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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL GUIDANCE FOR SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract. The article discusses modern methods and practices of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development of students in higher educational institutions. With globalization and rapid technological progress, traditional teaching methods are becoming insufficient. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of modern methods and practices used in different countries, with the aim of adapting and introducing them into the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The methodological basis of our research is a personal approach, which involves considering the individual characteristics of each student.

The analysis of international experience revealed effective methods, such as emotional intelligence development, active learning, coaching and mentoring, project-based and problem-based learning, gamification and the flipped classroom. These approaches demonstrate high effectiveness and can be adapted for use in the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The introduction of these methods helps to improve the quality of education, improve the employment of graduates and their competitiveness in the labor market. Successful integration of these practices will require adaptation to local conditions and training of teachers, which will significantly increase the level of specialists' training in Kazakhstan.

Key words: soft skills, psychological and pedagogical guidance, foreign experience, university students, development, higher education.

Introduction

The modern higher education system faces numerous challenges, among which one of the key ones is the need to train specialists who have not only professional knowledge, but also a developed set of soft skills. In the context of globalization and rapid technological progress, traditional teaching methods can no longer fully meet the needs of students and employers. In this regard, there is a need to study and implement advanced techniques and effective practices of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development.

The concept of higher education and science development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029 pays special attention to the curricula revision and optimization of the university graduate model. The main focus is on developing key competencies that meet current and future labor market needs (MES RK, 2023).

These measures are aimed at improving the quality of higher education and increasing the employability of graduates, which, in turn, helps strengthen their position in the labor market. In his adress to the nation "Constructive public dialogue – the Basis of Stability and Prosperity of Kazakhstan", President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev noted that only half of the country's universities achieve a graduate employment rate of 60 % (Tokayev, 2024).

This highlights the need for further efforts to integrate education and the labor market. Modern employers strive to find specialists who have not only professional skills and knowledge (hard skills), but also soft skills, such as communication skills, critical thinking,

teamwork, leadership, and adaptability. These qualities allow organizations to strengthen their position and gain a competitive advantage in the market through human resources.

The object of our research is the system of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development in higher education of various countries. Research subject: methods and practices used in foreign universities to develop soft skills among students, as well as the possibility of their adaptation and implementation in the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Thus, we formulated the following hypothesis: adaptation and implementation of advanced methods and practices of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development used in foreign universities into the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan will improve the quality of education and increase the level of graduates' employment who meet the requirements of the modern labor market .

The goal of this study is a comparative analysis of modern methods and practices used in different countries, for their adaptation and implementation in the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Research objectives:

1) analyze and compare modern methods and practices of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development, used in leading foreign universities;

2) assess the possibilities and prospects for using these methods in Kazakhstani universities.

Research methods include analysis of literature and documents on the soft skills development in higher education institutions, study of scientific publications, reports, strategies and recommendations, as well as analysis of programs and methods used in foreign universities.

Psychological and pedagogical guidance in the soft skills development among students of higher educational institutions is of critical importance for the formation of readiness for modern challenges of the labor market, since it not only contributes to holistic personal growth and improvement of interpersonal skills, but also allows for the individualization of training, including the latest technologies in the process and teaching methods.

Literature review

The term "soft skills" refers to skills that are not directly related to professional qualifications and include abilities in the areas of communication, time management, teamwork, etc. The Cambridge Dictionary defines "soft skills" as personal qualities that contribute to effective and harmonious interaction with other people, including productive communication skills (CD, 2024). However, even this voluminous definition does not exhaust the full content and depth of the concept of "soft skills".

Various researchers explore the concept of "soft skills" through different aspects. Majid et al. (2020) consider soft skills, social skills and people skills as synonyms, describing a set of competencies that includes communication skills, problem solving and leadership. Hurrell's (2016) study examines how soft skills contribute to career development and improved employability, especially in an ever-changing labor market. Raitskaya & Tikhonova (2018) define "soft skills" as a set of non-professional skills, abilities and qualities necessary in the labor market for the successful application of professional competencies.

At the international economic forum in Davos, a forecast of the most valuable competencies for 2020 was presented. Key skills included: complex problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and emotional intelligence. These skills are essential to working successfully in an environment of technological change and automation that is radically changing workforce requirements. It is predicted that by 2025, 50 % of all employees will require retraining due to the increased use of technology (WEF, 2020).

The importance of these soft skills has been confirmed by many studies showing that they will become increasingly in demand in the job market. During this study, psychological

and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development of university students will be organized with an emphasis on the development of the above-mentioned soft skills.

The research team analyzed modern methods and practices of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development of university students, used in different countries, with the aim of adapting and introducing them into the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The following is an analysis for 7 countries:

Czech Republic: The Czech Republic uses the project-based seminar methodology, where students work on long-term interdisciplinary projects, developing skills in critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration (Balcar, 2018).

Teachers act as consultants, which promotes student independence and creativity. Educational programs actively use interactive lectures and seminars, including discussions, role-playing games, and simulations to develop communication and analytical skills.

Finland: Finnish curricula include projects across a variety of subject areas, increasing student motivation and ability to apply knowledge in practice. Aalto University (Finland) actively uses game-based teaching methods. In game development programs and interdisciplinary projects, students develop soft skills through gamification (Hamari & Koivisto, 2015). Researchers from Aalto University show that gamification can support long-term motivation and engagement among students.

Germany: In Germany, dual study programs are a cornerstone of the educational system, seamlessly blending theoretical learning at universities with practical training at companies. This unique approach not only equips students with essential professional skills but also emphasizes the development of crucial soft skills like adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving. By gaining hands-on experience in real-world settings, graduates from these programs are exceptionally well-prepared and competitive in the labor market, making them highly sought after by employers for their practical expertise and holistic skill set (Cinque, 2016).

USA: in the USA, the method of problem-based learning (PBL) is actively used, where students solve real problems and tasks in the educational process (Deep et al., 2020). It develops critical thinking, collaboration and problem-solving skills. Coaching and mentoring methods are also widely used, where experienced mentors help students develop personal and professional qualities. Harvard University and other leading universities include Emotional Intelligence courses in their MBA programs and other courses to help students improve their leadership and management skills. Also, the “flipped classroom” technique is widely used to develop soft skills in students, giving them the opportunity to study theoretical materials at home and actively participate in practical exercises in the classroom (Moundy et al., 2022).

For example, Stanford University uses this technique in engineering and computer science, where students watch video lectures at home and participate in discussions and projects in class, which promotes the development of critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills.

England: In England, the educational system places a strong emphasis on developing soft skills through interdisciplinary projects, practical assignments, and personal development programs. These initiatives aim to cultivate creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork skills essential for navigating modern professional environments. Career counseling services are also integral, guiding students in career planning and leadership development. Additionally, the integration of emotional intelligence programs within the curriculum, exemplified by institutions like the London School of Economics (LSE), underscores England's commitment to equipping students with the interpersonal and communication skills necessary for success in both academic pursuits and professional life (Cheng-Huan &Yong-Cih, 2019).

In the Netherlands, Project-Based Learning has been introduced, integrating students into real-world projects. This approach significantly enhances collaboration skills, promotes creative thinking, and cultivates the ability to solve complex problems effectively. Mandatory

project modules within educational programs further encourage students to develop independence, take responsibility, and prepare for professional challenges (Cinque, 2016).

Italy: In Italy, interactive lectures and seminars are actively utilized, incorporating discussions, role-playing games, and simulations. These methods are designed to enhance students' communication and analytical skills. The use of interactive technologies encourages active participation and engagement among students, thereby enhancing their preparedness for professional endeavors (Rossi et al, 2021).

This analysis allows us to identify and compare the most effective methods of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development of university students.

The results of the study and discussion

Based on the comparative analysis of foreign experience in the implementation of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development, we have identified methods that show high results in various educational institutions around the world and can be adapted for use in the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. A description of methods, effective practices, and the possibility of their adaptation in the Republic of Kazakhstan are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Methods of psychological and pedagogical guidance of soft skills development of university students

No	Methods	Description	Effective practices	An example of method's adaptation in the Republic of Kazakhstan
1	Methods for developing emotional intelligence (EI) Kondratenko et al., 2020)	- EI includes understanding and managing one's own emotions, as well as the ability to recognize and influence the emotions of others; - development of EI helps improve interpersonal interaction and leadership skills	- trainings to develop self-awareness and empathy; - role-playing games and simulations; - feedback and coaching	- implementation of emotional intelligence courses into educational programs; - conducting regular trainings for students and teachers
2	Active Learning (Rossi et al, 2021).	- active learning includes a variety of methods that stimulate the active participation of students, such as discussions, group projects, interactive tasks; - this approach helps develop communication, collaboration and critical thinking skills	- use of technologies for interactive learning (for example, educational platforms, interactive whiteboards); - organization of discussions and debates; - implementation of active methods in lectures and seminars	- integration of active learning into traditional lectures; - advanced training of teachers to use active methods
3	Coaching and mentoring techniques (Rahimova et al., 2021)	- coaching and mentoring are aimed at individual support for students, development of their personal and professional skills; - mentors and coaches help students set goals and develop plans to achieve them	- mentoring programs with the participation of graduates and professionals; - regular individual consultations and coaching sessions; - organization of mentor clubs and communities	- coaching and mentoring systems implementation at universities; - cooperation with enterprises to attract professional mentors

4	Project-Based Learning, PBL (Cheng-Huan &Yong-Cih, 2019).	- project-based learning involves students in the implementation of projects that require the use of various soft skills, such as teamwork, communication, creative thinking and problem solving; - students work on real problems or tasks, which allows them to develop practical skills	- creation of interdisciplinary projects; - inclusion of real tasks from industry partners; - regular presentations and reflection on projects	- implementation of mandatory project modules into educational programs; - cooperation with local enterprises to develop relevant projects
5	Problem-Based Learning, PBL (Cinque, 2016).	- problem-based learning focuses on solving complex problems that require students to use analytical skills, critical thinking and the ability to work in a team; - students explore and find solutions through discussions and collaboration	- development of scenarios for real problems; - use of case stages and situational tasks; - group work and discussions	- implementation of PBL into courses in various specialties; - conducting regular seminars and workshops on problem solving
6	Gamification (Garcia et al., 2020)	- gamification includes the use of game elements in the educational process to increase motivation and involvement of students; - promotes the development of teamwork, leadership and strategic thinking skills	- implementation of educational games and simulations; - use of a system of awards and achievements; - organization of competitions and challenges	- gaming applications development for teaching soft skills; - holding competitions to solve real business cases
7	"Flipped Classroom" method (Moundy et al., 2022).	- students study new material at home and perform practical assignments and projects in class; - allows you to actively use class time to develop soft skills through discussions and group work	- preparation of video lessons and materials for self-study; - organizing discussions and collaboration in the classroom; - emphasis on the practical application of theoretical knowledge	- integration of the flipped classroom into curricula in various disciplines; - creation of an online platform for access to educational materials
8	Community-Based Learning (Cinque, 2016).	- learning in the community includes students participation in projects and initiatives aimed at solving real problems of local communities; - helps develop collaboration, social responsibility and leadership skills	- participation in volunteer projects and social initiatives; - cooperation with local organizations; - organization of student clubs and associations	- implementation of mandatory modules on community learning into curricula; - partnership with local and public organizations

9	Project seminars (Abdulaeva & Kurbanova, 2023).	- students work on long-term projects, which allows them to apply theoretical knowledge in practice	- students are united in groups to complete projects, often interdisciplinary; - teachers act as consultants rather than lecturers, which promotes the development of independence and creativity	- implementation of mandatory project seminars into educational programs; - organization of interdisciplinary projects involving students from different faculties.

The analysis revealed that the most effective methods of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development, such as methods for developing emotional intelligence, active learning, coaching and mentoring, project-based and problem-based learning, gamification, flipped classroom and community learning, have significant potential for use in system of higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These approaches not only promote the development of key soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership, but also increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. For example, the gamification technique, which uses game elements to stimulate learning activity, has shown high results in universities in the USA and Finland. Research confirms that gamification can significantly increase students' long-term motivation and engagement in the educational process.

In addition, methods such as community learning and project-based learning help students apply theoretical knowledge in practice, developing their professional and personal qualities. The implementation of these methods into Kazakhstani universities will require adaptation to local conditions and cultural characteristics, as well as training of teachers in new methods. It is important to note that the successful integration of these approaches can significantly improve the quality of education, improve the employment of graduates, and strengthen their position in the labor market, which corresponds to the goals of the Concept for the Development of Higher Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029.

Conclusions

The introduction of advanced methods of psychological and pedagogical guidance for the soft skills development into the higher education system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a strategically important step to improve the quality of specialists' training. These methods, tested in various educational institutions around the world, have proven their effectiveness in developing the key competencies necessary for successful professional activity in the modern labor market. Their adaptation and integration into the educational programs of Kazakhstani universities will not only increase the competitiveness of graduates, but also ensure their better readiness to solve complex problems in professional life.

The successful implementation of these methods requires an integrated approach, including training teachers, developing new educational materials, and creating conditions for the active participation of students in the educational process. Collaboration with international partners and exchange of experience will help speed up this process and adapt best practices to local conditions. Thus, improving the quality of higher education in Kazakhstan will contribute to the development of human capital, which is a key factor in the sustainable economic growth and social progress of the country.

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