

PROFESSIONAL – PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENTS – FUTURE CHILDREN'S TEACHERS FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS /COMPARATIVE RESEARCH/

Evgenia Topolska

St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo-Vratsa Branch

e.topolska@uni-vt.bg

Abstract: The article at hand presents a comparative theoretical research of the professional-pedagogical preparation for students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs. The comparative research includes description and analysis the preparation of bachelor students on the topic in the “St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo” – Vratsa Branch in the Republic of Bulgaria and in the College for preschool teacher in Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia. The comparative analysis includes all units of the Veliko Turnovo University that prepare students – future children's teachers – pedagogical department in Veliko Turnovo and Pedagogical Collage in Pleven.

The reason for conducting this comparative research is based on important factors in the development of the modern education and professional preparation of students – globalization and mobility. Students have the opportunity to choose a course of studies and a university in other countries as well. This creates competition in regards to the university education and high expectations for constantly improving the quality of the education. Therefore, comparative researches help gather information regarding the current stand, tendencies, problems and prosperity of educational processes in other educational systems.

The topic of the comparative research is current. The professional – pedagogical preparation of students for work with children with special educational needs is viewed in the context of inclusive education. Supporting evidence for the topic is found in national and international normative documents. A small theoretical overview of the professional-pedagogical preparation of students in specialized scientific literature is made. The comparative method of processing the data is done on two levels: description of the courses that prepare students for work with children with special educational needs and a comparative analysis of the educational content, included in the syllabuses. The description is summarised in a table. The comparative analysis is made according to the type of courses, number of classes, number of credits and educational content.

Keywords: professional-pedagogical preparation, bachelor students, inclusive education, comparative research

1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization and mobility are one of the most important factors for development of the modern education and professional preparation. The globalization refers to the educational policy because it is connected with the acceptance of general or harmonization of already established norms, standards, priorities and procedures. The globalization does not mean unification but clearly defined and internationally accepted concepts for educational structures, curriculum, educational programs and even the content of education in some subjects and requirements regarding the preparation of teachers. (Popow, N., 2014: 98-99). This process is impossible without comparative researches. The comparative researches do not explain what has to be done in the educational system of a country based on knowing another educational system. However, the comparative researches provide information regarding the current stand, tendencies, problems and prosperity of educational processes in other educational systems.

The comparative researches in the education are very important for the preparation and achieving mobility in the professional preparation of students. The comparison of curriculum and educational content in educational programs in the professional-pedagogical preparation of students makes the transfer of credits easier.

The mobility in the area of education was regulated in 2008 with the introduction of the European Qualifications Framework for studying throughout the whole life (EQF). The included knowledge, skills and expertise are the general basis of comparison that allows increasing the transparency and transfer of qualifications. Defining knowledge, skills and expertise in the professional preparation of students is important to clarify the expectations of employers regarding the efficiency of preparation in universities.

Based on the EQF the Council of Ministers in the Republic of Bulgaria accepted the *National qualification frame* (NQF). It summarizes the knowledge, skills and expertise for each educational level. In the current research we will have a look at level 6, sublevel 6 A and sublevel 6 B, which correspond with "Professional Bachelor" and "Bachelor".

In the professional-pedagogical preparation of future teachers an important role plays the preparation for work with children from a few specific groups: children with special educational needs, children with chronic disease, children at risk, children with another first language and children with expressed gifts. The education of the

mentioned specific groups of children in the general kindergarten is viewed as inclusive and is policy in many normative documents. In 2016 the Ministry of education and science in the Republic of Bulgaria accepted a regulation for national requirements for obtaining the professional qualification "teacher", effective as of 2017/2018. According to this regulation, students will take the mandatory class "inclusive education" with a minimum of 15 academic hours. The curriculum includes other courses as well that prepare future teachers for work with children with special educational needs.

The current research is **comparative theoretical**. This research has been conducted within a research project "Comparative aspects of the professional-pedagogical preparation of the students - future children's teachers / on the example of "St Cyril and St Methodius University" of Veliko Turnovo and College for preschool teacher - Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia / - Contract № FSD- 31-653-01/19.06.2017.

The aim of this research is to make a comparative analysis of the professional-pedagogical preparation of students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs in "St Cyril and St Methodius University" of Veliko Turnovo and the College for preschool teacher - Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia. The subject of the research is the curriculum and educational programs which prepare students for work with children with special educational needs in "St Cyril and St Methodius University" of Veliko Turnovo and the College for preschool teacher - Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia.

The research includes a comparative analysis of the curriculum and educational programs which prepare students for work with children with special educational needs in "St Cyril and St Methodius University" of Veliko Turnovo and the College for preschool teacher - Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia.

In the comparative theoretical research a comparative method is used for data processing on two levels: description and analysis.

The topic is current and important: the current comparative analysis will help identify the strenghts in the professional-pedagogical preparation of inclusive education and special pedagogy of students – future children's teachers between the two universities and thus improve the quality of the university's education.

2. PROFESSIONAL – PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENTS – NORMATIVE ASPECTS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL POINT OF VIEW

The preparation and qualification of teachers is a priority in the educational policy of the European Union (Mihova, 2015). "In the official documents of the European Union the role of the teacher for the society and the education is characterised by four aspects: the relation between high quality teaching – high quality education and education – achieving the goals of Lisbon; teaching – a service of great personal and social importance; the ability of the teacher to work in a multicultural environment and developing fairer educational systems; modernisation of european educational systems which can be achieved by effective systems for preparation and education of teachers. The main priorities of the policy of the EU regarding the preparation of teachers are: developing the pedagogical science, increasing the professionalism of the teachers, better coordination between the different stages of preparation, making the teacher's profession an attractive professional choice." (Mihova, 2015: 84)

The requirements for the professional-pedagogical preparation of students are summarised in normative documents. In EQF there are descriptors that show the results of the education, which correspond to the qualification for specific levels of preparation in universities: level 6 for a bachelor student, level 7 for a master student and level 8 for a PhD student. In EQF the result of the education shows what the student knows, understands and is able to do when the learning process is completed. (EQF, 2009: 3) Therefore the EQF emphasises on the results of the studying, not on its duration. The results of the studying are divided in three categories – knowledge, skills and expertise.

The analysis of the quoted document shows that the preparation of bachelor students is a continuous process that begins with gaining knowledge (facts, principles, theories), continues with gaining the ability to apply it (guessing and practical skills) so that eventually there are personal and professional qualities and a proven ability to apply them in working or learning situations (expertise).

3. PROFESSIONAL – PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENTS – SCIENTIFIC THEORETICAL ASPECTS

The procedural character of the pedagogical activity is recognised by many researchers. N. V. Ipolitova and O.V. Buldasheva state that "the choice of effective professional decisions requires a base of theoretical knowledge and an established system of special skills, including the ability to analyse, compare, sum up information, plan procedures and ways to achieve set goals, control and evaluate the results." (Ipolitova, Buldasheva, 2015) That is why the authors include the following three aspects in the preparation of students:

1. Knowledge aspect which ensures the future pedagogues knowledge that is required for a competent solution of professional tasks;

2. Activity aspect which is directed to the development of skills required for a competent solution of professional pedagogical tasks, expanding the experience in the particular activity;
3. Motivational aspect that contributes to the development of positive motivation and interest towards the pedagogical activity.

Knowledge has different dimensions in the professional-pedagogical preparation of students – future children's teachers. According to Sv. Angelova "The synthesis, interpenetration of knowledge in its dimensions – subject, pedagogical and technological is an objectivized expression of the concept as a whole of a teacher for teaching the specific subject." (Angelova, Sv., 2016: 86)

Pedagogical skills of future teachers play crucial role in their university training. (Marcheva, P, 2016 : 71)

I. Petkova, in her book "Training and qualification of Bulgarian teachers' research his professional roles and professional competencies. She underlines that "with the constantly increasing professional tasks and functions, the competencies that a teacher must have are increased" (Петкова, И., 2012 : 56). She classifies them /the competences/ at mega-, mezo- and personal level. The first mega-level contains key, basic and functional competencies. Undoubtedly, the ability to work to create an inclusive environment is one of the teacher's functional competencies.

The arguments put forward show that the preparation of young people for successful self-realization in the integrated society requires educational interactions that stimulate the multi-integration process and form a polycultural identity. The application of such pedagogical interactions is beyond the traditional professional skills of the pedagogue and implies the development of specific meta-pedagogical competences in the contemporary teacher. (Tasevska D., G. Dyankova, S. Dermendjieva, 2016: 63)

The term "professional preparation" is closely related to the professional education and displays the process of gaining knowledge, skills and expertise, required for an independent professional activity. In this context, N. A. Glusman defines the professional preparation of future teachers as a "pedagogical system as a whole, whose functioning assumes that students have reached a certain level of professional expertise and qualities of the personality, which will allow them to successfully get the socio-cultural experience across to their students and to create conditions for their development and self-development. At the building of expertise in the future teachers the author includes a system of professional-subjective, professional-technological and professional-personal expertise. (Glusman, 2017)

In the professional-pedagogical preparation of students the specification of knowledge, skills and expertise is achieved on the basis of legal and sublegal normative acts, specialised scientific-theoretical and practical-methodical literature and is expressed in educational plans and educational programs for bachelor students.

4. PROFESSIONAL – PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS – COMPARATIVE ASPECTS

In "St Cyril and St Methodius University" the preparation of students – future children's teachers is done in accordance with National Qualifications Framework on level 6 A - "professional bachelor" in the pedagogical college – Pleven and level 6 B - "bachelor" in the pedagogical department in Veliko Turnovo and Vratsa Branch. The preparation of students – future children's teachers is done in hybrid programs that give extra qualification. The preparation of future children's teachers on level 6 B "bachelor" is done in the programs "pre-school and primary school pedagogy" and " pre-school pedagogy and foreign language". The preparation of future children's teachers on level 6 A "professional bachelor" is done in the program "pre-school pedagogy and English".

In the College for preschool teacher - Aleksinac, Republic of Serbia the preparation of students is only for future children's teachers. The education is done on two levels. The first level of education is a three year period and corresponds with 180 ECTS to the level "professional bachelor". The second level is a one year specialization in three different ways: pedagogy of the early childhood, music and drama.

The professional-pedagogical preparation of students - future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs is done in the context of the concept of inclusive education. The concept of inclusive education is written by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow in 2000. (Booth, T., Ainscow M., Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools). Second edition published September 2002. Third edition published May 2011. The concept of inclusive education assumes that all children regardless of their strengths and weaknesses in any area of their development are part of the community in the kindergarten. The kindergarten has to take into account the different experience of the children, their different interests, knowledge and skills. The inclusion does not only refer to education of children with disabilities, it refers to quality conditions for education of all children: children with special educational needs, children with chronic diseases, children at risk, children with a different first language, children with expressed gifts. In the current comparative theoretical research the aim is specific – to analyse the content of the professional-pedagogical preparation of students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs in the conditions of inclusive education.

4.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL – PEDAGOGICAL PREPARATION OF STUDENTS – FUTURE CHILDREN'S TEACHERS FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE CURRICULUM OF “ST CYRIL AND ST METHODIUS UNIVERSITY” OF VELIKO TURNOVO AND THE COLLEGE FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHER – ALEKSINAC

The current comparative analysis refers to the preparation of students on two educational levels: "professional bachelor" and "bachelor". This is the reason why we won't compare from a quantitative view the number of classes between level 6 A and 6 B because they are not comparable. A quantitative comparison of the number of classes can only be made between the preparation of students in the pedagogical college – Pleven and College for preschool teacher – Aleksinac, in which the preparation is on level "professional bachelor".

The concept of inclusive education presented above gives us reason to make the description and the comparative analysis of the following subjects, included in the curriculum of the above-mentioned universities: Special pedagogy, Inclusive education, Practise in integrated and individual education, Social work when people with special needs step in. The table № 1 presents a description of the classes, included in the curriculum of the above-mentioned universities that prepare students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs.

Table № 1 "a description of the classes, included in the curriculum of “St Cyril and St Methodius University” of Veliko Turnovo ", Bulgaria and the College of preschool teacher in Aleksinac, Serbia that prepare students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs"

	Program and level according to EQF	subject	type	semester	Examination method	Type and number of classes	ECTS credit points
“St Cyril and St Methodius University” of Veliko Turnovo – Pedagogical department and Vratsa Branch, Bulgaria	Preschool and primary school pedagogy, Level 6 B "bachelor"	Inclusive education	Mandatory class	2	exam	15 hours of lectures	3
		Special pedagogy	Mandatory class	7	exam	15 hours of lectures	3
		Practise in integrated and individual education	Optional class	7	Ongoing grade	30 hours of lectures	2
	Preschool pedagogy and a foreign language, level 6 B, "bachelor"	Inclusive education	Mandatory class	2	exam	15 hours of lectures	1
		Special pedagogy	Mandatory class	2	exam	15 hours of lectures	1
		Inclusive education	Optional class	3	Ongoing grade	30 hours of lectures	2
		Practise in integrated and individual education	Faculty class	7	Ongoing grade	15 hours of lectures	4
“St Cyril and St Methodius University”– Pedagogical college Pleven,	Preschool pedagogy and English, level 6 A, "profesdsional bachelor"	Inclusive education	Mandatory class	1	Ongoing grade	15 hours of lectures, 15 hours of exercise	3
		Special	Optional	2	exam	30 hours of	3

Bulgaria		pedagogy	class				lectures, 15 hours of exercise	
College of preschool teacher – Aleksinac, Serbia	Education of specialized teachers for work in kindergartens, level 6 A, "professional bachelor"	Social work when people with special needs step in	Optional class	2	exam		45 hours of lectures, 15 hours of exercise	5
		Special pedagogy	Optional class	6	exam		45 hours of lectures, 15 hours of exercise	5

The table № 1 shows that the professional-pedagogical preparation of students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs gives the following credit points:

- For the students of the pedagogical college – Pleven from “St Cyril and St Methodius University” of Veliko Turnovo /level "professional bachelor"/ - 6 credit points
- For the students of the college for preschool teacher in Aleksinac /level "professional bachelor"/ - 10 credit points
- For the students of the pedagogical department and Vratsa Branch in St Cyril and St Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo - 8 credit points each for the programs "preschool and primary school pedagogy" and "preschool pedagogy and foreign language".

In the “St Cyril and St Methodius University” of Veliko Turnovo since 2017/2018 the subject "Inclusive education" is mandatory in the preparation of students according to the regulation of state requirements for obtaining the professional qualification "teacher". The mandatory subject is "Special pedagogy" for the pedagogical department and Vratsa Branch of the “St Cyril and St Methodius University” of Veliko Turnovo that prepare students on level 6 B /bachelor/ according to NKR. The subject "Special pedagogy" for the students on level 6 A /professional bachelor/ from the pedagogical college Pleven and from the College of preschool teacher in Aleksinac is optional.

In the curriculum of the pedagogical department and Vratsa Branch of the “St Cyril and St Methodius University” there are two subjects "Inclusive education" and "Practise in integrated and individual education" that are more specific than "Inclusive education" and refer only to work with children with special educational needs. The subject "Inclusive education" is optional, whereas the subject "Practise in integrated and individual education" is faculty.

4.2. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CONTENT IN THE CURRICULUM FOR PREPARATION OF BACHELOR STUDENTS FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE “ST CYRIL AND ST METHODIUS UNIVERSITY” OF VELIKO TURNOVO AND THE COLLEGE FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHER – ALEKSINAC

The subject "Special pedagogy" is part of the preparation of all students in the above-mentioned universities. The differences refer to the type and the content of education that underlies it. The comparative analysis shows that the subject "Special pedagogy" is mandatory for bachelor students and optional for "professional bachelor" students. This fact may be explained by the different duration of the preparation of "bachelors" and "professional bachelors". In regards of the content of the subject "Special pedagogy" we can point out that students in the “St Cyril and St Methodius University” study the processes of bringing up and education only of children with special educational needs, whereas in the College for preschool teacher in Aleksinac in the subject "Special pedagogy" students study these processes not only for children with special educational needs but also for gifted children, which means the content of the education is richer. Therefore, we can say that up to a point the absence of another subject (for example "inclusive education") is "compensated".

The comparative analysis shows that on the level "professional bachelor" the number of classes intended for preparation of students for work with children with special educational needs is much bigger in the College for preschool teacher in Aleksinac. The table above shows that the subjects include 90 hours of lectures and 30 hours of exercise. On the other hand, in the pedagogical college in Pleven the subjects include 45 hours of lectures and 30 hours of exercise. There are differences in the specifications of the educational content. In the pedagogical college in Pleven the students study "Inclusive education" which prepares them for a pedagogical support of children with different specific particularities in the development. In the College for preschool teacher

in Aleksinac in the subject "Social work when people with special needs step in" the students study the social aspects of the work with children with special educational needs and learn the concept of the Inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The preparation of students – future children's teachers for work with children with special educational needs is an important part of their professional-pedagogical preparation as a whole in the above-mentioned universities. Every curriculum includes the subject "Special pedagogy". There are differences in regards of the names of the other subjects that prepare the students for work with children with special educational needs. These subjects are optional and faculty. The comparative analysis of the educational content shows that students receive a professional-pedagogical preparation also for work with other types of children with different specifications in the development in the context of the inclusive education.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ангелова, С. Някои аспекти на интеграция на технологиите в природонаучната подготовка на бъдещите начални учители. *Управление и образование, Том XII (3) 2016*, Бургас, ISSN 13126121
- [2] Глузман Н.А. Категориално-понятийный аппарат теории профессионализма будущих учителей. *Современные проблемы науки и образования* – М: 2017, № 3; URL: <http://science-education.ru/ru/article/view?id=26511>
- [3] Европейска квалификационна рамка за учене през целия живот - Люксембург: Служба за официални публикации на Европейските общности, 2009
- [4] Ипполитова Н.В., Булдашева О.В. Подготовка студентов педвузов к компетентному решению профессиональных педагогических задач как педагогический процесс // Интернет-журнал «НАУКОВЕДЕНИЕ» - Том 7, №4 (2015) <http://naukovedenie.ru/PDF/32PVN415.pdf>
- [5] Михова, М. Проблемът за подготовката и квалификацията на учителите в образователната политика на европейския съюз // *Юбилейна международна научна конференция "30 години Педагогически факултет"* - В. Търново: Издателство Фабер, 2015
- [6] Наредба за държавните изисквания за придобиване на професионална квалификация „учител“, МОН, 2016, <https://mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=7&subpageId=59>
- [7] Петкова, И. Подготовка и квалификация на българския учител. Университетско издателство “Св. Кл. Охридски”, С., 2012
- [8] Попов, Н. Сравнително образование. Българско дружество по сравнително образование. С., 2014, с. 98-99
- [9] Booth, T., Ainscow M., *Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools*; 3rd edition, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) New Redland Building, Coldharbour Lane, Frenchay, Bristol BS16 1QU, UK, 2011
- [10] Marcheva, P. The Nature of the Pedagogical Skills of Future Music Teachers in Intercultural Education, - *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia*, 2016, Vol.37, p. 71 -80, Abstracting and indexing services: Central and Eastern European Online Library – C.E.E.O.L; EBSCO (Current Abstracts, Education Research Complete, Education Research Index, Toc Premier); MLA International Bibliography. [Инд./Реф. в: EBSCO Publishing]
- [11] Tasevska D., G. Dyankova, S. Dermendjieva, *A model of educational policy designed to stimulate the process of multi-integration by promoting polycultural identity*. International journal KNOWLEDGE "THE TEACHER OF THE FUTURE", GRAFOPROM - Bitola, IKM-Skopje, 2016