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Professional and social competences in agrarian specialists: Theoretical aspects

Introduction

Various changes have been occurring in our society. Those changes are related to globalization trends in the world in terms of economy and population. Agrarian sectors are under pressure of these trends. This pressure is realized in the State Program on development of Ukrainian villages, which was adopted until 2015. In Ukraine productivity of crop and livestock production in agrarian sectors is low. One of the reasons is the absence of the sufficient number of qualified specialists. Each of those factors emphasizes a need to give more attention on preparing highly qualified specialists by universities in Ukraine in the field of agriculture [*The State Program...*].

Developing professional and social competences in students who will become specialists in the field of agriculture (agrarian-specialists) is necessary in higher education of Ukraine. This need has also been addressed during the Conferences by Ministers of European high education in Berlin 2003, by Ministers of Europe at Bucharest 2012 and by the United Nations Organization in Rio de Janeiro 2012. This is because markets of agricultural employment require highly qualified specialists.

One of the main directions to provide society with specialists is to improve their social and professional competences in Ukrainian universities. Each of specialists has to be adapted to modern conditions. They have to be able to apply their knowledge and experience in dealing with different problems that are arised in the field of agriculture. During preparation of highly qualified specialists it is necessity to improve methods and forms of study. Specialists have to know how to solve problems and associated with them economic consequences on agricultural systems of crop and livestock production and consumption. Therefore, higher education in Ukraine has faced an urgency to improve quality and efficiency of educational programs in order to prepare agrarian specialists. Development of the professional and social competences, indeed, plays a crucial role in improving educational systems.

1. Research objective and methodology

The objective of this study is to analyse current knowledge towards developing and improving professional and social competences in students who study

agricultural science in higher education of Ukraine. We analyze criteria of preparing agrarian specialists. We review definitions of several terms: „professional competence of agrarian specialists” and „social competence of agrarian specialists”. To achieve the research objective we revised literature sources such as books [Hutorskii 2002; Ovcharuk 2003; Svystun 2005; Vesnin 1998], articles [Zymnya 2006; Bolotov, Serikov 2003; Zarubinska 2006] and relevant reports [*The State Program...*].

2. Results and discussion

It is challenging to prepare specialists who came from different backgrounds and culture. Many scientists have studied the role of professional and social competences in higher education. These are, for example, Hutorsky A. Serikov V., and I. Zymnya. They distinguish different terms of competence: motivational competence, cognitive competence; action competence and axiological competence [Zymnya 2006; Bolotov, Serikov 2003; Hutorskii 2002]. Experts of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) „Program Definition and Selection of Competencies”: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations (DeSeCo) consider of „competence” that includes knowledge, practical and cognitive ability, skills, emotions, attitudes, values, ethical rules, and motivation [Ovcharuk 2003]. The Irish teacher D. Kullahan defines this term as ability, which is based on experience and knowledge. People develop and improve these experience and knowledge during education and practice. According to french scientist G. Delor we define the competence that is based on four basic knowledge: developing knowledge, practicing knowledge, learning to be in natural environment, learning to be in social environment [Sofii, Ermakov 2000]. These „foundations” determine the competence and they reflect needs of society for highly qualified specialists.

During the Bologna process the main quality criteria of preparing agrarian specialists were defined. These criteria include (1) creating flexible and beneficial conditions for future career, (2) establishing and implementing transparent programs in higher education by cooperating with employers, and (3) stimulating competitiveness within European educational systems. Preparing specialists for agricultural sectors has been investigated in European Union countries such as Germany, France, Belgium, Poland. Basic requirements were defined for preparation: establishment of regional educational centers of European higher education; the need to recognize programs from different countries; acceleration of process towards improving knowledge; innovative approaches to student-focused teaching [*Cooperation in Higher...* 2006].

In the State Program on development of Ukrainian villages [*The State Program...*] one of the main problems of developing agricultural sectors is the absence of highly qualified specialists and conditions to increase their levels of productive employment, jobs in villages. Ukrainian agrarian sectors have to be

competitive in order to increase the employment rate. The system of agricultural Education in Ukraine, therefore, is needed to be revised for preparing highly qualified specialists. Nowadays, specialists are prepared in many regions of Ukraine for agrarian sectors. These include the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv, National Agricultural University in Bila Tserkva, National Agricultural University in Vinnicya, National Technological University in Zhytomyr, Podolsky National Agrarian Technical University in Kamenetz-Podolsk, National Agricultural University in Lugansk, National Agricultural University in Lviv, Taurian National Agrotechnical University in Melitopol, National Agricultural University in Mykolayiv, National Agricultural University in Odessa, National Agricultural Academy in Poltava, National University of Water Management and Nature in Rivne, National Agricultural University in Sumy, National Agricultural University name after V. Dokuchaeva in Kharkov, Carpathian National University name after Vasylya Stefanyka in Ivano-Frankivsk. Preparing agrarian specialists is imbedded to directions: „Agronomy”, „Plant protection”, „Agrochemistry and Soil Science”, „Ecology, Environmental Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources”. Content, forms and methods of those disciplines are defined by Educational Qualification Characteristics and educational (study) plans are defined by a discipline direction.

We found some differences between professional and social competencies of agrarian specialists. Scientists such as Nagaeva V., Svystun V., Shpykulyak O., Vardanyan U., Savynova T., Yashkova A., Pometun O., and O. Ovcharuk [Svystun 2005; Shpykulyak 2004; Vardanyan, Savynova, Yashkova 2003; Pometun 2004] define „professional competence of agrarian specialist” in a way that students should have professional qualities: initiative, purposefulness, resoluteness, and communicative, making decisions.

Vesnina V. [1998] emphasizes that „professional competence of agrarian specialist” includes the ability of specialists work qualitatively and perform their functions in normal and extreme conditions. Agrarian specialists have to be able to master new knowledge successfully and adapt quickly to different changes.

Doktorovych M. considers that the social competence – „it is acquired ability of personality to orientate in social condition and to interact effectively with social environment” [Doktorovych 2007]. According to Zarubinska I. this term integrates personal characteristics, combination of some characteristics, knowledge and skills. Each of those allows people to interact with society and to do different social roles productivity [Zarubinska 2006].

Research by O. Bodaluva shows us that the social competence is formed during different family situations, life difficulties, experience of dealing with problems. This competence does not depend on natural-physiological characteristic of people. Social intellect and physiological suppleness are two main components of the competence [Bodalev 1996].

On the basis of researches by I. Zarubinska, M. Doktorovych, A. Mudryk and others [Zarubinska 2006; Doktorovych 2007; Mudryk 2006] social competence of agrarian for specialists is „integrative education, which provides efficiency of professional activity in the system of industrial relations”. Social competence is mastery of skills and self-government to enhance professional experience.

Conclusions

We analyzed current knowledge towards developing and improving professional and social competences in students in the field of agricultural sciences. We conclude that an essential feature of professional activity for agrarian specialists is their professional and social character, orientation, and leadership. We reviewed definitions of „professional competence of agrarian specialist” and „social competence of agrarian specialist”.

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Abstract

We assessed the current knowledge towards forming professional and social competences in agrarian specialists. We analyzed the process of preparing agrarian specialists in higher education of Ukraine. We reviewed definitions of „professional competence of agrarian specialist” and „social competence of agrarian specialist”.

Key words: professional competence, social competence, agrarian specialists, Ukraine.