Experience-Based Learning and Active Learning Environment for Promotion of Prospective Hospitality Business Managers Competitiveness

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Abstract: One of the basic tasks of a modern higher education institution is to facilitate the development of specialists' competitiveness. On the basis of ecological approach, the authors of the article have developed the conception of study environment facilitating the competitiveness of hospitality company managers, where, within the context of the organization of studies, there has been actualized the constructivism approach and the principles resulting from it: the principle of experience-based learning and the principle of active learning. The aim of research presented in the article: to substantiate theoretically both these principles within constructivism approach context. Studies based on experience are necessary in order the student as a prospective specialist could learn from own experience and the experience of others, as well as in order he would gain new experience of studies and professional activities during the study process. The experience-based learning is a self-adjustable, active and constructive process, where cooperation and exchange of views are of particular importance and where, on the basis of previously gained experience, there is constructed and amassed new experience, the new cognitive constructs of psyche are formed. The experience-based learning is fruitful, if they are meaningful and subjectively important. The principle of active learning envisages ensuring of such study environment that would enable the student to self-activate and express himself through different study activities, including problem-based studies. The facilitation of the personality's self-activities and self-development is the main aim and precondition of education, because education, including new knowledge, a human being acquires as a result of his/her diverse activities and efforts. Thus, the self-activity is simultaneously means and result of education. The experience-based learning and active learning are important principles for the facilitation of specialists' competitiveness in the study environment of higher education institution. The results of theoretical research show the complexity of the principles of constructivism approach, the diversity of substantiation and interpretation and the considerable variety of implementation.

Keywords: active learning, competitiveness, constructivism, experience-based learning, self-activity, higher education.

Introduction

Education is a means for the facilitation of the sustainable development of modern society. In its turn, only such education is sustainable that can meet the present society's needs, as well as its needs from future perspective. One of the basic tasks of modern higher professional education is to facilitate the development of specialists' competitiveness. A prospective specialist's competitiveness could be viewed in the contexts of three different levels: 1) the competitiveness and sustainability of all society from the future perspective; 2) the competitiveness and sustainable development of the company, where the specialist is employed; 3) the viability, self-perfection and self-realization of a specialist as a self-developing personality under the changeable environment.

In modern education, the competitiveness of a human being as a personality and also as a specialist is studies within the context of the new paradigm of this concept.

Competitiveness is an integrative totality of a personality's qualities that ensures its viability, including the development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment. *The basis for the personality's competitiveness is experience.* The competitive personality is characterized by the following qualities/features: 1) the characterizing indicators of a personality orientation and self-conception, including the determination and an action oriented towards success; the readiness to overcome difficulties and to take a risk; persistence, adequate self-assessment and daring to take a risk; 2) well-developed self-regulation, including volition, stress endurance, self-reflection, including *analytical-evaluating* and *systemic thinking*; *personality's flexibility* (flexibility in thinking, emotional sphere, behavior), the ability to make a decision; the responsibility for the made decisions and their

consequences; 3) different competences, including also creativity as an ability, oneself- and environment - *friendly thinking, attitude* and *behavior*: observation of moral and ethical principles, the principles of environmental, including social environment (community), balance and sustainability, readiness for the co-operation with other people; 4) readiness to change oneself in order to maintain the balance with the changing environment, readiness to start changes in the environment on the basis of environment-friendly attitude and action (Katane, 2011, 525-526).

The results of theoretical research performed by the authors of the article, as well as observations and reflection of own experience enabled to draw an important conclusion: it is important to ensure such study environment at the higher professional education institution that would facilitate and support the development of the prospective specialist's competitiveness. Such study environment shall be open and inclusive. For this purpose, the authors of the article have developed the conception of study environment facilitating the hospitality specialists' competitiveness.

The aim of the article is to make available to public a part of the results of performed theoretical studies, which became an essential component of the study environment conception developed by the authors of the article. ***The aim of studies*** published in the article is to substantiate theoretically two principles of constructivism approach: experience-based learning and active learning.

Methodology

The authors of the article based the development of the conception of study environment facilitating the hospitality company managers' competitiveness on ***ecological approach***, substantiating this study environment as an interaction system in many environmental contexts and disclosing the multifunctionality of this environment. The substantiation of the organization of study process, based not only on ecological but also on ***constructivism approach***, is very important within this conception.

In scientific literature the concept ***approach*** is explained as: a research aspect, initial position, beginning from where the research starts and which determines its progress in relation to the aim (Коротков, 2000); a guideline, belief (Новиков, Новиков, 2007); ideology and methodology of dealing with the problem, which discloses the main idea, the socio-economic, psychologic and pedagogical context, the main aims, stages, mechanisms for achieving aims (Ибрагимов, 2007); the progress of a scientific though based on a particular paradigm, a totality of world outlooks, theory; thinking, attitude oriented towards and based on certain values; studies, analysis and evaluation of scientific literature (Nolen-Hoeksema, Fredrickson, 2014); the reflection of authors' experience (Кукуев, 2010).

Methods of the research: 1) study, analysis and evaluation of scientific literature; 2) reflection of authors` personal experience.

Results and discussion

Nowadays one of the didactic demands is to ensure such study environment, which would facilitate the students' cognitive activities, creativity, power of reasoning and taking decisions, flexibility in thinking, performance and communication, facilitating the amassing of experience necessary for the solution of problem-oriented tasks and cooperation, including exchange of views, the development of attitude, including accountability, reflection, self-activity in studies, the development and progress of competency, including competencies of professional activity environment competencies, and the development and progress of professional identity. Such study environment on the whole ensures the development of specialists' competitiveness. The answer to the question how to implement this didactic demand successfully is given by ***constructivism approach***.

The theories of constructivism were developed in 1990ies. The historical origin of constructivism could found in the works of J. Bruner, J. Dewey, I. Kant, V. Klafki, J. Piaget, S. Rubinstein, L.S. Vygotsky and other authors (philosophers, psychologists, pedagogues). The developers of these theories are G. Cannella, E. Glasersfeld, L. Kroll, A. MacKinnon, J. Reiff, V. Richardson and other (cited in Briede, 2004). It is possible to identify two trends of the interpretation of theories in constructivism:
- ▪ *psychological constructivism*, based on J. Piaget's cognitive development theory;
- ▪ *social constructivism* based on L.S. Vygotsky's theories.

In the facilitation of a specialist's development constructivism approach is related to several basic conclusions (Katane, Kalniņa, 2010; Tiļļa, 2005).

- Learning is *a self-adjustable, active and constructive process, where cooperation and communication are of particular importance* and where preliminary experience is related to the new one. Learning depends on the context of environment and study content that encourages students to communicate and cooperate among themselves in order to identify the problem and obtain new learning experience regarding dealing with the problem. The learning experience is the students subjective experienced and reflected knowledge, their skills to perform actions. Every young man develops his own individual experience, which is amassed in the socio-cultural environment, where he develops. As a result of interaction with environment, learning acquires different dimensions and thus enriches the general understanding of learning concept.
- Nowadays the educator's role changes. He becomes not only an organizer of studies, but also an observer, a counsellor who studies himself, through the search of invariative answers to the problems and through a dialogue with students he obtains new information, draws new conclusions and develops his competencies.
- Building his learning upon constructivism approach, a student as a subject more and more takes over responsibility for his learning and organizes it himself.
- It is important to ensure environment appropriate for constructive studies; there shall be offered the diversity of information obtaining, use, evaluation and of problem-solving methods; there shall be ensured a student's free choice and there shall be developed the decision-taking skills.
- Reflection of experience is very important for the facilitation of the development of learning skills. It is possible to observe the increase of the significance of study process and the evaluation of its results and the self-evaluation.
- The constructivists emphasize an idea that there are no correct, universal interpretations, the subjective interpretation is important; therefore the significance of discourse actualizes within the studies. The social group creates the knowledge constructions, where the individual experience becomes important, the subjective opinion has been obtained during the discussions, modifying and adapting it within the social interaction.

Within the study process, constructivism approach stimulates creative thinking, therefore teamwork is a topical form of studies, where, through communication, there is a meaning identified, and this motivate to learn, in social interaction, the developed defective or even wrong views are replaced by more precise knowledge, and it is promoted by Problem-based learning (PBL) (Bereiter, 1994). Thus – people's thinking is contextualized (it is limited, intensified, directed and controlled by context) (Glasersfeld, 1996).

The development of study environment context and psyche cognitive constructions in cooperation is one of the basic ideas of constructivism (Smith, 2001), where an important phenomenon is the knowledge of everyday life and everyday experience. The type of the implementation of understanding is the presentation and exchange of opinions. Thus the hermeneutic phenomenon is the general connection of thinking and speaking. In hermeneutic conversation there is a common language developed. Understanding is substantially related to the concepts of reconstruction and integration (Gadamers, 1999).

There are emphasized the cognitive effects obtained as a result of constructivism approach: the initial analysis of problem and the emphasizing of the most important knowledge within the group discussion; the detailed elaboration of such knowledge and useful processing of new information; restructuring, systematization of knowledge and constructing of semantic fields, constructing of social knowledge, learning within the context; identifying of connected, analogic problems; designing of mind-maps etc. (Bazens, 2008).

The meaningful, research-based and inquiry – based studies take place within such context (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, 2007). The authors find that the cognitive dissonance or conflict, which has developed in the studies, cause confusion, become an internal motive for learning connecting intellectual and pragmatic aims. The development of knowledge, skills and competencies promote viability, construction of the insight into the world (Glasersfeld, 1996; Resnick, 1987). Thus constructivism

approach is actualized from the aspect of study process management (planning, organising and evaluating) in order to facilitate the competitiveness of students as prospective specialists.

Experience-based learning principle

In the structural competitiveness model of prospective hospitality managers the authors of the article have substantiated experience as a base of a specialist's competitiveness (Katane, Īriste, 2013), therefore one of the principles of the facilitation of specialists' competitiveness in study environment has been chosen *experience-based learning principle.*

Experience-based learning in scientific literature is based and interpreted differently. The most important in such studies is to ensure conditions ***in order a student as a prospective professional could learn from his own experience and the experience of others, as well as could amass new study and professional performance experience during the study process***.

Learning from experience could be viewed from three aspects (Dirkx, Lavin, 1991):
- perspectives, oriented towards an individual and substantiated in the humanistic view on the study process, where knowledge is developed as a result of active experience amassing process, the study results depend on the individual insight into knowledge;
- perspectives, oriented towards an individual's socio-political context and substantiated more in the sociological view on the study process; the studies take place within the cooperation process and their meaning is formed from the totality of different views;
- perspectives, reflecting the development of theoretical base for the facilitation of the learning from experience process; the studies shall take place under the real professional performance environment conditions.

An idea of learning from experience has been viewed by scientists representing different disciplines. Philosophical discussion on whether we acquaint with the world through our feelings or our minds have lasted for centuries (Crosby, 1984). I. Kant finds a way out this intellectual deadlock by making to understand that the source of the global order is in a human mind, instead of being external. According to I. Kant, experience is developed through active structuring of mind. An idea that the cause and the experience are involved in the cognition of the world was further developed in the works of many progressive educators, including J. Dewey (Dewey, 1938), M.P. Follet (Follet, 1932), E. Lindeman (Lindeman, 1926) etc.

In constructivism's philosophical view there is an approach, according to which, any cognition is subjectively constructed – as a result, there are new cognitive constructs of psyche formed; it is an alternative to any metaphysical ontology and epistemological realism (Касавин, 2009). It is philosophical, epistemological and pedagogical approach to studies (Connolly, Begg, 2006).

According to constructivism approach supporters, the surrounding world exists independently if the subject, it cannot be perceived, cognized directly; therefore – it cannot be taught, the knowledge cannot be passed *ready-made*. An individual makes his reality himself, and it is based on the global construct substantiated in his experience (Jonassen, 1991). The individual constructs knowledge for himself so that he could adapt in environment (Piaget, 1977). Besides, he learns more efficiently, if he is involved in the construction of artefacts important for himself.

Knowledge comes into existence and deepens within the interaction of personality and environment. Therefore each of us is unique with our world outlook, views and beliefs. Therefore we are interested in the views of other people; therefore it is important to remain true to one's principles.

L.S. Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978) wrote about the different choice offered by each cultural environment, as well as about the models of socio-cultural processes characteristic to it, and thus scientist substantiated the thought on the diversity of the global aspects viewed and heard by individuals from different cultural environments. By observing others in a particular social environment, by receiving their assistance and by cooperating we can adjust the most appropriate behaviour to this environment, as well as to attain more efficient study results. According to researcher, the constructive processes manifest particularly powerfully under the group conditions, where each participant discovers the meaning out of the complex

interaction, where he is involved. L.S. Vygotsky, the supporter of the social view on constructivism, accentuated that knowledge starts at the social level and only later it becomes individual.

L.S. Vygotsky's ideas were developed at the beginning of 1990ies, when in the anthropological study on the solution of problems in the groups of different cultures outside the educational institutions emerged concept *situated learning*, where the cultural and contextual solutions help an individual within the real activity context (Lave, Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990).

S. Gance (Gance, 2002) has identified the main learning components related to constructivism approach, namely, an individual who learns searches for information actively, studying his environment. Secondly, constructivism approach often comprises practical, dialogic interaction with the study environment, where the learning context is very important, which creates the authentic situation for dealing with problems. Thirdly, in constructivism approach the environment comprises social components, which are often interpreted as an interaction with other students and mentors within the actual learning context.

K. Illeris (Illeris, 2003) states that any studies comprise three dimensions, namely the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills; the emotional dimension of feelings and emotions and the social dimension of cooperation and communication and they all are related within the social context.

P. Freire and J. Mezirow emphasize that the studies are based on the processing of experience, namely critical reflection of our experience. They point out that the study cycle begins with the experience, continues with the reflection, which is followed by an action that becomes the reflection of the particular experience (Rogers, 1996).

In conformity with constructivism approach, which is based on an individual's active performance within the process of knowledge creation and construction, the study process is oriented towards the development of mind, comprising four interrelated elements: 1) acquisition and understanding of knowledge; 2) discovery of new knowledge as a result of the student's independent activities; 3) application of knowledge under new circumstances, i.e. broadening of its borders; 4) inventions – alternative, varied solutions of problems (Brooks, Brooks, 1993).

J. Dewey (Dewey, 1958) states that knowledge and activities are closely related and learning takes place within the activity context, when an individual try to achieve important aims, overcoming different difficulties. D.A. Schön (Schön, 1983; 1987) points out that the professionals learn to think in an action thorugh their experience. Practitioners (in our case prospective hospitality business managers) have their special knowledge code, which is closely related to practice. They apply this *knowledge-in-action* without verbal expression of it; however, they are unable to solve the problem, the *reflect-in-action*, using language, which is specific for the particular professional field. Then, evaluating the event (*reflection- on-action*), they use language characteristic to the professional field, instead of using the scientific language. Thus the professionals raise the level of their learning and improve their *repertoire of experience*, which would be later used for dealing with future problems. It is these abilities of the reflection-on-action and the action differs an efficient practitioner from a less efficient practitioner.

Irrespective of differences between the ideas expressed by various trends of constructivism, as a result of theoretical research (Cannella, Reiff, 1994; Kroll, LaBoskey, 1996; Leino, 1994; Richardson, 1997) there were identified and summarized several common features:

- a student *actively* develops *his own knowledge* with *meaning* and *creatively* and this process takes place *in the interchange*: with *the content*, instead of imitating or repeating, with his *present experience*, as well as with *ideas, conclusions* and *events* during studies;
- the main aim of constructivism *approach* is *metacognition* (*the higher order process of reflecting*), which has a powerful potential *for solving problems*. A student, when facing a problem, he/she can reflect not only on its structure, but also to structure his/her approaches to the problem and to generate alternative, more productive strategies.
- *adaptation* has a cognitive function, the *student* tries to understand and organize knowledge in order to adapt to the environment and to the world in general;
- emotions and motivation have an *essential* role for the development of experience;

- teaching staff/mentor shall be professional – the teaching staff shall be able to integrate study material, pedagogical knowledge, students' qualities, as well as to develop the appropriate study environment.

Several supporters of constructivism approach (Brown, Collins, 1989; Jonassen, 1994) in their research emphasize the necessity for open authentic study environment, where the student could himself develop knowledge important for him. This created the development of ***constructivist learning environment*** guidelines and criteria. The study environment is a place, where students can work together, support each other by applying different means and information sources, while trying to achieve their learning aims and perform problem-solving activities (Gance, 2002; Grabinger, Dunlap, 1995; Wilson, 1996), i.e., applying the principle of self-activity and active learning.

Principle of active learning

Within the great flow of information, the knowledge grows out-of-date very quickly, therefore the new specialists shall continuously perfect knowledge, improve the indicators of the efficiency of their performance.

One of the ways how to achieve the above mentioned is ensuring of the study environment, where there would be promoted *the active learning* of the student as a prospective specialist, which is characterized by participation in problem solving, construction of new knowledge, applying of existing knowledge in practice, by active participation in the processes of thinking, development of interconnections.

Active learning enables students *to speak and listen, write, read, and reason meaningfully* the content of academic subject, *to create* ideas, questions and to awake interest. (Meyer, Jones, 1993, 6). Active learning is a considerable contribution of the student's mental energy and high-level psychological involvement in the study process (Cuseo, 2010).

In another definition of active learning there has been emphasized *thinking* on what the student is doing (Bonwell, Eison, 1991). Active learning is opposed to the conventional study process, where the students is a passive receiver of information (Prince, 2004). Nowadays learning by doing is defined as active learning.

Principle of self-activity has been described by German educator F. Diesterweg (Diesterweg, 1873), who introduces the concepts of self-activity and self-development in the science of pedagogy, and by self-activity he means the activating of own mind, the ability to reason independently, an initiative and the most essential feature of personality. According to his point of view, in an individual, the human trait is his self-activity. Anything human, free, original results from self-activity. Mind, will, memory, thinking, attention is characteristic to all people, they develop through self-activity. Education ends, when an individual starts showing a desire and feel strength to continue self-educational process for the whole life; when he starts to see the ways and methods of such self-education. According to F. Diesterweg's conclusions, the teaching staff's task is to help the student to self-develop abilities granted him by nature. Self-activity is equal to free, independent cognition. Every individual has the right to the development of independent thinking. According to F. Diesterweg's point of view, independent thinking promotes wilful actions in life, namely, by developing self-activity, an individual becomes the master of his life.

Facilitation of personality's self-activity and self-development is the main aim and precondition of education, because an individual acquires education, including new knowledge, as a result of his own diverse actions and efforts. Thus self-activity is both means and result of education. The only one that an individual can obtain from outside is an impulse. A human mind cannot be fulfilled, an individual needs to acquire and understand everything independently. This principle is also topical in modern education: the main aim of education is the facilitation of specialists' independent professional activities.

The significance of individual study subjects shall be determined according to the fact, how much they promote the individual's mental activity and how much an educator facilitates, promotes the students' self-activity.

As a result of respect showed towards the self-activity principle:
- the student's character is developed;
- there is an ability developed to do one's best to achieve the set aim;
- the cognitive abilities are developed;
- both student's intellectual and moral development are facilitated;
- the beliefs are developed;
- meaningful and motivated learning takes place, thus the student's self-development is facilitated.

Within the systems organization of performance, the activity shall be viewed from three aspects (Петровский, 1993): an activity as a precondition of performance, performance stems from an activity; an activity as a dynamic part of already existing performance; an activity – the expanded reproduction moment of performance and a step towards the qualitatively new forms of performance.

As a result of many studies it was discovered that in the systems organization of actions, the biological individual's activity is responsible for the physiology of action, the social individual's activity – for the technology of action, but personality's activity – for the psychology of action. The leading level of psychic regulation, where the activity is organized in action, is the personality; thus the personality participation in action has two aspects: on the one hand – the personality's activity is a factor that makes the action dynamic and stable, preparing in the system the transitions and transformations of its structural elements (for example, the directing of motive towards the aim), on the other hand – the personality's activity is the cause of the development and changes of actions, where the personality functions as a reformer, owner and transformer of an action (Шурыгина, 2012).

Psychological analysis of performance shall be focused on the personality as a subject of performance. In the higher education institution such subject of performance is a student who learns actively. Active learning is an effective self-development means of the personality, including competitiveness, of the student as the prospective specialist.

In order to introduce the principle of active studies at the higher education institution more and more, we should recall Confucius' aphorism: *I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand* (Instruction at..., 2010).

American scientist E. Dale (Dale, 1969), on the basis of own research, in 1969 creates *Cone of Experience*, where at the top there is showed the least efficient study method, namely, listening. The most efficient methods are showed at the base of the cone – direct, purposeful attaining of experience.

A student, on the already existent experience base, knowledge, obtained in other study subjects, through reflection and active learning constructs new knowledge. The obtained knowledge stays in the memory for a longer period of time, awakes interest and motivation to learn, as well as the individual can apply knowledge in different contexts. Several scientists (Божович, 1955; Щукина, 1971) speak about a powerful stimulus for the personality's activity, under the influence of which all psychical processes are more intensive, but the action becomes more fascinating and efficient.

Promotion and facilitation of students' active learning is based on two learning aspects. The significance of emotions for the facilitation of students' activities could be explained with the functioning of central nerve system (Алеева, 2012).

Satisfaction for the accomplished and achieved, joy of discovery and creation, self-actualization are those positive experiences, which are both an integral part of active learning and the 'driving forces or motives of active learning. Therefore the teaching staff, by their experience, knowledge, attitude towards work and students, methodological competency, shall ensure during the organization of active learning such study environment, where the students' positive emotional experiences could be possible.

Study programs, where this principle of active learning is applied, which perform the role of a coordinator, cooperation partner, a leader and organizator, succeed in the preparation of students for the lifelong learning; the new specialists are able more flexible to acquire the new skills and competencies, as well as to adapt easier to the working environment, as well as a greater number of students graduate their studies successfully (Astin, 1997). The development and socialization of

a student as a personality takes place also through the amassing of subjective experience. Through active learning, the students adapt initially seemingly difficult to master study content, thus makes it significant and understandable for themselves, and without any difficulty store it in their memory for a long term, developing the system of stable knowledge.

The experience of the authors of article proves that there may be several types of the manifestation of students' active learning: writing, including making notes, development of reports etc.; speaking: provision of information, exchange of views; popularization, passing and/or exchange of own experience; searching for, evaluation, selection, aggregation and creative applying of necessary information; using of information technologies; research; searching for the ways to solve the problems etc.

The most widely spread active learning methods are the following (Instruction at..., 2010): Active Listening; Active Writing; Visual-based Active Learning; Brainstorming; Collaborative Learning; Team based learning; discussions, Debates; Peer Teaching; Role Playing, Drama, Simulations; Problem-Based Learning (PBL).

The origins of PBL method could be found in Socrates' philosophical discussions with his opponents, where the truth was found by means of conversations and disputes. Initially this method was applied in the USA and Canada for the higher medical studies, when the students, on the basis of symptoms provided by teaching staff, by means of discussions, hypotheses, their knowledge and experience, had to state the patient's diagnosis and recommendable treatment. Thus the student himself, through active learning, reflection, self-directed studies, constructs *deep approach to learning*, as well as assumes responsibility for the research of advanced hypothesis (Biggs, 1999).

PBL studies become more and more topical also for the education of hospitality specialists. The teaching staff/mentor, at the same time also coordinators/counsellors, as well as the significant promoters of the development of metacognitive thinking, associated with the problem-solving processes (Collins, Brown 1991). If a student faces problems regularly, this mobilizes him for dealing with problems. A problem is an obstacle, which should be overcome, and, as a result, the personality develops. According to the point of view of psychology science, this method serves for the development of profound and stable motivation to learn, for the identification of the functioning and development of a student's mind in order to acquire the most important, profound internal interaction and relations from the content of studies for the development of creative approach to studies, for the development of such personality qualities that help to adapt to the changeable social and professional environment (Пилипец, Клименко, 2014).

The results of theoretical research show ***the complexity of the principles of constructivism approach, the diversity of substantiation and interpretation and the considerable variety of implementation***.

Conclusions

- Education is a means for the facilitation of the sustainable development of modern society. In its turn, only such education is sustainable that can meet the present society's needs, as well as its needs from future perspective. One of the basic tasks of modern higher professional education is to facilitate the development of specialists' competitiveness. A prospective specialist's competitiveness could be viewed in the contexts of three different levels: 1) professional professional the competitiveness and sustainability of all society from the future perspective; 2) the competitiveness and sustainable development of the company, where the specialist is employed; 3) the viability, self-perfection and self-realization of a specialist as a self-developing personality under the changeable environment.
- It is important to ensure such study environment at the higher professional education institution that would facilitate and support the development of the prospective specialist's competitiveness. Such study environment shall be open and inclusive.
- Constructivism approach enables to actualize two study principles for the facilitation of specialists' competitiveness: experience-based learning principle and principle of active studies.
- The main aim of constructivism approach is metacognition as the highest level of reflection, which reflects our processes of thinking and dealing with problems and which has a powerful

potential for solving problems. A student, when facing a problem, he/she shall reflect not only on its structure, but also to structure his/her approaches to the problem and to generate alternative, more productive strategies.

- Constructivism approach is based on the insight into experience; the experience ensures the interpretation of past and the anticipation of future. It is like a movement along spiral, where the rotation on the way back is simultaneously overcoming of past and forecasting of future. The construction abilities depend on the skill, in the problem-situation, to identify already known and the different, which has not been acquired yet, these are the abilities to apply already existing knowledge for dealing with new, non-standard tasks, and for this purpose the critical thinking and creativity are also necessary.

- Experience-based learning is necessary in order to ensure the study environment, where the student as a prospective specialist could learn from his or her own experience and the experience of others, as well as could amass new study and professional performance experience during the learning process. The experience-based learning is a self-adjustable, constructive process, where cooperation and exchange of opinions is of particular importance and where, on the base of preliminary experience, there is constructed and amassed new experience, the new cognitive constructs of psyche are formed. Such studies are more fruitful, if they are meaningful and subjectively significant.

- In active learning, the leading role is attributed to the student as a prospective specialist within the self-development process of his personality. It is possible, if an educator fulfils the functions of a counsellor, a guide of thinking, a promoter of activities, a person who encourages and supports, a discussion partner, a provider of necessary psychological, technological, informative environment, as well as a provider of cooperation-based social environment. The facilitation of a personality's self-activity and self-development is the main aim and precondition of education, because the education, including new knowledge, an individual acquires as a result of his own diverse activities and efforts. Thus the self-activity is both means and result of education. Active learning may manifest through very diverse activities. Within the framework of active studies, PBL are actualized.

- Experience-based learning and active learning are important principles for the facilitation of specialists' competitiveness in the study environment of higher education institution. The results of theoretical research show the complexity of the principles of constructivism approach, the diversity of substantiation and interpretation and the considerable variety of implementation. Important aspects of the implementation of both principles are cooperation, discussions as a process of the exchange of views, amassing of social experience, including communication, and search for the possibilities to solve professional problems. This forms the basis for the competent, independent and responsible professional activities, which is a precondition for the development of a prospective specialist's competitiveness, one of the types of the manifestation of competitiveness and also the result of the development of competitiveness in the study environment of the higher education institution.

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