

University-Supervised Chair Work as a Form of School and Pedagogical University Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

The main tendencies of pedagogical education are discussed in the article. Modern tendencies and qualifying norms to the future teacher make the opportunities for strengthening of practical orientation of higher education. The key types of university-supervised chair (unilateral and bilateral cooperation) are considered and their work is characterized. The varieties of university-supervised chairs (basic subject and interdisciplinary chairs) are also defined in the article. Current work of university-supervised chair in pedagogical universities and schools is characterised according to the most recent documents on the topic. The authors analyse the experience of Omsk State Pedagogical University in establishing university-supervised chairs. The university-supervised chair of foreign languages is described in the article in detail. The purpose, objectives and functions of the university-supervised specific subject chair are represented and perspectives of school and pedagogical university collaboration are justified. The results of the content analysis of the reports of the university-supervised chair at Omsk State Pedagogical University are provided. The article draws on the interview with the administration of the partner educational institution. Conclusions about the work outcomes of the university-supervised chair of foreign languages are made.

KEYWORDS

University-supervised chair, university-supervised specific subject chair, research and methodology support, modern school, university and school cooperation

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Introduction

Today we are witnessing rapid changes in many areas. The paradigm of research and education is changing too. Moreover, society's expectations from higher education have also changed. Society demands greater agility, flexibility and sensitivity to social, scientific and technological requirements from the universities; universities should be more closely linked to the employer and be able to innovate and focus on the labor

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market. Universities are expected to provide more graduates, more research and services for less money (Knyazev & Evdokimova, 2006). Current trends and qualification requirements for future teachers create conditions to strengthening practice-oriented higher pedagogical education. A.B. Sobolev (2012) points out the following trends in higher education:

Content of education: practice-oriented (applied) bachelor's degree programs; Master's degree programs in technology; modernization of the Federal state educational standards; postgraduate degree programs as a level of higher education.

Technology: academic mobility (online learning); in-service training (university-supervised chairs); e-learning.

Evaluation: monitoring, including private universities; accreditation of educational programs; professional public accreditation.

Financial support: new approaches to planning students' enrollment; increase of wages of faculty members, transition to normative per capita financing.

Structural changes: special programs for leading universities; support to regional universities; modernization of pedagogical education.

These changes significantly affect the choice of the university's development strategy. One of the mechanisms to strengthen practice-oriented education and development of cooperation with the employer is a university-supervised chair. It should be noted that the phenomenon of "university-supervised chair" is not new for nationwide practice of training of future specialists. The first university-supervised chair appeared as early as in the mid-20th century. Its aim was to train future professionals to work in factories. Previously, university-supervised chairs were opened mainly in research institutes, and now they exist at enterprises of the real sector of economy. Today many scientific research works are devoted to the problems of university-supervised chair's activity (Drobotenko, Makarova & Chekaleva, 2016; Merkel, 2014; Makashina, 2015; Nikitina, 2012; Popova & Zajtseva, 2012; Shukshina, Gorshenina & Kulebyakina, 2016; Kamalova, Korchagina & Bulatbaeva, 2016). The problem of university and school collaboration is also studied all over the world. Such researchers as R.M. Serrano, M.A. Olivares Garcia & E. Gonzalez Alfaya (2012), J. Brown (2009), Ch. Opolot-Okurut & J. Bbuye (2014), T. Kruger et al. (2009), S. Salter et al. (2013) identified examples of effective and sustainable university-school partnerships as part of preservice teacher preparation programs, as well as research, induction and continuing professional learning for practising teachers. Many Russian researchers devote their works to the problem (Radionov & Rulevskij, 2016; Bulin-Sokolova, Obukhov & Semenov, 2014; Gulin & Sukhinets, 2015; Borodavkin, Sheglov, Okhochinskij & Rusina, 2015; Sopegina, 2015).

A university-supervised chair provides educational process: employees of companies deliver lectures and lead seminars, master classes; they supervise diploma and course work, practice and training and advise students who work on their projects and research. It can be implemented in various forms: organization of student's conferences, competitions, meetings with leading experts.

Methodological Framework

The analysis of educational practice in Russian universities reveals two of the most common types of university-supervised chairs.

1. One-way collaboration. There are university-supervised chairs located at the university (set up at the university's discretion) and university-supervised chairs located at the enterprise (set up at the enterprise's discretion).

a) A university-supervised chair established on the initiative of the university. Supporting the establishment of the institution and implementing a network of training programs (undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate). Such chair is established with the purpose of integrating research and educational centers where students can choose their major and minor, do research, use research results at their workplace or in their studies (Muratova & Fedorov, 2009). These chairs focus on the following:

- strengthening practical orientation of the educational process by attracting qualified practitioners from a partner organisation;
- development of student's research skills in the areas that such chair is focused on, solving urgent problems of science, education, economics and management;
- organizing in-service training at a partner enterprise;
- internships of faculty members at a partner organization;
- professional development courses for practitioners at the university.

University can use resources of a partner organisation to include the best practices of leading institutions and companies into the educational process and take account of the requirements of the regional labor market. As noted above, the establishment of such chairs is initiated by the university, but partner enterprises also benefit from them. They get an opportunity to select highly skilled personnel and find talented young people as well as to meet with a prospective employee in advance and let him/her choose such type of activity that fits best with his/her desires and abilities. It is a real opportunity of in-service professional training (Sigov & Petrov, 2010). It prompts mutual exchange of ideas between the youth and the experienced employees.

b) A university-supervised chair is created on the initiative of a partner organisation to advance cooperation with the university or research institute. The scope of cooperation is defined individually in each case. Such chair is organized in order to prepare students to work in a partner establishment during their studying at the university and help students learning specific technologies. This chair may bring the training of future specialists closer to the actual production process. Part of the training of seniors and graduates is carried out at the chair, where they are able to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical skills (Torkunova, 2014).

Since 2014 pedagogical universities can also conduct educational activities directly at schools through the university-supervised chairs. According to the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation A.A. Klimov (2014), these chairs are particularly important for bachelor degree programs in applied science. Students can build individual learning paths according to their interests and future employment opportunities. It is assumed that university-supervised chairs are organized in close cooperation between educational institutions of different levels. Training will be realized with the use of infrastructure and methodology of partner institutions. Pedagogical universities make partners with schools, vocational colleges and various social centers. University-supervised chairs that work with non-industrial sector can be separated into a third type of chairs.

2. University-supervised chair with bilateral cooperation. This type of chairs is created in order to organize cooperation between the university and a partner educational institution which involves the following main areas:

- research and methodology support of the partner educational institution (O'Hanlon, 1996);
- practical orientation of the university educational process at a partner educational institution (Villegas-Reimers, 2003);



- research, methodology and project-based learning at the university and partner educational institution;

- development of information resources on the portal "School".

An educational institution (school, vocational college, social center) will be able to use research potential of the partner university and develop a new joint development program. It will also be able to summarize the experience of the institution and disseminate it in the scientific community and start up innovative projects. The representatives of the academic community might also make changes in the educational process in these institutions (Gafurova & Kozel, 2014). Students will have an opportunity to participate in master classes and lectures of leading experts at the pedagogical university. Employees of the university-supervised chairs develop joint educational programs that involve partners in the educational process. Students of the university access lectures, seminars, master classes, workshops led by practitioners who have extensive experience in the professional field of teaching. Pedagogical internship, in such conditions, is becoming more centralized. Partner educational institution becomes a research and methodology laboratory that makes it possible to systematically analyze lessons of the teachers who work for the partner educational institution and other practitioners. Teachers provide research and methodology support to the partner educational institution, lead Olympiads, student's and school conferences.

Based on that it is advisable to identify two specific variations of university-supervised chairs: basic subject chair and interdisciplinary chair. The first one is focused on the basic subject which is often similar to that of the relevant department of the university. The second type of chairs works in different directions or assists in the development of interdisciplinary studies.

Methodology

Omsk State Pedagogical University (OSPU) also has experience in university and school interaction through university-supervised chairs. Following the decision of the Academic Council and Regulation of university-supervised chair, contracts and agreements with partner organizations aiming at strengthening relations with employers, OSPU has created 19 basic subject chairs and 7 interdisciplinary chairs. They interact both with municipal schools and Omsk district schools. A distinctive feature of these chairs is research and methodology support to schools, vocational colleges and community centers. It should be noted that partner organizations were carefully selected. They were required to be not just organizations that are willing to employ university graduates. They were supposed to be the city leaders in education and the faculty members of relevant university-supervised chairs were supposed to be highly qualified experts. The plans for a more active cooperation between OSPU and partner educational institution include establishing a joint service, for example, the banks of ideas or projects that take place in the scientific and student communities and might interest partner educational institutions.

Results and Discussion

The present article focuses on the activities of basic subject chairs. The analysis of reports on the activities of 19 basic subject chairs reveals the main directions of their work. They include research and methodology support of the partner educational organization, overseeing projects of the partner educational organization, support of students' activities, professional development courses for colleagues, teaching internships.

Schools of the city and region make up to around 80% of partner educational institutions. Colleges (15%) and urban community centers (5%) are also considered as partner educational organizations.

Content analysis of the reports by university-supervised chairs helped to identify the most important forms of pedagogical university's interaction with partner educational organizations. These include: methodological seminars (40%), joint (social, telecommunication, educational, coaching) projects (23%), professional orientation events (17%), research and practice (webinars, video seminars) seminars (10%), professional development courses for faculty members (7%), other forms (3%) (master classes, festivals, contests, conferences). Methodological seminars are prioritized as the main form of interaction because they are highly demanded by partner educational institutions and provide a good venue for sharing experience and developing professional competencies of partners. Joint projects allow both partners not only to implement the results of pedagogical research into practice and exchange experience with colleagues, but also to establish links with other educational and social institutions.

These reports also reveal the results of university-supervised basic subject chairs as well as the problems that faculty members had to deal with. The main problems mentioned in the reports include the following: lack of clear understanding of the functions of the basic subject departments, format of interaction with schools, partial overlap of cooperation tasks of regular university chairs and university-supervised chairs.

One of university-supervised interdisciplinary chairs of OGPU is the department of foreign languages that works in the partner school N 115 in Omsk. Since 2013 this school regularly ranked in the top 500 schools of the Russian Federation. For a few years, the school has been hosting a training center "English as a second or foreign language exam" to receive the Cambridge certificate. The school also hosts the School of the German language diploma. For 20 years, the school has had a student exchange program with the Berlin Werner-von-Siemens school. School N 115 became OGPU's partner educational institution in 2015. The purpose of the university-supervised basic subject chair is to develop the educational process by strengthening ties of OGPU with educational organizations of the city according to the educational goals of the Department of Foreign Languages. To realize this purpose, the leading faculty members of the university-supervised basic subject chair lead classes in innovative ways on important research issues in linguistics, pedagogy, psychology; develop research in the areas that are basic to the department with the involvement of students and teachers; organize internships for the professional orientation of students. In accordance with the listed goals the university-supervised basic subject chair performs the following functions: organizes and conducts master classes and consultations with high school teachers; develops new educational materials; participates in the National Certification Commission; organizes practical training of students in professional organizations; organizes research seminars, round tables and conferences. The chair began its work with the organization of meetings with the management of the university department and school to define common interests and strategies of the chair. Taking into account the interests of the school and university, it was decided to implement projects in the following areas:

- research and methodology support of the partner educational institution: the seminar "Perspectives of School Education"; workshop for teachers of the partner institution "Organization of students' research activities at the foreign languages section", school administration's participation in the mid-term expertise procedures in



the partner institution and the prospects for further work, a round table on the theme "Innovative technologies in foreign language teaching";

- research and project-based learning of university students and support of the partner educational institution: methodology seminar for the students of the partner institution "School of young researchers", expertise of research projects made by students of the partner institution for a non-state educational establishment;

- practice oriented approach to university education in cooperation with a partner educational institution: students of the Department of Foreign Languages organized and acted as jury in the contests for foreign language learners (phonetics, grammar, translation contests).

The teachers of the department of the English language together with the partner school, organized the municipal stage of the All-Russia Olympiad in English for which they prepared their own assignments. Faculty members took part in the webinar for the organizers of the municipal stage of the All-Russia Olympiad in English. OSPU faculty members led methodological seminars for school teachers on the theme "The results and typical English language errors at the Unified State Exam in English in 2014/2015 academic year" and "Tasks at the municipal stage of the All-Russian Olympiad on the English language" and "Foreign language students' research".

The interview with the school administration revealed the main problems the school teachers have to deal with during joint projects as well as the prospects for the next academic year. According to the administration of the gymnasium, the main difficulty was time limitation. There was not enough time to notify all participants about the project. It was also mentioned that the school is interested in collaboration with OSPU where university and school students will work together in joint community and foreign language projects. Finally, it was noted that either the university or the school may become the venue for such projects. It is possible to assume that the tasks that are developed specifically for such projects can become a part of students' internship and contribute to the development of the university-supervised specific subject chair.

The education portal "School" can become a means for developing cooperation between the chair and the school. The portal "School" is a regional platform for distance learning and interaction between students, teachers, and parents. The portal is available on the OSPU's server (<http://school.omgpu.ru>) and can meet all the needs of the educational process.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that the characteristics of the university-supervised specific subject chair of OSPU are as follows:

- research and methodology support of partner educational organizations, in particular, training seminars create conditions for the professional development of school teachers;

- results of specific subject chairs' work are in demand by university faculty members who teach a course in methodology of teaching specific subjects because they have the opportunity to interact constantly with practitioners;

- mission of a university-supervised specific subject chair gives the school the opportunity to develop research projects;

- targeted work with school takes into account the needs of the school.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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