PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHERS
IN AUSTRIA

ABSTRACT

The features of the Austrian education system, namely different types of schools of compulsory and optional levels and the necessity of qualified teachers needed for teaching in such schools, features of foreign languages teachers’ professional training and their practical availability for service in school, have been observed. The problem of hybridization of vocational training and higher education in Austria, which is the result of close cooperation between academic and vocational training, has been researched. The requirements for knowledge, abilities and skills of applicants to teacher training colleges and universities have been determined. The curriculum of teacher education for students, depending on the chosen type of school, has been analyzed. The features of the two-level training for teachers of foreign languages (German and English) have been analyzed. The importance of pre-vocational work carried out to validate students’ choice of teaching profession has been proved. Requirements for professional practical training in school, for production practical training that future teachers of foreign languages have in manufacturing, processing, service, trade; and for speech practical training abroad have been considered. It is important that a high level of knowledge and successfully completed practical trainings allow graduates of teacher training colleges and universities to qualify not only as a teacher of foreign languages, but also a translator or a guide-interpreter in different areas of service. The analysis has highlighted the promising first-hand ideas of the Austrian system of teacher training, its achievements and aspirations.

Key words: types of schools, vocational training, higher education, hybridization, teacher education, pre-vocational work, training, practical training, teacher of foreign languages.

INTRODUCTION

One of the priorities of European education is the training of foreign languages teachers. Many scientists and educators around the world work at this issue, as only a skilled teacher can contribute to the full development of pupils and students. Therefore, at this stage of the development of higher education there are transformation processes, which aim to improve and standardize the system of training teachers of foreign languages in all European countries, thus ensuring the unity of the basic principles in this area of professional formation.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the proposed paper is to analyze the features of the professional training of teachers of foreign languages in Austria, as well as to highlight the promising ideas of the Austrian system of teacher training, its achievements and aspirations.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

Both foreign and native scientists deal with the problem of the educational system in Austria. In particular, some aspects of the Austrian education have been studied by
scientists F. Buchberger, E. Gassner, O. Lokshina, A. Sbruyeva, M. Schratz, H. Seel, L. Zahorulko. Features of teacher education of this country are highlighted in their works. Basic principles of the education system in this country are investigated by N. Benderets, L. Kartashova, H. Kohut and others.

RESULTS

The education system in Austria is characterized by vertical diversification on middle and senior levels of secondary school – parallel structure of different types of schools that offer a variety of educational services. This does not only ensure the conformity of these schools to cultural needs of the community, but more importantly, influences the learning process of teachers who are trained in various educational institutions for different types of schools. Types of programs, the duration of training, qualifications (a teacher, a translator in the sphere of service, a guide) and the level of teacher training (Bachelor, Master) differ in such institutions. Many establishments of teacher education occupy their niche in various levels of education (senior secondary school, non-university professional level and university level) and are the subjects to various subordinations (Карташова & Бендерьес, 2014).

Hence, the typical feature of the Austrian education system ensues hybridization of vocational training and higher education. The problem of hybridization arises in engineer training as well as in teacher training, including teachers of foreign languages, because getting a graduate degree, graduates of the Austrian higher educational establishments are qualified not only as a teacher of foreign languages (e.g. German and English) but also as a guide-interpreter of hotel and tourism business and other areas of service.

Thus, Stephen Dinkelacker notes that hybrid is described as a combination of at least two different institutional sectors so that there is a new form of organization with the characteristics that are unusual for the components (Dinkelacker & Hilzinger, 2013). In this sense, the hybrid, to some extent, is greater than the sum of its parts. It is also important to note that most hybrids cannot meet their projected implied characteristics.

The scientific work by Lukas Graf “Hybridization of Vocational Training and Higher Education in Austria, Germany and Switzerland” states that hybridity involves integration of institutional elements of VET and HE in the structure and practice of an organizational-legal form. These institutional elements may relate to one or more aspects of educational institutions of the following types: regulatory (such as those associated with obtaining certificates and rules of admission), regulation (concerns to curricula and key target groups), and (or) cultural-cognitive (connected with the perception, which is taken for granted). In addition, hybridity combines or integrates these institutional elements not by simple addition but by “synergy” (joint activity, interaction), Graf, 2013.

Vocational training is closely linked with higher education in Austria, what leads to hybridization.

Having observed the characteristic feature of the Austrian education system – the hybridization of vocational training and higher education, we turn now to the features of the professional training of foreign languages teachers. However, to get a complete picture of teacher education in Austria, the information about the general education system of the country is important. This gives an idea of the kind of educational structures that to some extent have been changed in many European countries (Gassner & Schratz, 2000). To do this, let’s use the table that shows different types of schools of compulsory and optional levels and, therefore, the qualification of teachers needed for teaching in such schools (Buchberger & Seel, 1999), Table 1.
## Table 1

Characteristics ofTeacher Education in Austria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/ Schools/Levels</th>
<th>Entrance requirements</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Course structure/ Duration</th>
<th>Qualification/ Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten (age 3-6)</td>
<td>Lower secondary school leaving certificate (after 8 years of schooling)</td>
<td>Upper secondary level; Bildungsanstalt fuer Kindergarten paedagogik</td>
<td>Integrated model; 5 years</td>
<td>Kindergartner/ in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school/ Volksschule (grades 1–4)</td>
<td>Qualified school leaving certificate of an upper secondary school/ Matura or special entrance exam (Studienberechtigungsprüfung)</td>
<td>Post-secondary level; Colleges of Teacher Education</td>
<td>Concurrent/integrated model (25 % of educational sciences, 50 % of subject didactics in all subjects of primary school, 25 % of teaching practice) 168 weekly units of tuition (minimum duration: 6 semesters), one-phase approach</td>
<td>Lehramtszeugnis fuer Volksschulen; Certificate for Teaching/ Volksschullehrer/in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower secondary school/ Hauptschule (grades 5–8) and Polytechnischer Lehrgang (grade 9)</td>
<td>See primary school</td>
<td>See primary school</td>
<td>Concurrent/integrated model (25 % of educational sciences, 50 % of academic studies in 2 subjects; 25 % of teaching practice); minimum duration: 6 semesters; one-phase approach</td>
<td>Lehramtszeugnis fuer Hauptschulen; Certificate for Teaching/ Hauptschullehrer/in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education/ Sonderschule (grades 1–9)</td>
<td>See primary school</td>
<td>See primary school</td>
<td>See primary school; main parts of educational sciences and subject didactics are devoted to special education; specialization in one field of special education 168 weekly units of tuition; minimum duration: 6 sem.; one-phase approach</td>
<td>Lehramtszeugnis fuer Sonderschulen; Certificate for Teaching/ Sonderschullehrer/in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program/ Schools/Levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower and upper secondary school/Allgemeinbildende Hoheere Schule (grades 5–8/9–12) and general subjects in vocational schools at upper secondary level/ Berufsbildende Mittlere und Hohere Schulen (grades 9–11/12/13)</td>
<td>See primary school</td>
<td>1st part: University</td>
<td>1st part: study of 2 academic disciplines including subject didactics; educational studies including school practice (appr. 12 weekly units of tuition/sem.) duration: 4,5 years (9 sem.) 2nd part: teaching at schools, courses in education, science of teaching, subject didactics, school administration; duration: 1 year; two-phase approach</td>
<td>Master’s degree Certificate for Teaching/ Lehrbe rechtigung fuer das Lehramt an Hoeheren Schulen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school/Berufs bildende Pflichtschule (grades 10–12/13 and practical subjects at upper Secondary level/Berufsbildende Mittlere und Hoheere Schulen (grades 9–11/13)</td>
<td>Qualification as a master craftsman, two years of experience in a trade and participation in special introductory courses; or; qualified school leaving certificate of a technical/commercial school at upper secondary level and practical experience</td>
<td>Post-secondary level; Colleges of Vocational Teacher Education/Berufs paedagogisch Akademie</td>
<td>Concurrent/integrated model (subject studies, methodology, teaching practice); duration: (normally) 2 years one-phase approach</td>
<td>Lehramts zeugnis fuer Berufsbildende Pflichtschulen; Berufsschul lehrer/ in Certificate for Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial schools (grades 9–13)</td>
<td>See primary</td>
<td>University, two years of experience in enterprises</td>
<td>Diploma program; integrated model (academic studies, business education, educational sciences, teaching practice); duration: 4,5 years (9 sem.)</td>
<td>Master’s degree Lehrer/in an Berufsbildenden Mittleren und Höheren Schulen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical schools (grades 9–13)</td>
<td>See primary</td>
<td>University, two years of experience in enterprises</td>
<td>Academic studies (min. 9 sem.) at University; INSET programs e.g. Dipl. Ing. (diploma) see commercial schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, this table clearly displays multi-degree, multi-level teacher education of Austria.

It is important that training programs that meet the requirements of the national program (Lehrplan der Pädagogische Akademie) are offered to students for learning depending on the type of their compulsory schooling. However, the initial curriculum is based on an agreed model: students take courses of general education and have vocational training at the same time – from the beginning to the end of a full course of study. Teacher training colleges (or the university colleges of teacher education) are partially autonomous, because they have the right to place 164 modules within the four established areas: humanities – 25–45 modules; subjects and didactics – 65–80 modules; additional courses – 10–30 modules (e.g. IT, special education); practical training in school – 25–30 modules.

Students who intend to further work at primary or special school must acquire knowledge of all academic subjects. All graduates of pedagogical institutions of non-university degree can immediately begin their service as entirely qualified teachers. However, tests taken by the students after graduation (Lehramt Spr Fun) do not provide them the right to teach in high school yet. Graduates of teacher training colleges should obtain the additional course of training on the university level for getting permission to teach in upper secondary school link (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien Curriculum für das Bachelorstudium Lehramt an Hauptschulen, 2014).

For admission to teacher training college for training on the program of teacher education for vocational schools (schools of professional slant), applicants should have individual master qualification or certificate after finishing higher school (Matura). In addition, applicants should have at least two years of professional experience and successfully pass special introductory courses for teachers of vocational schools at the institutes of in-service education (Berufspädagogisches Institut). Two-year training programs vary in content, but they are based on a competitive model; they have taken into account the requirements of the national program, thus the content envisages the study of the subject, didactics and practical training in educational establishments. After graduating graduates receive their diploma (non-university degree), which gives the opportunity to teach in vocational schools.

However, teacher training colleges do not train for teaching in higher vocational schools. In Austria, this position requires of the applicant the availability of the university degree in the subject to be taught. In addition, it is necessary for the applicants to get a two-year experience in the specialty after obtaining short introductory courses at the institute of in-service education.

Obtaining teacher education at universities, students from early learning master the course of a single unit of general and first vocational education. However, the basic teacher education includes such elements as obligatory practical training – graduates should undergo training for one year (Unterrichtspraktikum), organized by the local Department of education in collaboration with the regional Institutes of in-service education.

It should be noted that the basic university studies last for four and a half years – as many as at the classical universities; the academic program of study (Lehramtsstudium) includes general education, which consists of two academic subjects, vocational education and the first teaching practical training (Schulpraktikum). The fact is interesting that for a long time universities were able to determine the content of the curriculum themselves. Minimum requirements for mastering the required clusters or the minimum standards have been recently specified by the national law.

With regard to the vocational training, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that programs of teacher training colleges and universities are widely divergent. From four and a half years of training course at the university, only 16% of the curriculum is devoted to
the special didactics, educational sciences and practical training in schools (Карташова & Бендерець, 2014).

According to the law for higher education of 2005 (Hochschulgesetz) Pedagogical Academies became Pedagogical Higher Schools (Pädagogische Hochschule), in which the student-centered learning and its application in practice are realized. Particular attention is paid to prevocational work in order to verify the correctness of the student’s choice of the teaching profession. The improving of educational programs (including the creative component) and the use of new technologies provide teachers of foreign languages with internally national and international mobility. There is a general statement that the training of teachers in colleges is less scientific than at the universities. However, it can be considered not only a weak, but also a strong point, because every theory must be confirmed by a practical training. Higher educational establishments give theoretical knowledge and schools ensure the practice.

One can distinguish one-level and two-level teacher training in education systems:
– one-level training involves teacher training in higher school, after which the teacher can apply for the position in that school;
– two-level training includes theoretical and practical parts. The teacher training college or the university is responsible for the theoretical training, and the school of appropriate degree provides the practical one (Buchberger & Seel, 1999).

Austria has a two-level teacher training for all levels of the education system and, in our opinion, it is one of the positive features of this country, since the interaction of theory and practical training gives impulse to the improvement of both components and contributes to the professional competence of teachers of foreign languages.

In 1991 the Ministry of Education introduced a draft “English as a working language” (Englisch als Arbeitssprache). English has become the device for instructions at all lessons and improved at the foreign language lessons. As a result, it has become a means of communication (Arbeitsmittel) in school in general. Such innovation has given the impetus to the development of bilingualism (the use of two languages).

Teaching children of immigrants, for whom German is not native, has promoted the training of teachers of German as a foreign language since 2000. The lesson is conducted by the subject teacher, and the assistant, who explains the necessary material in the pupil’s mother tongue, helps them. The positive trend is observed in teacher training colleges and universities as to the training of a teacher of foreign languages who can give all lessons in pupils’ mother tongue and teach them German as a foreign language.

The English language is studied at all faculties. However, the training of future teachers of English involves not only language mastering, but also the possibility of applying the knowledge gained in school, particularly at the bilingual lessons. Thus, the range of a foreign language usage in school is expanded, not only as a school subject, but also as a vital necessity (Корый, 2010).

The implementation of the principles of practical orientation training of foreign languages teachers in Austria provides availability of a training unit in the curriculum as practical preparation for work in school. The system of teaching practical training for future teachers in higher educational establishments is coherent and consistent, characterized by a gradual increasing complexity of tasks and continuity between various stages. In Austria's higher educational establishments, for example, the first phase of practical training begins from the third semester. The content of this phase of practical training is not differentiated depending on the direction of future teachers’ training. During the seminars, held within the
first phase of practical training, students gain knowledge of general principles of planning and conducting the lessons, the principles of their observation and evaluation. They also have the opportunity to practice conducting individual segments of lessons.

From the fifth semester the second phase of practical training begins. It is differential, depending on the studying specialty, and it passes in both directions selected by students in equal volume (four weeks for each discipline). Gaining practical skills is backed up by theoretical training, which is realized through attending seminars. At this stage, future teachers of foreign languages are also encouraged to introspection and reflection of their gained experience. The preliminary and final discussion of the attended and conducted lessons and the preparation of a report on the conducting of a practical training contribute to this (Fachschaft für integriertes Lehramt Uni-Hildesheim, 2014).

The prerequisite for admission to the first state exam is a practical training for 8 weeks. Future teachers of foreign languages should do this vocational practical training in the area of production, processing, service or trade. It is also possible to have it abroad. The purpose of this practical training is to form students’ understanding of the labor market outside the school system. The practical training should be done before the beginning of the basic educational process in higher educational establishment. In our opinion, these two types of practical training promote more informed decision-making concerning the professional compliance and assist in the formation of more conscious attitude of future teachers of foreign languages towards the chosen profession (Мархева, 2012).

The obligatory important part of training teachers of foreign languages in Austria is the studying or spending a semester abroad – in a country, whose language is being studied.

CONCLUSIONS

So, having considered the system of teacher education in Austria and analyzed the features of the professional training of foreign languages teachers at universities and colleges, it can be argued that Austria is committed to providing quality education to all citizens of the country. The dominant feature of teacher training is its versatility, wide application of advanced technologies, teaching methods and practical trainings. Special attention is given to practical training for teaching in schools and to pre-vocational work in order to verify the correctness of the student’s choice of the teaching profession, what greatly improves the quality of teacher training.

Interesting ideas and productive educational sector in Austria may be food for thought, and may serve as a model for further development of teacher education in Ukraine. For example, graduates of Ukrainian higher educational establishments, future teachers of foreign languages, could get a diploma of obtaining a qualification not only of a teacher of foreign languages, but also a translator or a guide-interpreter of hotel and tourism business and other areas of service.

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