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Research of Future Pedagogue-Psychologists' Social Competency and Pedagogical Conditions of its Formation

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Abstract

The purpose of the research was to study and diagnose social competency of future pedagogue-psychologists, to ground theoretically and test experimentally pedagogical conditions of future pedagogue-psychologists' social competency formation. 130 students of the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of Kazan federal university were recruited for the test-experimental work.

The complex of diagnostic methods to diagnose the level of social intelligence, empathetic abilities, strate-gies to solve conflict situations were used in the process of work.

On the basis of the obtained results there were worked out and realized pedagogical conditions of future pedagogue-psychologists' social competency formation. Standard methods of mathematical statistics (Stu-dent's t-criterion) were applied for statistical processing of research empirical data.

1. Introduction

The issue of competency formation of specialists of different profiles is the subject of study of many modern researchers (Vardanyan (1999), Basova (2004), Zimnyaya (2006) [1, 2, 4]. The term "competence" (Latin «competentia») means a set of issues that an individual is well aware of and has acquired experience in.

I.A. Zimnyaya (2006) understands "competency" as an actual, subject to forming personal quality based on knowledge, intellectually and personally stipulated socio-professional characteristic of a person, his personality quality [4].

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The analysis of presented definitions of competency concept allows to come to the conclusion that competency is connected with a certain set of knowledge and skills, abilities and personality qualities that are successfully applied in professional activity and developed in the process of study and upbringing.

One of the most complicated issues of modern Russian school today is a fairly low level of pedagogue-psychologists' professionalism. The majority of pedagogue-psychologists working in educational institutions have a short work experience, the staff are renewed significantly every year. But aims and goals of pedagogue-psychologists' activity require their personal and professional maturity. Therefore, one of the priority-oriented guidelines of practical psychological education development in Russia is the improvement of competent pedagogue-psychologists' training system that will help them to perform their professional activity at a high level. Despite the variety of views on the criteria of successful professional psychological activity, there is one that is shared by the majority of scientists: the main instrument of a psychologist-practitioner is their personality, first of all (Vachkov, 2005) [3].

Thus, to realize professional activity successfully, a psychologist should have quite stable and adequately high self-estimation, positive outlook, ability to manage his psychological state, self-confidence. A psychologist ought to show his empathetic abilities towards another person, be able to reflect conflict situations adequately.

These qualities, according to V.N. Kuniztina (1995), make the structure of social competency [5]. She defines social competency as the system of knowledge about social reality and oneself, the system of complicated social skills of interaction, scenarios of behaviour in typical social situations to get adapted quickly and adequately, to take reasonable decisions

Social competency takes the leading position in the hierarchy of values and is defined as a person's ability and readiness to manage his relations with the social realm and other people efficiently.

In the 80-s and 90-s many scientists handled the issue of social competency and created complimentary models (Hinsch&Vitman, 2005 [11], Selman, 1997 [10]. They define a social competency as the possession of cognitive, emotive and motor ways of behaviour which in certain social situations promote long-term favourable balance of positive and negative consequences.

Within the frames of English-American research position, K. Rubin (2001) and other scientists understand social competency as effectiveness and adequateness of an individual's reflection of various problem situations in life, and the ability to overcome them [9].

M.Argile (1962) combining professional and communicative competencies determines a social competency as obtained skills and ways of behavior that allow an individual to display desirable impact on other people and ascribes such signs as social sensitivity, general skills of social interaction and skills of encouraging and reward, balance and quietness [13].

A.I. Markova (1990) represents the content of a social competency as the mastering of mutual (group, co-operative) professional activity, collaboration, and methods of professional training adopted for this profession, responsibility for the results of work [6].

Thus, a social competency is attributed the ability to communicate, cooperate, to manage conflicts, achieve goals, adapt easily, display the initiative, take responsibility etc.

This very circumstance allows O.V. Romulus (2003), firstly, when considering this variety of competence as one of the basic characteristics of a personality, to single out basic structures of it: knowledge (availability of some information), attitude to this knowledge (to accept or reject, to ignore, to transform), implementation (practical application of knowledge); secondly, to take into consideration such aspects of a social competency as ability to take in the social structure of the society, announce positive social initiatives, take responsibility for their realization, participate in the activity of public organizations and associations [8].

In some research works a "social intelligence" is often considered as the counterpart of a social competency.

The concept social intelligence was firstly used by E. Thorndike (1920) in 1920 to specify "foresight in interpersonal relations" [14]. Many famous psychologists contributed to the interpretation of this notion. In 1937 G.Allport (1973) described a social intelligence as a specific ability to judge people in the right way, to predict their behaviour, and to provide adequate interpersonal interaction [12]. Social intelligence according to G.Allport

is a special "social gift" that makes people's relationships smooth, it is characterized by social adaptability instead of the depth of understanding [12].

Thus, "social competency" in the context of a job description is: an integral system combination of inter-connected knowledge, skills, ways of activity set in accordance with psychological-pedagogical activity in an educational institution which determines a pedagogue-psychologist's ability and readiness to establish contacts with the subjects of teaching and educational process, participate in mutually taking decisions and conflict management in a non-violent way.

In terms of this definition, the main characteristics of a social competency for a future pedagogue-psychologist's personality is: developed social intelligence, empathy, ability to manage conflict situations efficiently.

It is expedient to outline some characteristics in the structure of future pedagogue-psychologist's competency, they are intellectual-gnostic, emotive-reflexive, behavioural. Intellectual-gnostic characteristic of a social competency implies the availability of specific knowledge in the sphere of social interaction which includes knowledge about oneself and ability to comprehend other people, understand intentions, feelings, and states of an individual according to verbal and non-verbal signs; awareness of the importance to master various ways of communication necessary to enlarge social and subjective experience in life and professional self-determination. Emotive-reflexive characteristic means the ability to control and analyse one's emotional condition; to have abilities to self-analyse, self-organize and self-stimulate; ability to listen and hear, to understand and feel sympathy towards another person (empathy). Behavioural characteristic suggests the availability of personality activity aimed at creative self-development; abilities to adapt in new situations of social-pedagogical interaction; ability to keep one's behaviour under control in conflict situations and choose the correct strategy of behaviour.

As it is known, a psychologist as a personality and a professional is developing in the process of study, up-bringing and socialization. Therefore, the process of future pedagogue-psychologist's social competency formation may be more successful and efficient if in the course of teaching and educational process there will be implemented necessary conditions.

Pursuant to this, the goal of the present research was to study and diagnose future pedagogue-psychologist's social competence, to ground theoretically and test experimentally pedagogical conditions of future pedagogue-psychologist's social competency formation.

2. Methods

In compliance with the goal, the following methods have been selected. To diagnose the intellectual-gnostic characteristic of a social competency there was applied "Guilford test to reveal the level of social intelligence". This test consists of four subtests: "A story Ending Test", "Expression Testing", "Verbal Expression", "Story Additions". The general level of social intelligence development is determined on the basis of the complex assessment of all four subtests.

The analysis of the emotive-reflexive characteristic of the social competency allowed to notice that the ability to understand and feel sympathy for another person is significant. Therefore, to reveal the level of students' empathic ability there was applied V.V. Boiko's method of empathic abilities diagnosis.

For the purpose to diagnose the behavioural characteristic there was applied "K. Thomas test-questionnaire". It includes 30 questions that allow to single out typical ways of conflict management (cooperation, compromise, adaptation, escape, rivalry) [7].

The results were processed with Student's t-criterion.

3. Results

At the ascertain stage of the experiment, due to the results of the intellectual-gnostic characteristic research according to G. Guilford's procedure, we found out that students can deal with non-verbal reactions rather well, they are able to communicate with different interlocutors in different situations rather successfully, but a low

level of "Story Additions" test (9.2 scores) testifies to the fact that students have some difficulties when analysing situations of interpersonal interaction and, as a result, have poor adaptation abilities to establish relationship with different people. The general level of social intelligence development was determined on the basis of the total sum of each test and the indicator of a social intelligence complex assessment in the group made 33 scores at that stage, it corresponds to the third (average-developed) level of social intelligence.

The integral indicator of empathic abilities in the group at this stage made 18, 32 scores, it corresponds to the understated level of pedagogue-psychologists' abilities.

The results of Thomas test demonstrated that the majority of the group participants choose such behaviour strategies in conflict situations as adjustment (7, 06 scores), avoidance (6, 72 scores), rivalry (9, 23 scores). The results of all three indicators of the ascertain experiment showed that the level of future pedagogue-psychologist's social competence is rather low. The goal of the forming experiment was to conduct some experimental work aimed at the realization of the developed pedagogical conditions that impact on a social competency formation.

The structure of the social competency allowed determining and substantiating the complex of the following pedagogical conditions facilitating efficient future pedagogue-psychologists' social competency formation:

- Refinement of "Psychological and pedagogical workshop", "Methods of active social-psychological teaching" training courses by situations of social interaction;

-application of different active teaching methods aimed at the formation of intellectual-gnostic, emotive-reflexive and behaviour components of a social competency;

- Development and realization of social competency formation program with the application of social-psychological training;

- Reasonable combination of classroom and extracurricular students' activity and opportunities of psychological and pedagogical school practice in the development of future pedagogue-psychologists' readiness for effective execution of socially oriented activity and appropriate conflict management.

At the control stage of the experiment we estimated the efficiency of pedagogical conditions application for the successful future pedagogue-psychologists' social competency formation.

Having analysed the results of average values in the group before and after the experiment, we noticed that the results of the subtest "A story Ending Test" increased from 9 to 12 scores. It can testify that students have well-formed skills to anticipate people's further actions, and arrange guidelines of their behaviour to achieve the desired goals. The increased indicator of "Expression Testing" (from 9 to 13 scores) gives reason to say that a student can properly estimate states, feelings, intentions of other people according to their non-verbal manifestations, mime, postures, gestures. According to the results of four subtests, the average level of social intelligence has increased (the 5th level). Individuals with a high social intelligence are able to get the utmost information about people's behaviour, to understand the language of non-verbal communication, to display foresight dealing with other people to promote successful social adaptation.

The value of the empathic abilities integral indicator has increased significantly from 18, 32 to 23, 43 scores.

The retest was carried out with the application of Thomas test-questionnaire as well. Thus, if at the control stage students possessed such strategies as adjustment and avoidance which according to G. Thomas are not considered as successful strategies to manage conflicts, then at the ascertain stage, cooperation (8,95) and compromise (8,49) had the highest score. These strategies of behaviour are effective for conflict management, in case of cooperation strategy application both sides gain the advantage. It is also important to state that scores of rivalry and avoidance strategies decreased though at the ascertain stage had a high rate.

The changes of average values in the students' group before and after the experiment were tested for their reliability with Student's T-criterion. The following data were obtained after calculations: tkr = 1, 98 (at p<0, 05), tkr = 2, 62 (at p<0, 01). As temp > tkr, the differences between behaviour strategies in conflict situations gained at the pre-test and post-test stages of the experiment do exist and they are significant.

4. Conclusions

According to the results of diagnostics, we observe the dynamics in the pre and post period of the experiment. Students have a high level of social intelligence, their level of empathic abilities and reflection has increased, in conflict situations they prefer such strategies as cooperation and compromise. The observation also showed that students began to reveal behaviour confidence in situations of social interaction, they tried to be creative.

The dynamics of social competency growth was caused by the complex of developed pedagogical conditions and the following factors as well: close collaboration of teachers and constant high level of students' motivation, application of active teaching methods, organization of students' independent work.

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