-European educational space, meet the modern requirements for professional training of teachers in Europe and are consistent with the European Qualifications Framework.

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