The principles of academic staff professional development in the UK

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Abstract. This article discusses the question of academic staff professional development in the UK. The ideas of corporate education and network approach used in British academic staff development system are presented. A set of principles (the dependence of academic staff development organization and content on HEIs purposes and educational policy, the continuity of academic staff professional development, the regular renewal of the training courses content, the orientation to achieving results; the availability of a common goal, openness and partnership relations, innovativeness) is also given. The article proves that the ideas of corporate education and network approach can be successfully used to provide effective professional development of academic staff of Russian universities.

Introduction

As all universities are involved in the process of specialist training today, the question about effective and high-quality work of teachers in Russian higher education institutions (HEIs) has arisen among many researchers because the quality of professional training of future specialists depends on the teaching quality in HEIs.

One of the main conditions for university teachers to be a success is their regular professional development. In this respect, academic staff development practice in British HEIs is of special interest.

It should be noted that the problem of academic staff professional development has been the focus of attention of many foreign researchers such as Barnett, Nixon, Nicholls, Bamber, Light, Cox, Calkins, Zuber-Skerritt [1–4]. They cover this question from the point of view of the role of professional development and innovations in higher education, new strategies and methods of teachers' professional development, critical thinking development in the context of information space extension.

This problem has been studied by many Russian higher education experts such as Morozova, Salimullina, Egorova, Myasoyedov, Kazakova, Sergeeva, Vagaeva, Piterskova, Fedorova, Efendiev, Reshetnikova [5–11]. They give coverage to the main trends and problems of academic staff professional activities, their training, professional and personal development, professional competence formation as well as the organization principles of academic staff development system.

While discussing the question of academic staff professional development in British universities, first of all, let's review the categories of academic staff for whom professional development activities are held.

The academic career pyramid in British universities includes the following categories: professor, reader, senior lecturer and lecturer [12].

The term professor has a specific meaning in the UK system denoting the top of this career pyramid. The hierarchy begins with lecturer. Most staff expect to progress at least to the level of senior lecturer. Before promotion to the rank and title of professor, it is common to spend anything between 5 and 15 years at the lecturer grade and another 3 to 10 at the senior lecturer grade. An intermediate status between senior lecturer and professor is that of reader. Promotion is generally based on research record but teaching and administration may also play a part [13].

The support of high-quality professional activity of teachers is achieved through their systematic training. The basic tendency of the present stage of this process in British HEIs is the use of principles that implement the ideas of corporate education and network approach borrowed from economic and sociological spheres. These ideas are expressed in the organization and implementation of academic staff development activities in accordance with the University educational policy, their positions and work experience, effective interaction between various structural subdivisions of HEIs, partnership with other universities, business, industrial enterprises interested in the development of higher education and training of highly qualified specialists.

Before showing the advantage of the implementation of the above-mentioned approaches, it's necessary to give definitions of the concepts

"principle" and "corporate education" using authentic literature.

According to *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* the concept "principle" means a basic belief, theory, or rule that has a major influence on the way in which something is done [14].

Lindsay Ryan writes that "corporate education is the means of harnessing the knowledge, skills and capabilities of employees to assist an organisation to grow and evolve and, occasionally, to take considered, quantum steps in its development" [15].

The effectiveness of the quality improvement of academic staff activities depends a lot on the principles that are followed by a university administration while planning and arranging academic staff development activities.

It would be expedient to list these principles revealed in the course of investigating this question in the system of the UK higher education.

So, the principles, through which the idea of corporate education is implemented, should include: the dependence of academic staff development organization and content on HEIs purposes and educational policy, the continuity of academic staff professional development, the regular renewal of the training courses content, the orientation to achieving results.

The principle of the dependence of academic staff development organization and content on HEIs purposes and educational policy is implemented through the following university work directions:

- the organization of special university-based structural units (centers, departments);

- the development of specific versions of nationally run training modules (for a particular educational institution).

One of the main tasks of these units is to implement programs and training courses designed specifically for academic staff of a particular university.

For example, the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Aberdeen runs a range of programs accredited by the Higher Education Academy that are available only to members of the University of Aberdeen as their content reflects the teaching specificity of this educational institution [16].

In its turn, at Cardiff University the program *Leadership and Management Development Programme for Research Team Leaders* is run. It incorporates a Cardiff University specific version of the nationally run training module *Research Team Leadership – Developing your capacity for research team leadership*. It is known that in November 2010 the program received the THE Award for Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development with the

judging panel describing Cardiff's approach as "rigorous and comprehensive" [17].

The principle of the continuity of academic staff professional development is implemented through the following university work directions:

- enabling academic staff to the choose time and forms of training; self-education opportunities;

- the development and implementation of training courses within the framework of academic staff official duties in accordance with the above-mentioned career pyramid.

The content of this principle is being actively implemented in the Centre for Academic Development at the University of Aberdeen [16].

New probationary lecturing staff are required to participate in the university-wide two-day course "Two Day Course: Learning & Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Aberdeen".

Besides, the educational policy of the University provides for further improvement of academic staff professional pedagogical activity. The Centre for Academic Development invites them to visit thematic seminars on the problems of the learning process.

The principle of the regular renewal of the training courses content is realized through:

- providing feedback mechanism with the aim of obtaining an objective assessment of university teachers about the quality of training courses and programs focused on their professional development;

- systematic and prompt updating of training courses in accordance with the purposes and policies of HEIs, taking into account personal and professional needs of teachers.

The example of successful implementation of this principle is the activities of the Queen's University of Belfast. Staff Training and Development Unit (STDU) is continually improving its professional development program for teaching staff [18].

Feedback received from teachers engaged in improvement of professional knowledge and skills via the Internet contributes greatly to it.

The principle of the orientation to achieving results is being implemented through the following university activities:

- setting purposes by a university administration to improve professional skill of academic staff;

- the development of programs and academic staff development courses with a practice-oriented character (i.e. the opportunity of application of the received knowledge in practical activity of university teachers).

For example, at Queen's University Belfast the course "Interactive PowerPoint Presentations" provides participants (staff interested in using

PowerPoint 2010 at their lectures) with an opportunity to learn about more advanced features in PowerPoint 2010 in order to incorporate interactivity and multimedia in presentations.

The practical implementation of the above-mentioned principles is realized due to wide range of recourses (seminars, mentoring, coaching), to which academic staff have open access.

For example, at the University of Brighton staff development includes workplace training, exchange of experience with colleagues, mentoring, coaching, participation in conferences, seminars, courses and other training activities for university teachers [19].

Training at the University of York covers various forms of work, including e-learning. The University has created favorable conditions for education and development individualization of teachers [20].

Further we examine the principles that implement the ideas of the network approach, which in the scientific literature (S. Andersson) is considered as the approach that "has a more inductive research approach focusing on the phenomena of exchange between companies and tries to describe and explain why this exchange occurs" [21].

These principles include: the availability of a common goal, openness and partnership relations, innovativeness.

The principle of the availability of a common goal is realized through:
-       the motivation of all teachers working in a particular institution for the overall result associated with specialists quality training that are competitive on the labor market, as well as associated with the prestige of the institution aimed at the preparation of such personnel;
-       the development of common plans and coordinated actions on improvement of academic staff professional activity between the structural subdivisions of the University as well as its partners (educational institutions and organizations), representatives of business and industry, acting as the main employers of these universities graduates;
-       the confirmation of a university teacher status through participation in training programs (Postgraduate Certificate, PGCert).

The UK has a practice of preparing new university teachers (Postgraduate Certificate, PGCert). This course conducted in universities focuses on the role and responsibilities of university teachers in the learning process. Program participants are free to choose their own research issues of a specific scientific problem. Teachers can use their results in teaching students. Their more experienced colleagues (senior lecturers, readers, professors) support and

assess trainees. The main purpose of the program is providing qualified academic staff in the UK HEIs [22].

In 1995, the Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG) was established in the UK to exchange experiences between educational development units of universities. Their main task is to provide professional development for all categories of academic staff (the purpose and role of the educational development units, their functions and place in the institutional structure are discussed) [23].

The principle of openness and partnership relations is realized through the following areas of work:
-       networking between structural university units (departments, centers);
-       development, testing and promotion of new educational staff development programs in the pedagogical community;
-       increased cooperation of universities with industry and business.

University units (The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD)) at Oxford Brookes University (Oxford Brookes University)) are responsible for professional development of academic staff and offer specialized courses (more than a hundred), seminars and consultations on various topics for educational establishments in the UK and other countries. Thus, continuous development of network teaching communities occurs [24].

British universities (The University of Exeter) work in partnership with a number of leading companies and organizations (from small and medium-sized enterprises to multinational corporations). Such cooperation leads to positive long-term results. Businessmen become part of international community, business people, scientists and other professionals to share experiences and knowledge. Representatives of HEIs can quickly respond to the needs of the economy due to such interaction [25].

The principle of innovativeness is realized through:
-       development of training programs based on the latest achievements of world science;
-       teacher training in the latest educational methods and technologies.

For example, at Queen's University Belfast academic staff learns about search engines such as Google. The aim of the course is to help them evaluate the effectiveness of Google Scholar, Google Books and QSearch. This course provides academic staff with the opportunity to access and search hidden information (the content of many databases, e-journals, e-books and other research resources such as newspaper archives) using library resources.

In addition, teachers become familiar with new techniques of groupwork management (fishbowls, pyramids) in specialized courses. In the future, teachers can use them for effective small group teaching [26].

In order to improve the quality of teaching and professional development of teachers in HEIs seminars, conferences and short courses on academic staff development are provided.

Academic staff development incorporates external educational events, workshops and secondments to exchange experiences with colleagues from other universities.

When selecting teaching methods facilitators follow a number of criteria: compliance with the goals and objectives of participants; compliance with course content / program, compliance with the requirements of academic staff and their professional skill level.

In conclusion, we underline that the presented principles of realizing the ideas of corporate education and network approach, as positive experience of British HEIs show, can be successfully used to provide effective professional development of academic staff of Russian universities in accordance with their educational policies and deepening integration of education, science and industry.

We believe that this process in Russian universities will be a success if we approach it gradually and progressively in accordance with official duties of academic staff, without overloading them with the administrative, scientific, research and educational work, but metered, providing functional activities in the framework of one of the named directions.

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