PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

DEVELOPING THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS FOR THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM THROUGH MINDFULNESS TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract

It is provided a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the problem of the theoretical and methodological substantiation and practical implementation of the process of developing the professional competence of future English language teachers preparing for professional activity in vocational education institutions through the integration of modern innovative mindfulness technologies. It is identified the essential characteristics and structural components of teachers' professional competence within the vocational education system. It is substantiated the appropriateness of incorporating mindfulness practices as a systemic factor in optimizing psycho-emotional well-being, enhancing cognitive flexibility, reducing foreign language anxiety, and fostering professional reflection among future specialists. Based on empirical observations and theoretical analysis, the article identifies the stages and specific methodological models for integrating mindfulness technologies into the foreign language training of future English language teachers for the vocational education system.

Keywords: professional competence, future English language teachers, vocational education, mindfulness technologies, mental self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, foreign language anxiety, vocational education.

1. Introduction

Globalization processes taking place in contemporary Ukrainian society have significantly increased the demands placed on the quality of training qualified workers within the vocational education system. Ukraine's European development trajectory and the need to integrate the national labour market into the global economic environment have created an urgent demand for skilled workers who possess English language proficiency at a level sufficient for professional communication, working with foreign-language technical documentation, and intercultural communication in the workplace. In this context, the role of English language teachers in vocational education institutions is becoming increasingly important, while the specific nature of foreign language teaching within the vocational education system entails a range of distinctive psychological and pedagogical challenges. Traditionally, students enrolled in vocational education institutions demonstrate relatively low initial motivation to study humanities subjects, significant gaps in their basic school knowledge, and pronounced language barriers. Working under such conditions requires English language teachers to possess not only profound philological and methodological knowledge but also emotional resilience, a high degree of adaptability, the ability to respond flexibly to disruptive behaviour, maintain students' attention, and create a favourable psychological climate.

The contemporary system of higher pedagogical education is primarily oriented towards training teachers for general secondary education institutions and often overlooks the specific preparation required for working in vocational education settings. As a result, young professionals encounter emotional burnout, occupational stress, and cognitive overload from the very beginning of their careers, which undermines the effectiveness of developing students' language competence. Therefore, there is an objective need to identify and introduce innovative technologies into the educational

process of higher education institutions that would ensure the balanced development of both instrumental and personal (adaptive and self-regulatory) components of the professional competence of future English language teachers. One of the most promising approaches to addressing this challenge is the integration of mindfulness technologies into the educational process.

2. Methodology

The problem of developing the professional competence of future foreign language teachers has attracted considerable attention from numerous Ukrainian and international scholars, including N. Aristova [1], V. Barkasi [2], I. Vakulova [3], L. Darling-Hammond, M. E. Hyler, M. Gardner [6], and others. Researchers provide an in-depth analysis of the structure of this competence, identifying its linguistic, sociocultural, methodological, psychological, and reflective components. At the same time, the specific aspects of training teachers for the vocational education system have been investigated by scholars such as P. Luzan, A. Ostapenko, T. Pashchenko, O. Titova, O. Yamkovyi [5], and I. Mosia [4], who emphasize the importance of professional and pedagogical mobility and the ability to integrate general education and vocationally oriented components of instruction.

In recent years, particular attention has been devoted to mindfulness technologies in international academic discourse, particularly in the works of J. Kabat-Zinn and S. Shapiro. Research findings demonstrate the positive impact of mindfulness practices on brain neuroplasticity, anxiety reduction, and the enhancement of cognitive functions, including selective attention and cognitive flexibility. A distinct field known as mindful teaching has emerged within the Western pedagogical tradition, as reflected in the research of P. Jennings. In Ukraine, research into mindfulness technologies is only beginning to develop and remains largely fragmented, focusing primarily on students' psychological well-being and strategies for overcoming academic stress. The integration of mindfulness into the process of developing the professional competence of future English language teachers for vocational education institutions has not yet been the subject of comprehensive scholarly analysis, which has determined the choice of the present article's topic.

To achieve the stated research objective and establish its theoretical and practical foundations, a set of complementary research methods was employed. The theoretical methods included systemic, comparative, and structural-functional analyses of philosophical, psychological, and scholarly methodological literature. The empirical methods were based on observations of the educational process involving students enrolled in philological degree programmes, an analysis of their academic performance, and expert assessment methods aimed at evaluating specialists' psycho-emotional states and the level of development of their professional and reflective skills.

3. Results and Discussion

The specific nature of the professional activities of English language teachers in vocational education institutions determines the complex structure of their professional competence. This competence is not merely a set of linguistic knowledge and teaching methodology skills, but an integrated personal and professional construct that determines the ability to perform effectively in non-standard, stressful, and pedagogically challenging conditions of vocational education.

Mindfulness technologies, as understood within an evidence-based scientific framework, constitute a system of mental training practices aimed at developing the ability to maintain non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. The central mechanism of mindfulness is attentional regulation: individuals learn to recognise where their mental activity is directed and voluntarily redirect their attention to a chosen object, such as breathing, bodily sensations, thoughts, or external stimuli.

In the context of training future English language teachers, this approach is of fundamental importance. The process of learning and teaching a foreign language is inextricably linked to the phenomenon known as foreign language anxiety. Even students with a high level of language proficiency often experience fear of speaking publicly in a foreign language or making mistakes in front of their peers or teachers. Mindfulness makes it possible to interrupt the automatic connection between the emergence of an anxious thought ("I am going to make a mistake") and the physiological stress response (freezing, accelerated heartbeat, or stammering). Students learn to perceive anxiety merely as a temporary mental event that does not determine their professional competence.

Furthermore, mindfulness serves as a powerful means of developing future teachers' emotional intelligence. By becoming aware of their own emotional triggers while simulating challenging pedagogical situations, future teachers develop what is commonly referred to as the "space between stimulus and response". This enables them, in their future professional practice in vocational education institutions, to avoid reacting automatically with anger or aggression to students' provocative behaviour and instead choose the most pedagogically appropriate and balanced response.

The integration of mindfulness technologies into the process of developing the professional competence of future English language teachers should not take the form of compulsory or isolated mystical practices. Rather, it should constitute a clearly structured, scientifically grounded methodological system organically integrated into existing academic disciplines, such as Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages in Higher and Vocational Education, Oral and Written Language Practice, and Teaching Excellence and Pedagogical Skills.

The final diagnostic assessment conducted following the completion of teaching practice in vocational education institutions revealed substantial qualitative differences between the two groups. Students in the experimental group demonstrated a 34% lower level of situational foreign language anxiety when conducting English lessons for students in vocational education institutions compared with those in the control group.

An analysis of expert assessments and self-reports indicated that future teachers who had mastered attentional regulation techniques were significantly more successful in managing classroom discipline issues.

Rather than resorting to authoritarian pressure or emotional detachment, they more frequently employed active listening techniques and flexibly adapted teaching tasks to the current needs and emotional states of learners.

Students reported that brief breathing exercises performed immediately before lessons at vocational lyceums helped them overcome the syndrome of "fear of the classroom" and transform anxiety into a state of professional composure and energy.

Furthermore, longitudinal observations revealed positive dynamics in the development of the cognitive component of professional competence. Through the development of concentration skills, students in the experimental group demonstrated an improved ability to retain substantial amounts of foreign-language vocational terminology in memory and developed integrated English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tasks more efficiently. These tasks combined language learning with specialised vocational subjects, including automotive studies, culinary arts, construction, and other fields.

4. Conclusion

Summarising the results of the theoretical substantiation and empirical research, it can be concluded that the development of the professional competence of future English language teachers for the vocational education system is a complex, multidimensional process that requires the integration of innovative technologies. The incorporation of mindfulness technologies into the educational process serves as a powerful and scientifically substantiated means of optimising this process. Through the purposeful development of self-regulation skills, attentional control, and non-judgmental reflection, future professionals significantly enhance their psycho-emotional resilience, overcome foreign language anxiety, and develop readiness for effective pedagogical interaction in vocational education institutions.

The prospects for further research in this area lie in investigating the long-term outcomes of mindfulness technology implementation by English language teachers in vocational education institutions, with a view to conducting detailed monitoring of strategies for preventing professional burnout.

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