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NON-FORMAL EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES

Ⓐ *This study covers non-formal learning in higher education institutions by examining online platforms of non-formal education in the European Union (EU). Non-formal education in EU countries plays an important role in the development of personality, professional skills and social integration. It is a key element of the lifelong learning concept, which is actively supported by the EU. Ukrainian online platforms of non-formal education are more frequently used by students in Ukrainian higher education institutions. The survey analysis has shown a high rate of interest among students in getting acquainted with online platforms of non-formal education used in the EU. Examples of modern online platforms in EU countries are Codecademy, Coursera, Udacity, Udemy, OpenupEd. Platforms in EU countries offer courses from leading universities and teachers, providing students with the opportunity to gain knowledge at a high level. A principal role of non-formal education in professional training has been recognized in EU countries. Online courses through platforms are often focused on practical skills that are highly valued by employers. The platforms include courses related to the specifics of work and study in the EU, which helps students understand the requirements of employers and prepare for employment. Online platforms foster a culture of continuous learning, which is crucial for adapting to changes in the world. Therefore, there is a need to analyze and identify modern online platforms of non-formal education. The use of online platforms for non-formal education in higher education would enable students to obtain and expand their professional knowledge. The experience and skills acquired via online platforms in the EU would make students more competitive in the labor market. Students gain international experience while studying on EU platforms. Non-formal education in the EU is an important tool for adjusting to rapid changes in society and the economy, contributing to the development of an innovative, inclusive and educated society. Knowledge of online platforms in EU countries allows students to access quality education, develop professional and soft skills, prepare for an international career, and broaden their horizons. This is an important tool for successful learning and professional development in today's world.*

Keywords: students; additional knowledge; educational platform; informal education; methods and tools

НЕФОРМАЛЬНА ОСВІТА В КРАЇНАХ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОГО СОЮЗУ

Ⓢ *Розглянуто використання здобувачами вищої освіти онлайн платформ для неформальної освіти в країнах Європейського Союзу. Зазначено, що у професійній підготовці майбутніх фахівців у країнах ЄС важливу роль відіграє неформальна освіта. Тому, виникла необхідність в аналізі та виділені сучасних онлайн платформ неформальної освіти. У досліджені визначено, що частіше студенти застосовують українські онлайн платформи неформальної освіти. Однак, вони зацікавлені в ознайомленні з онлайн платформами неформальної освіти, що застосовуються в ЄС. Застосування онлайн платформ неформальної освіти у вищій школі надасть змогу студентам отримати та розширити власні професійні знання. Знання та навички, отримані на онлайн платформах ЄС, допоможуть студентам бути конкурентоспроможними на ринку праці. Студенти зможуть отримувати міжнародний досвід під час навчання на платформах ЄС.*

Ключові слова: студенти; додаткові знання; освітня платформа; неформальна освіта; методики та інструменти

The general currentcy of the problem. Currently, Ukraine is undergoing European integration processes that require changes in the educational process. The growing rapprochement of national policies in the process of achieving common goals defined by the European Union (EU) framework programs of cooperation in the field of education and training [10] is expected within the education sphere. Non-formal education used in EU countries is many and various, since each EU country is independent in choosing teaching methods, their validation and application in practical activities. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Strategy in Ukraine suggests the direction towards inclusive and equitable education and providing opportunities for lifelong learning for all [7]. Therefore, the analysis of the European education and training development strategy is relevant for Ukraine, which is in the process of European integration and is heading towards the European Educational Space.

Analysis of resent research and publications. I. Akymenko [1] has examined non-formal European education functioning through a system of educational activities, projects and initiatives including improvements in professional competencies, increasing awareness, and providing basic educational knowledge. Types of non-formal education can cover seminars, career enhancement training, online learning, various thematic courses and programs organized by public organizations. Non-formal education in European countries plays a central role, availed by the revival of traditional public education as well as ensuring the possibility of continuous self-development of personality in the face of present challenges. The author believes that studying the practice of non-formal education organization in the UK, Germany, and Poland has shown constantly evolving education sector owing to the support provided by government authorities and active citizen engagement. The drafting of legislative acts, national mechanisms for supporting non-formal education, as well as emulating successful experiences in other countries at the level of public institutions are also important.

I. Akhnovska [2] has identified the characteristics of non-formal education. Hence, the scientist has noted the strengths such as adequate resources, information about which is promulgated via viral marketing, and the weaknesses represented by the insufficient level of integration into officially accredited educational programs. Threats to the use of non-formal education lie in the inadequately developed regulatory framework, and a reduction in number of training centers resulted from licensing educational activities.

Y. Saveliev [6] considers that non-formal education can be useful for testing methods and tools which could then be used for formal education, but also notes that non-formal education is optional and voluntary as opposed formal education.

H. Tovkanets [8] noted that among the main principles of organizing in-service training for teachers in Denmark and Norway are continuity, comprehensiveness, and the possibility of participation of different categories of teaching staff in determining policy on in-service training.

Identification of previously unresolved parts of a common problem. It has been noted that in the European Union (EU), non-formal education is a contemporary form of obtaining new knowledge and a way to improve educational and professional qualifications. However, there are a lot of online platforms in the EU that provide an opportunity to gain knowledge, so it is extremely important to analyze the main online platforms that would be useful not only for participants in the EU educational process, but also for Ukrainian educators.

The purpose of the paper: to study the online platforms of non-formal education used in EU countries and to analyze the student survey on the usability of online platforms in the educational process.

Presentation of the basic material. The main online platforms of non-formal education used in EU countries have been identified [9].

1. www.codecademy.com. Codecademy is an interactive online platform founded in 2011, allowing to learn 7 programming languages including Python, PHP, jQuery, JavaScript, Ruby, markup languages HTML and CSS. Anyone can create their own course on the site and publish it using the Course Creator, and some courses have "sandboxes" where users can test the written code. Codecademy also introduced the "Hour of Code" application for iOS, which enables to learn programming in a playful way. At the end of January 2014, more than 24 million users had completed more than 100 million exercises.

2. www.coursera.org. This platform offers more than 2,000 digital courses covering more than 180 different specializations, graded by 4 educational levels. In addition, it has about 25 million eager learners registered. This recourse is well suited not only for gaining knowledge but also for getting recognized and credits for it from 149 higher education institutions from all around the globe that cooperate with Coursera. The graduates obtain an official certificate after successfully completing the course. The course participants are required to systematically review the lecture materials on a weekly basis, read the recommended literature, and complete practical tasks during the study. Some of the courses are available with Ukrainian subtitles.

3. www.udacity.com. A Web project called Udacity is mainly focused on technical disciplines. Separate blocks are concerned in mathematics, entrepreneurship, design and other fields of knowledge, such as physics or biology. In total, Udacity offers about 30 courses based on the difficulty levels: for beginners, those with some experience, and professionals. Each course is divided into several units presenting video materials. After each unit, a follow-up homework is given via integrated quizzes as self-assessment-tests. Completing and passing a course usually takes about two months, requiring a time commitment of approximately 6 hours per week. Udacity can even help in finding a job: with the consent of students, their personal data are transferred to companies-employers through partnership agreements with the platform. Today, Google Company, Bank of America Affiliate Companies, social networking website Facebook and others are partnered with Udacity's.

4. www.udemy.com. Udemy is a learning platform that focuses on educational initiatives, grouped into 16 various thematic categories taught by practicing experts. The choice of courses is very widely – from tips for improving personal

effectiveness to guidelines for promoting and maintaining healthy behaviors and lifestyle as well as mastering music theory. There are both free and paid training programs. Materials are provided in several formats: videos, audio recordings, slides and text files. Moreover, Udemy affords companies with tools to create their own courses that are used to train employees. After successful completion of a training, students can get certificates confirming their knowledge and skills issued by such well-known organizations as Cisco Systems, Microsoft Corporation, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and others.

5. www.ed-era.com. EdEra (Education Era) is an educational startup aiming to raise the level of education in Ukraine and make it universally accessible. All the educational programs are available for free, although after completing the course, anyone interested can support the project financially. Each video lecture is supplemented with questions and practical tasks for better understanding and augmented with supporting materials – notes with visual images and explanations. Students solve and submit their homework assignments weekly, and at the end of each course, they take a final examination. It is possible to study at any time that is comfortable for the participants, and accomplishments are confirmed by an issued certificate.

6. www.khanacademy.org. The platform hosts a large number (several thousand) of free short lectures on various academic disciplines including mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, finance, economics, biology, art, as well as computer science and other subjects.

7. www.edx.org. Founded by Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2012, EdX is a leading platform for online education. It provides Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) through the open source free OpenEdX platform. Students are offered high-quality training programs in 24 disciplines, including computer science, statistics, literature, and many others.

8. www.canvas.net. The Canvas Network can boast of various courses developed by experts in numerous fields: from PhDs to managers, from writers to specialists. Each course is unique in its methodology, and a detailed description of each includes information about the aspects of teaching. The course duration is usually 2–3 weeks, and the recruitment announcement opens a month in advance or even earlier, allowing everyone to register online beforehand. Canvas Network provides three types of courses: free, shareware and paid. Shareware courses relate to additional costs for educational materials, such as textbooks and other editions, while paid courses enable receiving credits for the continuing education system.

9. openuped.eu. OpenupEd is the first and so far only pan-European initiative offering MOOCs, launched in 2013 by the European Commission and the European Association of Distance Learning Universities (EADTU). With excellent co-operation of OpenupEd partners between Asian and African countries, coordinated by UNESCO, over 200 MOOCs are now available translated into 13 languages to students for personal review and study.

10. iversity.org/. Iversity is a European educational online platform focused on providing interactive training programs and lectures for universities since 2011, and specialized in offering MOOCs since 2012. Today, Iversity accumulates over 750,000 registered users and over a million students, and also, it is one of the few platforms where students from around the world can gain ECTS credits for successfully completing online courses.

The Law of Ukraine "On Education", Article 8 "Types of Education" dated 05.09.2017 No. 2145-VIII provides that non-formal training is based on academic programs and applicants are not awarded state-recognized educational qualifications by education levels, but they can obtain a professional and/or partial educational qualification [3]. The Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated February 08, 2022 No. 130 "Procedure for the recognition of learning outcomes in higher and professional pre-higher education obtained through non-formal and/or informal education" defines general requirements on the procedure for the recognition of learning outcomes in higher education obtained through non-formal and/or informal education in higher education institutions [5].

In Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science team is broadening the scope of important resources related to psychological assistance, education, and obtaining information for adults. Platforms for improving skills and personal development are currently adding to the available list [4].

1. prometheus.org.ua. Prometheus is a free educational online resource in Ukraine launched in 2014. The platform cooperats with top universities in our country. Prometheus opens a space for universities, talented teachers and leading companies to host and distribute their educational courses. Each course includes video lectures, interactive tasks for individual work, and a forum where students can approach their advisors for help, as well as exchange views and learn from each other. After successfully completing the course, users receive an electronic certificate that serves as confirmation of the acquired knowledge and skills. Access to the courses is possible from anywhere in the world at any convenient time, and the platform also offers mobile applications for Android and iOS devices.

2. vumonline.ua. The Open University of Maidan (VUM) is an online platform for teaching the basics of civic consciousness. This online project contains more than 30 educational programs available for free. Each course consists of video materials, practical exercises and tests for self-control. A special forum allows students and teachers to freely exchange ideas and discuss the learning process. Lectures are given by well-known experts from business spheres, public organizations, as well as successful entrepreneurs and representatives of the social sector. The programs cover a wide range of topics: personal development, realizing one's own opportunities, starting one's own business, and building an open society in Ukraine. After successfully completing the course, users are invited to download an official certificate.

Results. According to the survey results, 92% of 25 5th-year students at Kharkiv National Medical University reported the importance of using digital support in the educational process. 80% of the respondents considered the use of non-formal online educational platforms, and 20% of them stated about not having platform used for learning. Students noticed the Prometheus

platform as the most commonly used and would like to be informed of usable online platforms in EU countries.

Conclusions. Education in Ukraine is being transformed under the influence of European educational strategies, and non-formal education in EU countries occupies an important place. Therefore, to improve the educational and professional level, to train a competitive specialist in the labor market, it is important to examine the characteristics of using educational online platforms of European non-formal education in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

We are of the opinion that the use of European online platforms of non-formal education in the learning process is required ***further scientific research*** to familiarize students with the European experience of gaining professional knowledge.

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