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## HARD AND SOFT SKILLS FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SPECIALIST

The article presents an attempt to investigate a particular aspect of professional training of specialists in international relations, which is the development of a complex of skills necessary for future employment and successful professional activity in the chosen field of interest. The rapid development of informational societal tendencies encourages the need of a new generation of specialists whose qualification satisfies the requirements of progressive labour market. This, in turn, provokes the pursuit of innovative changes and decisions on the way to train these specialists in terms of higher education standards. Generally speaking, professional training is now experiencing the fundamental shift in selection of approaches to the formation of instructional programs, definition of its aims and objectives, choice of teaching methods and, of course, interpretation of skills of future specialists. The given paper relies on theoretical methods of scientific researches using efficient methodological framework. The research is conducted from the perspective of frequently used division of skills into hard and soft, which reflects the modern tendencies of viewing the issue under study. In the course of the study, the conducted analysis of the chosen reference base gives a possibility to outline major hard and soft skills of international relations specialists as well as the methods of instruction, which help to develop these skills in the learning process of higher education establishments. The findings of this study reveals that modern labor market shows high requirements for future employees and well-developed combination of hard and soft skills help to keep abreast with modern tendencies of labour market. The study also suggests that higher education institutions should draw more attention to the development of soft skills as they make future specialist more flexible in professional activity and to go out of the limits of a particular profession.

**Keywords:** professional training; international relations; specialist in international relations; hard skills; soft skills; professional competence.

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## ТВЕРДІ ТА М'ЯКІ НАВИЧКИ, ЯКІ ФОРМУЮТЬ ПРОФЕСІЙНУ КОМПЕТЕНТНІСТЬ ФАХІВЦЯ З МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИН

Дослідження проведене на основі поділу навичок на тверді та м'які. Здійснений аналіз довідкової бази дає змогу окреслити основні тверді та м'які навички фахівців з міжнародних відносин, а також методи навчання, які допомагають розвивати ці навички. Отримані результати дослідження свідчать про те, що добре розвинене поєднання твердих та м'яких навичок фахівця задовільняє сучасні вимоги ринку праці. У статті наголошено на тому, що педагоги повинні звертати значну увагу на розвиток м'яких навичок, оскільки вони роблять майбутнього фахівця більш гнучким у професійній діяльності.

**Ключові слова:** професійна підготовка; міжнародні відносини; фахівець з міжнародних відносин; тверді навички; м'які навички; професійна компетентність.

**F**ormulation of the problem. The professional training of international relations specialists plays an important role in international educational space. Higher educational institutions, which carry out professional training of specialists, are the direct focal point for the reform

of educational models, the purpose of which is the formation of knowledge, skills and abilities of future generations. Taking into account the active trends of education, the processes of optimization and formation of the necessary complex of skills, competences and values of a specialist, which are the part and parcel constituents of personality and professionalism, represent relevant issue of modern pedagogical research.

**Analysis of research and publications.** The concept of hard and soft skills has been considerably investigated by numerous foreign scholars (J. Chan, K. Prest, R. Tewari, R. Sharma, etc). The analysis of different sources shows a commonly used distinction applied to hard and soft skills of specialist. These concepts are typically used in the works of foreign scholars of the topic (W. Cukier, J. Hodson, A. Omar). Since there is no universally adopted definition of both, it is possible to rely on the definition suggested in one of the reports initiated by the British Council in which hard skills generally defined as 'abilities associated with abstract reasoning power that tend to be captured through marks, academic/vocational qualifications and standardised achievement testing (IQ tests, for example)'. Soft skills, in its turn, are centred on personality within professional context, which includes teamwork, motivation and communication. In the process of professional training, it is advisable that educators focus not only on formation of fundamental or hard skills but also on functional soft skills, which are frequently defined as universa (Chan, Goh & Prest, 2015).

The latest research on the labor market reflects an undoubted tendency that employers show significant interest to soft skills. Most employers consider them to be just as important as hard skills. However, in the vast majority of higher education establishments, educators as well as students do not pay enough attention to the development of soft skills. However, instructional programs offer numerous academic disciplines that develop hard skills related to the knowledge of fundamental and special disciplines, obtaining practical training, etc. As a result, students are lacking knowledge about how to be a part of a team, how to interact with clients. Although process of professional training, their proficiency influences the efficiency of an employee (Robles & Marcel, 2012).

In Ukraine, the notions of soft and skills are relatively new and unstudied. Although, responding to labour market demands, it is necessary to conduct profound research in the sphere of hard and soft skills formation in the process of professional training of specialists.

The above mentioned helps to outline the **aim of the research**, which is to analyse hard and soft skills pertained to the professional training of international relations specialists.

The **objectives** of this research are to investigate the complex of hard and soft skills, which is developed in the process of professional training of international relations specialists in the environment of higher educational establishments; to find out methods of instruction helping to develop hard and soft skills; to discover the interrelation between the acquired skills and the formation of overall competence of a specialist.

**The statement of basic material.** Professional training of international relations specialists is directly related to the formation and development of a system of knowledge and skills that form professional competence of future specialists. This system includes interpersonal skills, namely, the ability to work with culturally different people and communities, process and analyze information from different sources, express their opinions and so on. Obligatory is the study of disciplines that familiarize students with the basics of diplomacy and conduct of diplomatic negotiations, gender, religion, ethnic and cultural peculiarities of different regions, countries, separate communities (Calgary University, 2018).

Hard skills refer to general technical skills pertained to specific professional activity in formal environment. These skills are effective for solving typical tasks and are easily assessed in the process of conducting professional duties. Hard skills can be presented as a sequence of well-coordinated acts, which are performed by an employee on the regular basis. In terms of professional training, the formation of hard skills is necessary for the development of overall professional competence (Chan, Goh & Prest, 2015).

Among the vast number of hard skills required in professional development of specialists in international relations one can mention the following: profound theoretical knowledge (knowledge in basic disciplines like political science, theory of international relations, diplomacy, history, economy, etc); computer literacy (the ability to use technology-based platforms and computer office tools); foreign languages (the ability to use foreign languages fluently to fulfill professional duties); copywriting; data analysis (the ability to process information taken from different sources and make the most beneficial decisions, which is connected with data presentation, resource management, data engineering); negotiation procedures (knowing of the protocol of conducting negotiations); research and development (the ability to conduct scientific research) (Calgary University, 2018).

## HARD AND SOFT SKILLS FORMING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SPECIALIST

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Education in international relations is marked by an interdisciplinary focus. Hard skills formed and developed during the study, such as rhetorical and writing skills, analytical skills and in-depth knowledge of world politics, prepare students for careers in government institutions, journalism, law, non-governmental organizations, international business, teaching activities and scientific research (Calgary University, 2018).

The development of hard skills is successfully achieved with the help of traditional methods of instruction such as lectures, seminars, laboratory works, workshops, consultations, etc. Commonly used practice is to invite famous scientists, teachers and practitioners from university faculties, other universities and scientific institutions of the country and foreign countries to deliver lectures, practical classes and trainings with the aim to add fresh perspective for better understanding of a subject (Crouch & Montoya, 2017).

On the contrary to hard skills soft skills do not have connection to a particular occupation, which makes them universal. The combination of such skills is frequently called functional literacy, which is indispensable to be a functioning part of society. UNESCO Institute for Statistics provides the following definition of the term 'functional literacy': "Person who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective function of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development" (Crouch & Montoya, 2017).

Numerous researches of soft skills point out that among the most valued are communicative, ability to be flexible and creative at work place, persuasion, project management, high level of self organization, team work, re-engineering (the ability to perform the same task in a different way), conflict management, time management, self-development, information processing, networking, financial intelligence, emotional intellect, leadership, etc. In the process of professional training, soft skills are the most effectively developed with the help of implantation of various strategies of active learning (Robles & Marcel, 2012).

The research of the works of local and foreign scientists made it possible to define professional training as a process of forming a set of professional knowledge and skills, attributes, labor experience and norms of conduct that ensure the possibility of successful professional activity.

A wide range of future employment and professional implementation is ensured by diverse skills that specialists in international relations possess.

Among them one can distinguish analytical, linguistic, organizational, communicative skills, ability to solve problems and to smooth conflicts, ability to think critically and to analyze the current situations (Calgary University, 2018).

Among the general competences of an international relations specialist it is possible to distinguish the following: the ability to integrate the situations and processes of the sphere of international relations; apply methods of research and analysis of the situation on the international scene; the ability to take professional initiative and responsibility for the results of professional activity; creativity; emotional intelligence, individual skills and ability to think critically; the ability to maintain professional interaction, professional responsibility, etc (Calgary University, 2018).

Professional competencies of an international relations specialist include: administrative (decision making on international relations, ability to work in a team, ability to carry out managerial function and execute orders in the framework of professional activity, negotiation in foreign languages, etc.); projecting (skills of presentation of information in oral and written form); analytical (the ability to formulate a strategy for analytical research and planning of international activities, risk assessment, work with media, development of professional communication, ability to process information material and make conclusions, understanding of the basics of regulation of international conflicts, etc.) (Calgary University, 2018).

The development of leadership qualities is an integral part of the professional training of specialists. In the context of university education, leadership skills should be shaped in the most optimal way according to the contextual and cultural aspects of a higher education institution. Effective leadership development methods are aimed at developing skills and abilities of applying influence, dedication to professional activity, ability to solve situational problems, apply communication skills, as well as motivation and encouragement skills (Tewari & Sharma, 2010).

Instructional programs in international relations at the universities of Canada include a compulsory component, which is the study of foreign languages and the formation of linguistic competence from future professionals. One of the key competences of specialists in international relations is the possession of a fairly high level of the language of the future destination country. In fact, a diplomat can not be qualified for his functional duties in the host country without having to speak the language of the host country (Calgary University, 2018).

The Canadian Council of Education, with the support of the non-governmental organization “C1 Canada” (English C1 Canada), developed and provided a versatile set of seven competencies to be held by young specialists for successful professional activities in the 21st century, namely: creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship; critical thinking; ability to cooperate; sociability; character; cultural and ethical public awareness; technological literacy (Shifting Minds, 2012).

According to these data, the creativity of a specialist is the ability to apply a creative approach to new value-added achievements, while innovation and entrepreneurship provide the ability to create and apply new knowledge in a new way to solve complex professional tasks. The necessity of developing this competence of a specialist is due to the fact that the dynamics and complexity of the development of economic, social and political problems require a creative and innovative approach for finding relevant solutions, ideas, theories (Shifting Minds, 2012).

The critical thinking of a specialist is the ability to acquire, process, interpret, justify and critically analyze large volumes of information to find a solution to a problem and its timely application. This competence is gaining weight because new age requires specialists with in-depth theoretical knowledge, the ability to think logically and effectively solve various problems that require situation analysis, testing of hypothetical decisions, the formation of a final decision and the practice of its application (Elder & Paul, 2004).

To create the skills necessary for students to succeed, the Canadian provincial governments have stated to implement educational strategies focused on the development of specific competences that can be conventionally grouped into the category “skills of the XXI century”. The main difference between the new requirements for future specialists is shifting the focus from the study of facts to the model of critical thinking, ability to solve problems, professional adaptability and flexibility, innovation, technological and media literacy, social and intercultural interaction. In order to implement these strategies, priority tasks are the establishment of inter-provincial and interinstitutional cooperation, as well as the professional training and development of teaching staff (Trilling, Bernie, Fadel & Charles, 2013).

According to a recent survey conducted by Ontario’s employers in Canada, it has been found that more than 70% of respondents believe that there is a significant gap in knowledge and skills of specialists, and they need to solve this problem directly at workplaces (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). Thus, there are differences in expectations regarding the level of soft skills formation of future specialists

from employers, educators and students. The situation is complicated by the fact that soft skills (in addition to critical argumentation and writing) can be verified only in the context of practical activity. Effective soft skills provide a combination of formal and non-formal learning, experiential learning. It is evident that the further research is needed to systematize knowledge in order to identify, develop and evaluate the soft skills of future specialists.

Since the research has shown that the development of soft skills comes from experiential learning, observations and critical feedback, these types of strategies are best fulfilled by various parties of the process, working together to create an environment for consistent development and improvement. There are numerous initiatives and strategies that have been identified to help improve skills of future specialists. Traditional educational objectives of curricula tend to focus on the results of knowledge, not on processes and in this context soft skills are taken for granted. There are scholars, who support the idea of integration of professional skills development into all instructional programs. The others tend to develop special online courses with the aim of formation of special skill such as social self-esteem or traditional lectures with guest speakers for broader pedagogical context (Kivunja, 2015).

There is a belief that the prevalence of new digital technologies has led to a decline in the interpersonal skills of their students. However, there is also another perspective, which suggests that digital technologies help students develop soft skills in the course of their studies (Viswanathan, 2009).

The results of research conducted by the Canadian professional organizations prove that professional training programs are a key factor for the development of soft skills (Conference Board of Canada, 2013). The learning process provides for professionally oriented seminars, workshops and meetings financed by the employer, partnerships between private and public universities, organization of professional or academic internships, etc. In fact, many students are disappointed by the lack of opportunities to develop their academic and professional potential within their undergraduate and graduate programs (Gemme & Gingras, 2006).

**Conclusions.** Summarizing the conducted research we can determine the professional competence of an international specialist as a complex feature that demonstrates the readiness for professional activity in the field of international relations, the ability to make optimal decisions, applying the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as practical experience in order to achieve the identified goals, owing to the successful

combination of the technique of professional communication, the specifics of work in a multicultural environment and professional ethics.

Complex review of the given reference base suggests that in the context of contemporary development of higher education there are many different initiatives encouraging the development of the skills necessary for adaptation in professional environment. This issue is not only of educators' concern since this problem finds interpretation in numerous academic papers and political documents prepared by governments and professional associations. The development of skills of future professionals should be a priority part of any learning process. This aspect needs to be taken into account at each stage of creating programs for professional training.

In the course of the research, a wide range of university strategies aimed at improving their qualifications have been analyzed. It has been found that these strategies should be clearly defined, consistent and continuous.

In particular, it has been proved that the combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning is of importance for successful formation of the whole range of skills of future professionals. Formal education and traditional methods of learning interaction contribute to the development of hard skills whilst game methods of active learning have a positive effect on the development of soft skills. The establishment of partner interaction in the learning process can be the best way to support the development of soft skills and to maintain the achieved results over time.

The results of the study indicate the undeniable importance of forming not only hard but also soft skills of future specialists, which in the long run will ensure the economic growth of the country where professional activities will be carried out. There is a large number of soft and hard skills defined in academic circles. The article presents the most commonly used hard and soft skills in the field of international relations. The former comprise good theoretical knowledge of the disciplines of expertise, proficiency in diplomacy and foreign languages, higher education degree, computer literacy, writing, business correspondence and general information processing, organizing and participating in negotiations, etc. The latter include communicative skills, critical thinking, problem solving, interpersonal skills, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, team work, leadership, organizational skills, project management, creative thinking, entrepreneurship, innovation and ethics of argumentation, etc.

The investigation reveals that there is a typical

gap in perceptions of specialists' skills by educators, students and employers, which creates problems in the future employment and successful implementation in professional activity. Thus, within the educational programs development framework, it is necessary to introduce more accurate and consistent definition and evaluation of hard and soft skills at each stage of professional training. In order to achieve this goal, it is important to introduce coordination and interaction between universities and labor market representatives in order to form unified expectations of professional training and overcome the gap between supply and demand.

From the perspective of further research of the topic it is of particular interest to investigate in details the impact of application of various innovative teaching methods and classroom interaction aiming to develop the defined hard and soft skills of future specialists as well as to learn about the feedback from students concerning this issue.

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**ОПТИМІЗАЦІЯ РІВНЯ РУХОВОЇ АКТИВНОСТІ ДІТЕЙ ДОШКІЛЬНОГО ВІКУ  
В УМОВАХ ДОШКІЛЬНОГО НАВЧАЛЬНОГО ЗАКЛАДУ**

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**ОПТИМІЗАЦІЯ РІВНЯ РУХОВОЇ АКТИВНОСТІ ДІТЕЙ ДОШКІЛЬНОГО ВІКУ  
В УМОВАХ ДОШКІЛЬНОГО НАВЧАЛЬНОГО ЗАКЛАДУ**

*У статті представлено вимоги до професійної готовності вихователя дошкільного навчального закладу. На основі наукових досліджень проаналізовані різні конструкції вимог до професійної діяльності педагога. Розглянуто професійно значущі якості особистості вихователя. Проаналізовано результати визначеного рівня рухової активності дітей старшого дошкільного віку та обґрунтовано шляхи активізації їхньої рухової активності.*

**Ключові слова:** рухова активність; дошкільний вік; шляхи покращення; вихователь дошкільного навчального закладу; готовність до педагогічної діяльності; професійна готовність; діти.

*Лит. 16.*

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**OPTIMIZATION OF THE LEVEL OF MOVEMENT ACTIVITY OF CHILDREN OF  
PRESCHOOL AGE IN CONDITIONS OF PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY**

*The article presents the requirements for the professional readiness of a teacher of preschool institution. On the basis of scientific research the various constructs of requirements for professional activity of the teacher are analyzed. The professionally significant qualities of the educator's personality are considered. The results of the determined level of motor activity of the children of the senior preschool age are analyzed and the ways of activation of their motor activity are substantiated.*

*The problem of optimizing the motor activity of preschool age children is relevant and requires the detailed analysis and the search for effective ways of activating their motor activity.*

*The purpose of the article is theoretical substantiation of ways of activation of motor activity of children of preschool age in the process of preparation of future teachers of pre-school educational institutions.*

*According to the results of our survey, it was established that the level of motor activity in 74% of children of the senior preschool age is lower than the average.*

*To distinguish the following ways of increasing the motor activity of children of the senior preschool age: ensuring the functioning of the model of the motor regime of children, which should include all forms of work in physical education; rationally combine the different types of physical education classes, increase the use of standard and non-standard physical fitness equipment, increase the dosage of cyclic exercises, change the way and nature of exercises; to carry out systematic monitoring of the state of physical development and motor fitness of children, the*