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Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives
PERSONAL CONTEXTS OF SOCIAL EDUCATORS
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of subjective foundations of social educators training. The authors aim to identify the relationship between personal meanings of individual life of students and their professional orientation. As criteria for the personal context of vocational education, the authors propose to consider orientation of students to their own social experience; life attitudes of students; personal meaning of knowledge. The study was conducted using a survey in which 288 3–5-year students from 14 Russian universities took part. It showed that the students' lifestyles for constructive interaction with others in general coincide with the competencies that they should master in the learning process. In the learning process, students “refract” the acquired knowledge through a personal context; this allows them to understand better the essence of social pedagogy as a theory and practice of solving social problems of the family and the child. The empirical research data allowed the authors to conclude that, in general, the personal context plays a significant role in the student's understanding of himself/herself as a future specialist. The following methods of updating personally significant professional knowledge and competencies are disclosed in the article: an increase in active teaching methods, including case studies, discussions, problem solving; teamwork when passing pedagogical practices; regular reflection of educational activities, including focus groups; development of collective and individual start-ups as final qualification works.

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1. Introduction

The problem of vocational training of social educators is significantly aggravated in connection with the complication of relations of a modern person with the world around him/her. Modern society, existing in the context of the widespread distribution of network technologies and robotics, is characterized by an increase in the dangerous trend of dehumanizing human relations. Fast introduction of technological advances in the education process aims at finding ways to maintain its humanistic foundations. In the new social conditions, study of the education subjective foundations, personal characteristics of the future specialist, demanded by modern society, becomes relevant.

The problem of subjectivity can be most fully revealed through the personal meanings of the professional activity of future social educators, the content of which is determined by the individual-personal context of the student's life. After Verbitskiy (2017), the context is understood as a sign and subject environment, a system of conditions that gives a complete meaning to a phenomenon or situation. The process of forming a context is a sequence of actions that ensure the isolation of a particular phenomenon or situation from the general worldview; filling this phenomenon or situation with conscious experiences; the formulation (external or internal) of the relationship to the phenomenon or situation; verbalization of the acquired professional meaning value (Fatuchova & Suleimanova, 2012). An indicator of the context formation is the value attached to a particular phenomenon (Kofeynikova, 2016).

Contexts are situational and persistent; generally accepted and individualized; group and personality. Personal context is a system of personal relationships that each person invests in a phenomenon or situation. The perception of the situation, the value attached to it by a single person, changes significantly with a change in the personal context. Thanks to the personal context, a person knows what to expect and how to comprehend a phenomenon or situation. The personal context activates the thinking of the subject, fills it with meaning and introduces it into a state of a problem or creative situation (Filatova, 2000). Hence, the personal context of the professional training of social educators can be characterized as students' perception and development of a personal attitude towards the essence of social pedagogy and the functioning of social and pedagogical activity, the verbalization of the social pedagogy meaning in the system of relations "person – society", "child – society".

The idea of a personal context is developed within the framework of the concept of sociological research (Merton, Fiske, & Kendal, 1956) and allows modern researchers to come to a number of theoretical conclusions:

- the personal context is revealed by pointing to past experience, to the source of a person's personal values (Rashetina, 2016);
- the personal context turns out to be similar for people occupying a certain social position, determines individual goals and purposes of professional activity and ensures the development of collective professionalism (Racko, Obor, & Barrett, 2019);
- the personal context is necessary to understand unforeseen situations (McPherson, Forster, & Buchanan, 2019);
- while teaching social educators, the personal context provides a deeper motivation for professional activities (Dumitrescu, 2019).

Sustainable personalization of professional activities is especially important when it comes to social educators working with children: children respond more subtly to the individual position of their mentor, are guided by a personal example and the teacher's confidence in adequate ways to solve social problems offered to children.

2. Problem Statement

The objective of our study is to prove the influence of students' personal meanings on understanding and interpretation of professional knowledge obtained in social educators teaching in higher educational institutions of the country.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What kind of personality contexts do future social teachers possess?

3.2. What content of personal experience plays the greatest role in understanding and interpreting theoretical knowledge?

3.3. How can this knowledge enrich and humanize educational process?

4. Purpose of the Study

The article aims at finding out how the personal context of the social teacher profession is shown among students of Russian universities and determine how to update personally significant professional knowledge and competencies in the learning process.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis for solving this problem is the axiological and personality-oriented approaches. The axiological approach allows to rely on the nature and sources of students' personal values, connected with professional activities of a social teacher; it helps to understand the professional purpose of future social educators through established individual goals and ideals and provides an opportunity to take into account the personal, sensible motivation of professional activity, professional concepts of students (Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, & Turner, 2018). The personality-oriented approach directs the study to the choice of ways forming the subjective qualities of the future social teacher, taking into account personal contexts of understanding the essence and principles of social pedagogy.

The research method is a survey prepared by the employees of the laboratory for the content and technologies of social and pedagogical activity with children and families of the Institute for the Study of Childhood, Family and Parenting Russian Academy of Education under the supervision of M.P. Guryanova. One of the groups of questions was aimed at studying the personal context of vocational training for social educators.

6. Findings

The survey was conducted using electronic questioning on a sample of students from 14 Russian universities with graduating departments of social educators. The total number of respondents amounted to 288 3-5 year students.

The following criteria were recognized as criteria for the personal context of vocational education:

- *-orientation of students to their own social experience*, through which there is an understanding of the theory and practice of social pedagogy presented in the learning process;
- *life attitudes of students*, allowing to individualize professional goals and ideals of social pedagogy;
- *personal knowledge meaning*, which provides an opportunity to survive and feel the motivation of professional social and pedagogical activity.

The indicators of the first criterion are the students' assessment of their experience gained in childhood, in the family environment and in the student years; the second criterion is verbalization of relations with others and the value orientations of students; the third one is the students' expectations of the profession and mastery of regulating current life situations.

Let us dwell in more detail on the results obtained for each of the indicated criteria.

The assessment of social experience which refract knowledge acquired in the process of professional training of social educators is positive. Answering the question "How will you describe your childhood?", 63.4% of the students answered "steadily developing"; 31.7% described it as steadily developing with elements of social tension in the family. And only 4.9% indicated their sense of childhood as socially vulnerable. This means that the students in the acquired professional knowledge will seek out the positive aspects of childhood development, which will undoubtedly form a humanistic paradigm of social pedagogy. In addition, the students will consciously or subconsciously adjust the knowledge, taking into account the social situation (in its current state, the situation of social tension that they themselves experienced in childhood), which, in turn, provides understanding of social pedagogy in the context of society social development.

Assessment of the social experience of the family environment also allows us to conclude that students in the process of training and designing their professional activities will be guided by the humanistic values of family relations. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that the students designated the situation in their family as prosperous and benevolent (39.5%); as calm benevolent (22.7%); calm, friendly, but with elements of social tension (30.1%). The experience of staying in a socially tense and dysfunctional family was received by 7.6% of students. It seems that the choice of the profession of a social educator by the last group of students is aimed precisely at helping children to experience such negative situations in family relationships. On the whole, the existing family social experience, despite the ongoing age-related youthful conflict of generations, which is clearly reflected in the cautious students' assessments of relations in their families, allows one to assimilate advanced domestic and foreign concepts of social pedagogy.

Analysis of the survey results showed that the student community activity plays a significant role in assessing the social experience necessary for the conscious assimilation of knowledge and competences in social pedagogy. Unfortunately, it turned out that student life practically does not enrich social experience, which allows updating the personal context of mastering a profession and personally experiencing professional affiliation in practice. Only 26.1% of the respondents took part in volunteering, which is close to the future profession of a social educator. 10.9% of the respondents indicated that they took part in individual charity events. Of course, participation in student self-government (20.4%) and extracurricular activities on interests (26.4%) also give some experience. However, it is alarming that 39.5% of students answered that they have little participation in student life, studying at faculties where the basis of professionalism is their active social position. The conclusion is that the personal context, emotionally experienced in childhood and in family relationships, must be filled with empirical ways of organizing professional activities, especially when it comes to senior students who have already completed a number of professional practices. It is more necessary to involve students in research projects so that they can personally participate in the verification of theoretical knowledge and through the prism of their experience learn to interpret them.

The next criterion is *the students' life attitudes*, allowing them to individualize professional goals and ideals of social pedagogy, was analyzed using indicators such as verbalization of the relationship nature with others and students' value orientations. When choosing relationships with people around them, students give the main thing to mutual interest (75.1% of the respondents), mutual trust (65.6%), mutual sympathy (62.1%), common amateur activities (37.9%), mutual usefulness (22.8%). Only 3.5% of the students surveyed claimed mutual benefit. All this testifies to the fact that the students' life attitudes in a certain way coincide with those competencies that a future social teacher should master in the process of training: the ability to organize interpersonal contacts, communication; ability for constructive interaction. The personal context in these competencies development shows that the students have established positive social attitudes of interaction, which will help ensure their consolidation in their professional activities. The goals and ideals of the formed attitudes towards the nature of social relations with others will help the students master the ethical standards of relationships with others in the process of professional activity.

The personal context, indicated in the value attitudes of the students, also opens up additional opportunities for semantic awareness of the future profession. We will name the first five most rated value attitudes of the students: health (65.7%), love (64%), building a family life (54.8%), achieving wealth status (49.3%), developing one's abilities (49%), and working in one's favorite profession (49%). On the one hand, the aforementioned attitudes most fully reflect the age-related characteristics of modern youth, which allows only indirectly correlating them with the values of professional training. On the other hand, it is these value orientations that are the basis for the functioning of social pedagogy; they help to think and make professional decisions in the light of the principles and content of social pedagogy established by science and practice. The leading areas of socio-pedagogical activity are the formation of a healthy lifestyle and the support of family relationships. Having personal attitudes towards health and a prosperous family life, students can more consciously learn the training programs for these specializations.

The low student appreciation of the values of familiarizing oneself with culture (8.7% of the respondents) and communicating with people (28.3%) is alarming. Most likely, the first will complicate the

formation of general cultural competencies and mastery of the skills of seeing social processes in the broad context of the socio-cultural development of an individual; the second is to limit the need to master the ways of communicating with those people who are not in the circle of trust, interest and sympathy, but require the communication organization in the provision of social services. Consequently, the pedagogical task of university teachers is to include culture in its broad sense of the word in the personal context of mastering professional knowledge and to teach how to build not only interpersonal, but also professional communication.

The personal context of the *knowledge meaning*, which provides an opportunity to experience and feel the motivation of professional social and pedagogical activity, has been analyzed on the basis of students' expectations of professional training for themselves and the characteristics of their generation as a whole. Students turned out to be personally interested in obtaining such knowledge as harmonization of family relations - 66.2% of the respondents (22.4% of the respondents are married and most likely mean their own family); psychology of deviant behavior (50.2%) and the organization of a healthy lifestyle (13.9%). From the previous statements of the students about their problems, it is clear that they do not need this personally significant knowledge for self-knowledge and self-correction (only one student indicated this), but for the opportunity to provide assistance and support to others, including relatives (this was stated in response to the question: "Which of the listed life values are the most important for you?" 35.7% of the respondents choose the category "help to relatives"). Being involved into the personal learning context of the problems of the loved ones and acquaintances, in our opinion, also acts as a condition for motivated mastery of the profession.

The personal context associated with the recognition of oneself as part of the youth generation, which has to take responsibility for the future, affects the nature and methods of mastering professional knowledge and competencies. In response to the question: "How would you characterize the modern youth generation?", the answers were quite contradictory. Along with the definitions "converters" (42.5% of the respondents), "free" (41.4%), "generation of hopes" (31.2%) that came out on top, "scored" (23.5%), "unrealized" (14.7%), "Deceived" (6.3%). Due to the fact that the answer to the question posed involves the selection of several answer options, it turned out that the same students chose for themselves the role of "converters", as well as "confused". The students explain this position by the fact that they "strive for radical changes," but they "are not heard and prevent them from acting." The naivety of such reasoning significantly reduces the possibility of using the personal context of the assimilation of socio-pedagogical knowledge. However, we dare, on the basis of twenty years of experience in training future social educators, to assume that the contradiction that has emerged in modern social conditions of uncertainty not only interferes, but also stimulates students to a deeper understanding of the new laws governing the existence of the modern social world. You only need to know about the existence of this contradiction and use it when organizing the educational process, including organizing educational discussions, involving in the creation of social startups and the implementation of innovative projects. If we rely on the theory of personal context, then we can say that the modern training of social educators at a university should include the competence to solve their own social problems and, on this basis, learn to solve the problems of other people. While students are rather modestly assessing the contribution of teachers to obtaining the most

interesting and useful information in solving their own problems: communication with the teacher took only the fourth place in importance, skipping ahead the Internet, newspapers and books.

The correlation of the criteria of the personal context of vocational education: the orientation of students on their own social experience, life attitudes of students, the personal meaning of knowledge - shows that the students surveyed as a whole do not feel discomfort or intrapersonal conflict when mastering theoretical knowledge. They are focused on the profession of a social educator and express their willingness to work with children (39.2% of the respondents stated this). They actively rely on the personal meanings of vocational training and are ready to fill them with theoretical laws. They expect such educational programs from student life and teachers of specialized disciplines that could enrich their personal experience and build confidence that social problems have solutions.

7. Conclusion

Teaching social educators focused on the humanization of educational and socio-pedagogical activities, account must be taken of the personal contexts of the essence and functioning of the profession. Analysis of the students' questionnaires showed that the personal context of vocational training in modern higher education institutions is pronounced and deeply understood by future social educators. The personal context is revealed by such indicators as the students' social experience, their attitudes and values, individualization of the meanings of acquired knowledge and competencies. Students themselves constantly turn to the personal context in order to understand modern essence of social pedagogy. At the same time, in the student community and in the content of the educational process, students lack a new social experience that allows enriching the personal context as knowledge becomes more complicated. An insignificant place in deepening the personal context is given to research work. Students lack professional communication with teachers in the process of solving their own social problems.

As ways to actualize personally significant professional knowledge and competencies in the process of training social educators at a university, we can offer an increase in active teaching methods, including case study, discussion, problem solving; teamwork when passing pedagogical practices; regular reflection of educational activities, including focus groups; the development of collective and individual startups as final qualification works. Taking into account and enriching the personal context will allow graduate students to understand more deeply the meaning of modern social pedagogy.

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