Idealism versus Realism in Student and Practitioner Attitude toward Teaching

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It is absolutely essential in any professional environment to go through natural age-related rotation over a period of time. But, unfortunately, many young teachers filling in the vacancies are practically incompetent in their job, though they are supposed to have acquired certain psychological and pedagogic competencies at the university. This factor raised the issue of discrepancy between the student's idealism with respect to future profession understanding and professional realism revealing and demonstrating young teacher's insufficient competencies. The paper considers idealistic versus realistic set of necessary competencies for a modern teacher as the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teaching is closely linked, and often dependent, on it. The major methods used in the study of the issue were questionnaires and interviews among school head masters/principles, teaching methodology experts, teachers and undergraduates. They allowed to determine the desired and imperative competencies for teachers. The experiment involved 230 students and 190 school representatives. Current problems in teacher education, related to Russia, have been identified as belonging to three levels: regional, teacher training institutions, and secondary schools. The study contributed to develop a competency model of a modern teacher and the algorithm of its development. Investigation into the idealistic understanding of certain competencies and their relevancy by the university undergraduates who participated in the assessment of competencies significance, revealed the following student's attitude: they believe that subject content knowledge and methodological competencies are number ones in their future job. There are a large number of instructional and related activities to be performed by the teacher inside and outside the classroom. In their opinion the educational competency associated with developing a child's personality, talents and etc., was the second in order of importance, whereas in real teaching practice this competency was determined as the first in order of importance followed by reflective competency, and the third place was given to subject and methodical competencies.
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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of research

It is essential in any professional environment to go through natural age-related rotation over time. But, unfortunately, many young teachers filling the vacancies at schools appear to be practically incompetent in their job, though they are supposed to have gained certain psychological and pedagogic competencies at the university. First of all, incompetence can be attributed to the peculiarities of university study (Shaidullina et al., 2015; Bulunuz, Tapan-Broutin & Bulunuz, 2016). Young teachers' professional skills are rather weak because to pass their exams at university they had only to learn and remember certain facts which in the long run were accumulated into a stock of knowledge. As we all know, excellent subject matter knowledge is closely linked to teacher's experience in delivering lessons to school students i.e. gaining classroom experience. It goes without saying that graduates starting their careers at school lack this sort of experience.

Second, they don't have the slightest idea about who they will work with, i.e. students, school authorities, and teaching staff (Yildirim, Arastaman & Dasci, 2016). This is where the questions concerning the graduates' idealistic understanding of teaching as a profession arise, and they may feel how incomplete and imperfect the competencies gained at the university are.

Teacher education issues

As long as contradictions exist between the idealistic and the realistic attitude of university students and secondary school teachers towards their teaching profession, it is not unreasonable to assume that there are a number of problems in modern system of domestic pedagogic education. Considering current problems in teacher education in Russia we have been identified them as belonging to three levels: regional, teacher training institutions, and secondary schools.

Regional level is characterized by the following: inefficient teaching staff forecasts; lack of local authority responsibility for the employment rates; low effectiveness of mechanisms aimed at drawing attention of the best and most talented school students to teaching jobs; no professional support system for teachers starting out their career; no career prospects; low percentage of graduate employment as per qualifications obtained in pedagogic training institutions; and highly sensitive issues of letting go of the teachers that fail to cope with a modern requirements (Masalimova & Sabirova, 2014; Kalimullin & Masalimova, 2016).

Level of teacher training institutions: low Uniform State Exam average grades (GPA) of pedagogic training institution applicants is a significant factor influencing academic performance of students enrolled, it makes students' motivation a more complicated time and labour consuming process; poor quality of school education (obsolete methods and techniques, insufficient amount of time devoted to practical training, lack of «activitistic» content approach in training, lack of relationship between the study of academic disciplines and the actual needs of school); poor involvement of students into research; poor facilitating of effective learning process and pedagogical programs.

Level of secondary schools: retention and bringing back retired teachers into the classroom to cover teacher shortage even though they cannot meet a modern requirements to teaching content and techniques; lack of mentoring that proved effectiveness in social and professional adaptation of young teachers starting their careers; low level of motivational readiness of young teachers; social and

psychological inability of newcomers to work in teams; low level of their competencies in self-education, classroom management and methods; issues arising from unwillingness to solve educational problems; issues arising from communicative incompetence and overconfidence of the young teachers, etc.

Literature Review

Modern approaches and interpretations of professional competencies in Russia vary widely. A. K. Markova (1996) distinguishes four categories of professional competencies for a teacher: special, social and personal and individual:

1. Special, or «activitistic» professional competency, characterizes mastering the art of teaching, implies both special knowledge acquisition and the ability to apply it in practice.

2. Social professional competency characterizes the ability to collaborate and cooperate using the professional community techniques of communication.

3. Personal professional competency involves the ways of self-expression, self-development and counteracting professional deformation. Here we also include the ability to plan one's professional activities, make one's own decisions, to see, or determine, the problem.

4. Individual professional competency involves methods of self-regulation, willingness to professional development, sustainability in professional aging, and sustainable professional motivation.

According to V. N. Vvedensky (2003), the professional competency of the teacher cannot be reduced to a set of knowledge and skills, but justifies the need for them, the effectiveness of their use in real educational practice, and due to all mentioned he distinguishes the following:

- Communicative competence which implies emotional stability (related to adaptability), extraversion (correlates with status and effective leadership), the ability to design direct and indirect feedback, speaking and listening skills, sensitivity, the ability to reward, and the ability to soften the communication and make it "smooth";

- Informational competence which implies the amount of information (knowledge) about yourself, about the students and their parents, about other teachers' experience;

- Regulatory competence, that is goal-setting, planning, mobilization and sustained activity, performance evaluation, and reflection;

- Intellectual-and-pedagogical competence which is a set of skills related to analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, generalization, and concretization;

- Operational competence which is a set of skills that the teacher requires to be successful in his professional activities.

According to V. A. Slastenin (2002) the model of teachers' professional competence is the unity of his theoretical and practical training. She groups pedagogical skills into four groups:

1. To "transfer" the content of actual educational process into specific educational objectives;

2. To build and start a logically complete educational system;

3. To select and establish the relationship between the components and factors of education, and impel them;

4. To make an inventory and evaluation of pedagogical activities conducted.

S. A. Vdovina (2006) takes into account the requirements of State Educational Standard and identifies the following competencies:

- axiological (awareness of a person's inherent value, personality, understanding of objectives and goals in professional-and-pedagogical activity;

- acquisition of professional and ethical culture;
- understanding the significance and philosophy of the profession, as the source to understand the meaning of life, etc.;
- social-and-legal, i.e. basic knowledge of legal documents related to education in the context of modernization ideas;
- compliance with regulations and safety standards;
- ability to protect the life and health of school students while teaching them;
- thematic-and-informational (fundamentals of general and special theoretical subjects necessary to solve typical problems encountered while fulfilling professional responsibilities);
- knowledge of the main trends and prospects of education and educational sciences;
- skills needed to work with various information resources;
- methodological and technological (readiness for self-education to improve their qualifications, knowledge of school curricula, syllabus and textbooks to develop their monthly and yearly plans or course schedules; skills for using a variety of methods, techniques, training aids, etc.);
- communicative (ability to organize joint educational activities, tolerant behavior; assisting in socializing of students, ability to present the results of their scientific and methodological activities, etc.);
- monitoring and analytical (appreciation and understanding of information);
- acquiring and managing traditional and modern tools of learning assessment;
- acquiring a variety of methods to conduct psychological-and-pedagogical diagnosis of individual students and class profiles;
- designing-and-research (ability to plan the content and methods of interaction at all stages of the educational process, acquisition of basics for developing various teaching planning documentation and using it to implement the content of education; forecasting social disadaptation of children and adolescents, and designing preventive measures; developing the projects of psychological-and-pedagogical research, etc.).

Teachers   start   to   acquire   and develop   their   professional competencies throughout their career. However, training in pedagogical high school has always been considered as the process of developing the fundamentals (background) of professional competence, whereas training in, or through, the career development system is the process of further developing and deepening the professional competence and its' the most important constituents.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The essence of a modern teacher competency model

Competency model is a complete set of competencies that characterizes the behavior of effective teachers and his personality through professional activities. Practical value of modeling competences is that if properly designed using interviews to obtain behavioral examples they obtain the so-called predictive validity. This fact illustrates the idea that competency models can help us predict how the teachers will be able to carry out their professional responsibilities, and, what is also important, predict their behavior in non-standard situations. To build a competency model of a modern teacher it is necessary to define a set of competences that determine effective implementation of his professional responsibilities, and choose an appropriate selection technique.

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Algorithm to develop competency model of a modern teacher

The development of the competency model for teachers involved the following stages:

1. Determining and formulating goals and objectives. At this stage, we have formulated the basic tasks of a modern teacher's professional activity which involve the following: promoting students' key competencies; creating educational environment for self-realization and socializing; enhancing teaching methods; developing motivation to study a certain subject; improvement of individual assistance in learning, etc.

2. Decomposition of teacher key objectives into blocks of 'related' competencies. At this stage, we distinguished two blocks of competencies: general professional and special;

3. Identifying, by a group of experts, a short list of competencies (eight to ten competencies) for each block. At this stage, we used the expert method to select the main activities to ensure the effectiveness of educational activities. School principals, trainers and young teachers have been interviewed in order to obtain behavioral examples and study the distinguishing characteristics of the best teachers.

4. Carrying out an expert examination of a modern teacher competency model by key persons concerned (principals, supervisors, methodologists and young teachers).

Experiment Participants

Each respondent participating in the study (undergraduates) was asked to evaluate a set of competencies typical for teaching jobs, to rank them in order of their importance for a teacher (the *ideal* model of a teacher) and use the 10-point scale to determine how these qualities are inherent in respondents (true, or *real*, model of a teacher). There were 420 participants of the Kazan Federal University Teachers' Development Courses; interviewees included school principals, instructors, experienced and young teachers.

RESULTS

Competency model of a modern teacher

The proposed algorithm allowed to determine a set of competencies of a modern teacher: general professional covering psychological and educational competencies; competencies regarding laws and regulations, professional code; reflexive; and specific ones including subject matter knowledge, methods and pedagogy.

The first three competencies (Psychological-and-Educational, Laws-and-Regulations, Reflexive) have general pedagogical characteristics, and Subject Matter Knowledge, Methodical *and* Pedagogical competencies refer to special competencies which determine the ability to perform certain professional responsibilities that are specific to a school teacher and distinguishes him from other teachers in the staff. All these components are closely interrelated into a complex structure forming professional competencies of a teacher.

Table 1. Competency Model of a Modern Teacher

General Professional Competences	Psychological-and-pedagogical	- Acquiring basic invariant psychological and pedagogical knowledge and skills; - Compliance with certain professional and educational requirements regardless of the specialization of the future teacher; - Acquiring various assessment forms of student education quality; - Ability to identify individual student's ability and build the educational process with their account; - Ability to establish a pedagogical reasonable relationship with students, colleagues, parents; - Creating a favorable climate in the teaching staff; - Ability to design a biodiversity and personal orientation of the educational process, etc.
	Laws and regulations relating to teaching	- Certain regulatory relations as teacher-student, teacher-parent; - Knowledge of and ability to use basic documents on the Rights of the Child and adult responsibilities towards children; - Ethical and legal standards governing the relationship of man to man, society and nature; - Environmental and legal culture.
	Reflexive	- The ability to analyze and assess their work and school activities; - The ability to self-knowledge, self-motivation and self-realization. It is a regulator of the personal achievements of the teacher, as well as the driving force of professional growth and improvement of pedagogical skills. Reflexive competence is tightly integrated with certain specific competencies and others.
Special Competences	Subject matter knowledge	- Willingness to use knowledge of scientific bases of the course content of primary school; - A positive attitude to the subject matter; - Conscious possession of specialized terminology to the extent necessary as the content of educational material; - Ability to interpret and organize scientific information on the subject; - Ability to tailor the content of the discipline to the capabilities of the students.

Methods of teaching		- Willingness to plan, select, synthesize and design the training material on subjects; - Willingness to organize various forms of employment on academic subject; - Willingness to implement the activity approach to learning and ability to organize educational work of younger children; - Willingness to use innovative learning technologies; - Use of a qualified health-saving learning techniques, etc.
Educational ('pastoral care' i.e. duties in advising children about their personal needs)		- Knowledge of methods of orientation in different situations and fluency in verbal and non-verbal means of communication; - Ability and skills in establishing and maintaining necessary contacts with children and adults; - Ability and skills in using the system of internal resources required to build effective communication and activities; - Ability and skills in navigating a large flow of information, carrying out its processing and selection, etc.

The proposed structure of professional competence of teachers, or instructors, must serve as the basis for obtaining visual and adequate idea about their future professional activity and contribute in designing effective teacher training programs and techniques.

Undergraduates' and practitioners' views regarding 'ideal and real' teacher competencies

Undergraduates' assessment of the competencies significance for future teachers gave precedence to two competencies as the core of their professional preparation, or training: Subject Matter Knowledge and Methodology. The second most important is educational ('pastoral care' relating to the duties of a teacher in advising students about their personal needs rather than their schoolwork). As for psychological-and-pedagogic, reflexive and regulative (compliance with rules and regulations relating to education and teaching) competencies, they occupy the bottom positions in the assessment list. According to undergraduates' opinion, professional teachers, first and foremost, should have perfect subject matter knowledge and skills in using appropriate pedagogical methods in upbringing and education.

How do the teachers develop to achieve the ideal? Considering the real state of things, they work on skills needed for educational activities. The second place is given to reflective competency. It is followed by subject matter knowledge, methods and pedagogy; compliance with rules and regulations relating to teaching at the bottom of the list.

The results are not accidental; even the most experienced teacher sometimes feels lost among the variety of teaching aids and textbooks which causes many difficulties while teaching the subject and, consequently, low professional self-esteem.

A thought-provoking fact is that competences related to professional development and improvement (Subject Matter Knowledge and Methodology) have been assessed as the most significant ones when considering the ideal model but in practice have a low degree of implementation.

Thus, there is an obvious contradiction between ideals and reality. Such a state is definitely the reflection ideal and real attitudes towards teaching as a job in general, i.e. the desired and actual levels of responsibilities and performance. Moreover, this significant gap between the two models is an adverse characteristic from methodological and psychological points of view. The challenge is to create a continuous system of monitoring and adjusting the process on the basis of teacher professional development programs and courses.

DISCUSSIONS

Currently, it is absolutely urgent to solve the problems related to teacher education and training system:

At the regional level, it is necessary to

- develop a model of special purpose contracts in professional training offered by regional and municipal education systems with mandatory support of graduates (higher admission requirements for student enrollment) and ensuring their employment;

- address issues of setting minimum statutory starting salary for teachers, approving preferential rates for direct credits (housing);

- develop mechanisms of employment opportunities;

- transform teachers' colleges into large centers covering college-university-postgraduate programs and thus providing better opportunities in human and non-human resources;

- develop an independent system of professional certification of teachers in different training programs to ensure their support and career development;

- to create a public system of professional evaluating the quality of educational programs, etc.

At the level of secondary schools:

- social and professional support of teachers to ensure their promotion and professional career path;

- implementation of student self-education during their student teaching experience at schools (preparing lesson plans and giving lessons) with opportunities to discuss their practice achievements with cooperating teachers and professors;

- systematic professional development of teachers every three years;

- implementation of corporate programs aimed at increasing teachers' self-education level, as well as their administrative, educational, methodical and corporate competencies.

CONCLUSIONS

The research and its content analysis made it possible to identify the blocks of competencies needed for effective teaching: General Professional competency (psychological and pedagogical knowledge and skills), Legal (laws and regulations), Reflexive and special competences involving subject matter knowledge, methodology and counseling skills for educational, 'pastoral care' activities. Combination of all these competences is of great importance for effective fulfillment of pedagogic and educational responsibilities. The results obtained have indicated that there exist idealistic and realistic views on the image of a modern teacher.

Considering idealistic view on the skills and competencies that are necessary to develop for success we have arrived at the following results: assessment of competences significance by undergraduates showed that Subject Matter and Methodological competencies are evaluated as the most significant competencies, and Educational competency involving 'pastoral care' follows them. Whereas the real practical experience of teachers proved Educational competency to be on the top, Reflective - the second, and Subject Matter and Methodological competencies occupy the third position. The gap between idealistic and realistic understanding of teacher competencies raises a question of relevant and constant monitoring and adjustments both in teacher training and teaching experience. To bridge this gap we should raise the bar for teacher preparation so that excellent programs and practices are the norm across the nation.

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