

**BULVINSKA OXANA**  
*PhD, Senior Researcher,  
Institute of Higher Education  
of the National Academy  
of Educational Science of Ukraine,  
Kyiv, Ukraine*

**COMMUNICATION-BASED FORMATION OF RESEARCH  
COMPETENCE BY THE STUDENTS OF USA AND EUROPEAN  
UNIVERSITIES**

A significant experience of communication-based formation of research competence by students has been amassed by universities in the United States and Europe. Modern philosophy of education emphasizes adoption and expansion of communicative education in educational environment. The report of the National Communication Association (USA) in 2003 got the name of «Communication in the General Education Curriculum: A Critical Necessity for the 21st Century» [1].

Communication-based formation of research competence by students is a process of acquiring communicative knowledge, forming communicative skills and competencies, developing communicative personality traits and accumulation of professional and communicative experience in research interaction with individuals and groups, which are required of future professionals for finding ways of solving scientific problems, for production and application of scientific knowledge, information sharing, collective evaluation of scientific work.

The analysis of curriculum documents of USA and European universities, as well as publications of national and foreign researchers revealed three separate strategic sectors of communication-related education in these countries.

The first strategic sector is specialized programs for undergraduate, graduate and PhD level of communication (Communication Science or Communication Studies) that prepares qualified specialists in communication (communication major). The curriculum includes a wide range of courses on communication. The particular set of courses and their correlation can vary in different universities to a significant extent, due to the very interdisciplinary character of the area of communication studies and the fact that departments, faculties and universities have different profiles, their own particular communicative specialization.

At George Mason University (Fairfax, Virginia, USA) the Bachelor of Arts in communication prepares students for professional positions in such fields as interpersonal and organizational communication, journalism, media production and criticism, political communication, and public relations. The M.A. in Communication program seeks to answer these questions by examining processes of human communication in increasingly complex social and technological environments. Overall, the program offers four distinct areas of focus:

- strategic communication/public relations;
- health communication;
- science communication [2].

Faculty of Media, Communication and Cultural Studies of Newcastle University (UK) explore the role the media plays in shaping culture, identity and interpersonal communications and provides a range of approaches in communicative education:

- media: television, the press, radio, print media, the Internet, film, DVD, video, CDs, mass communications, media organisations, audiences, and producers;
- communication: the imparting or exchange of information, ideas or feelings;

- culture: the ideas, customs and art produced or shared by a particular society [8].

The focus of the study in the M.A. Communication program at the University of Vienna (Austria) is on the contexts, content and effects / consequences of communication processes on the micro, meso, and macro level. The students learn Theory of Communication; Theory of Communication Research; Communication Research Methods [6].

At the University of Bordeaux (France) Master Program «Information and communication science and technology» combines two areas. The first of them is scientific and theoretical, focused on epistemology, history and philosophy of science and technology. The second area is applied that aims to information, communication and art [7].

So, preparation of qualified specialists in communication is performed in the United States and Europe at bachelor, master and PhD levels; apart from scientific researches into communication, many universities offer courses that are focused on professional training of communication specialists in various fields of economy, social relations, media and more. It is communication education, which means training of high-quality specialists in communication. Despite the fact that the number of these professionals is limited, it must be said that these trained professionals are able to develop and introduce to university curriculums training programmes and courses in communication.

A different communication-related training of professionals is suggested by the second strategic sector of communication-related education – introduction to the curriculum of basic courses in communication obligatory for specialists in various fields (communication minor).

Teaching of communication has an applied character, in other words, it aims at preparing students for solving specific problems of communication in professional situations. Therefore, specialists in different areas at different levels of higher education in Europe and the United States are offered not only and

even not particularly basic courses of communicative training, but courses aimed at the formation and development of language skills of public speaking, group and interpersonal communication in different groups in all their social and cultural diversity and in various social contexts: argumentations and debates, communicative and rhetorical practical training session, legal, political, environmental communication, business communication, interpersonal, intercultural and international communication, communication in conflicts and crisis situations, communication in small groups etc.

The minor in Communication and rhetorical studies at Syracuse University (Syracuse, New York, USA) serves as an excellent complement to almost any major. You have the opportunity to enhance your communication skills as well as develop a sophisticated understanding of communication processes in a variety of social and professional contexts. The students change Concepts and Perspectives in Communication Studies or Concepts and Perspectives in Rhetorical Studies. The program includes Public Advocacy, Interpersonal Communication, Small Group Communication, Argumentation.

The program Leadership and Stewardship Communication is designed to enhance the student's understanding of the relationship between communication and leadership especially those that prepare students for leadership roles in specific professions (law, politics, management, media, community services, and so on). The program includes required courses (Public Advocacy, Presentational Speaking, Small Group Communication, Leadership and Stewardship Communication) and three from electives (Argumentation, Political Communication, Persuasion, Intercultural Communication, Ethics in Human Communication, Rhetoric of Social Change, Political Leadership, Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Skills, Leadership: Theory and Practice) [5].

Therefore, introduction in the curriculum of basic courses in communication obligatory for specialists in various fields makes it possible to deepen the communication-oriented training of future professionals and equip

them with knowledge and skills for solving professional tasks by means of communication.

Still, communication-related education cannot be reduced to specific communication training courses or training areas. The most profound involvement of communication with training of future professionals means transformation of the entire organization of training activities and educational process in universities. It is communicative education, that is, education based on the principles of communicative didactics.

It should be noted that the term «communicative didactics» has not been universally adopted, due to the fact that the education area is not yet sufficiently developed; different scientific works define for the term as «communication-oriented education», «a communicative approach in education», «education organized in a communicative way» and so on. Consequently, the conceptual framework still needs well-reasoned formation. But the meaning of the quoted definitions allows us to consider them as having the same view of a learning process as a joint purposeful activity of teacher and student that interact in terms of cooperation and partnership. Communicative didactics is not focused on the content of school discipline, but nurtures a culture of thinking instead, teaches critical thinking and reflective analysis, concerns with formation of competences. The strategic goal of communicative didactics is not encyclopaedic learning and knowledge accumulation of dead-weight, frozen, ready-made character, but gaining, formation, acquisition of knowledge here and now, in every class, in dialogue, during an intellectual interaction of all participants of the educational process. In this way, the processes of forming research and communication competencies are combined.

The communicative way of education employs such forms and methods of teaching that would foster the process of formation and development of communicative competences, nurture communicative personal qualities and promote accumulation of professional communicative experience with the

environment.

Interactive teaching methods based on interaction between students are indispensable in the process. The educational process is organized in the way of common involvement in the process of learning; students exchange information, analyze it, weigh alternative views, participate in discussions, model situation, evaluate the actions of others and their own behaviour, make thoughtful decisions – that is, tackle problems together, plunging into the atmosphere of a real business cooperation.

Interactive training transforms the reciprocal actions of teacher and student: student activities come to the foreground, and teacher acts as an organizer of the learning process, provider of necessary conditions for students. The most common interactive methods, according to western researchers, are method of projects, case method, discussion, research method, playing techniques.

*Project* is a set of search, explorative, accounting, pictorial and other works performed by students independently, but under the guidance of a teacher, with the aim of practical or theoretical settling of a relevant issue. The main outcome of a project is obtaining of a practical result – an educational product, which can take form of a report, essay, video clip, album, poster, newspaper article, instruction, theatrical production, game (sport, business), web-site and others.

Presentation of the results develops the skills of arguing one's position, making the audience aware of important information, orientation in the ways and means of effective presentation of information, rhetorical skills of public speaking.

For example Sports Coaching Students at University of Central Lancashire, UK, work as a project team through a consultancy brief with a partner agency and recommend strategies that can be employed to support community development through community sport and coaching initiatives. Examples of consultancy projects include: «A «health check» of football refereeing in Blackburn»; «Community Sport and Crime Reduction»; «Community Sport

(«Street Dance»)).

Students are expected to hold regular review meetings with the representatives from agencies, other relevant stakeholders (sportsmen, referees, coaches); use secondary research to help analyse their findings. They present their work and recommendations at a conference, where all the partner groups are invited. Representatives from agencies provide the feedback on students' work, judging on the content, feasibility of solutions, competency in conducting research and effectiveness of presentation [3, p. 17].

The essence of the *case-method* is that students are offered to consider a real-life economic, social, domestic or other problematic situation related to the future profession, and suggest a course of actions to address it. Along with the ability to think logically, clearly and consistently, understanding the meaning of the background of the situation and the proposed solutions, readiness for self-development and professional growth based on analysis of mistakes, both one's own and of others, student develops the skills of convincing reasoning, clear and accurate presentation of his or her point of view both personally and in written form.

Dorothy Spiller, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Waikato (Hamilton, New Zealand) bring example at Catholic Women's College (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA). The students were studying *Jazz* by Tony Morrison, a novel with strong sexual content. The women were given a scenario to address. In this scenario, the novel had been set for 16 year old students at a Milwaukee girl's school. The students were told that the parents had objected to their daughters studying the text on the grounds of obscenity. The teachers had said that the book would stay on the curriculum because of its literary merits. The students were invited to work in groups to provide a report for the parent teacher authority which advised on these matters. The students had to read the book, had to investigate the relationship between obscenity, literature and education (possibly the historical and legal precedent) and provide a report for the parent

teacher authority [4, p. 19].

During the academic *discussion* students are oriented towards sharing their thoughts, ideas, conclusions on the issue under examinations. Discussion forms such communicative competences: ability to analyze, summarize and find the key points, to verify statements and conclusions of interlocutors, speak clearly and express one's views, listen attentively, ask questions and answer questions, argue for one's opinions and defend them, perceive and respect the interlocutor and his otherness.

An example of written discussions is a student «Harvard Law Review». Each journal issue presents student notes about inconsistencies (or incomplete compliance) of American court rulings with the Constitution and existing laws. To do this, law students analyze the judicial practice in the country, present their findings in the journal, demonstrating their media-communicative competence, that is, ability to understand the laws and language of the audiovisual language of the media and use them. The following issues publish papers open to discussion that offer other options of judicial decisions on certain legal matter [3, p. 44].

The *research method* implies maximum independent research and creative activity, solving scientific tasks, all that leading to the discovery of new knowledge. Students learn to acquire knowledge, to investigate the object or phenomenon, draw conclusions and apply new knowledge and skills in real life.

At the University of St Andrews (Scotland) the last four weeks of the spring semester of chemical faculty devoted to experimental research. Students are divided into groups of five–six each assigned to an academic supervisor who assigns a topic for investigation. This requires some literature research, experimental planning, experimental work, analysis of results and their presentation. Students have no other class and are able to spend their full time on this module. There are parallels between this approach to course design and the experimental physics course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

(USA) [3, p.13].

*Gaming techniques* (business, simulation, role-playing, computer) further formation of practical skills and skills for future professional career, develop of creative thinking and an individual communication style. For example, students of the «Business Administration» specialty are offered computer games where groups of students are supposed to act out realistic business scenarios, working in a group and engaging in group dynamics issues, time management, decision making and so on. Such simulation games of business management are used as course elements in business schools from two weeks at the University of Western Ontario (London, Canada) to three months at Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA) [9, p. 37].

Thus, communication-oriented higher education makes it possible to train up-to-date specialists who gain both professional and communicative knowledge and skills, that is, are able to work effectively with people and build constructive professional relations.

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