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CAREER-FORMING STRATEGY FOR SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The article discusses the conceptual foundations of designing a strategy for supporting the professional development of future preschool teachers in the context of a career paradigm and the experience of experimental research of such support at the level of a state higher education institution. The solution to the problem of actualizing the students' self-realization process, which ensures professional development and career development design, is the system of student mentoring organized at the university; it is distinguished by a variety of content, forms of organization of inter-course interaction of students, which contributes to the planning of the career path of professional activity, the assimilation of professional competencies in accordance with changing educational needs. The acmeological-synergetic approach is chosen as the general methodological basis of the concept of a career-forming strategy. In the description of mentoring experience at the university on the basis of inter-course interaction, the pedagogical and organizational components of the career support system for future teachers are presented. The most significant results of revealing the career opportunities of future teachers in the context of the dynamics of changes in preschool education were the formation of ideas in the field of career self-management, professional competencies, manifestation of the abilities to plan and analyze their achievements, the need for self-development.

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1. Introduction

Development of the personnel potential of the education system is one of the most important management tasks worldwide. As shown by the research results on the world practice of creating conditions for professional growth and career advancement of teachers, conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, to stimulate this growth, such tools as identification and certification of outstanding teachers and creating new career levels are used (Teacher as Specialist ..., 2012). For example, the certification of the most talented teachers in the United States includes 25 types of certificates depending on the subject and level of qualification and provides assistance in retraining for new activities. Career steps in Ireland are associated with the introduction, along with senior positions, of new positions for teachers (with special responsibilities), with the establishment of various standards of employment and remuneration.

Additional remuneration in many countries includes payments for periods when teachers work over special problems, for example, lead trainees, perform managerial functions, teach in “problem” schools, work with “problem children”, etc., or for a high level of qualification and for participating in professional development events. Obtaining a new status is accompanied by appropriate assessment procedures involving independent experts, which contributes to the improvement of educational practice (PISA 2009 Results..., 2010).

Education policies should ensure that educators work in an environment conducive to success, encouraging effective educators to pursue their professional career paths. In a number of countries there is an intensive outflow of teachers from the profession, and there is a danger of losing the traditions and experience of the profession. Staff turnover among teachers is higher in the first years of professional activity and decreases as the teaching experience increases (Teachers Matter-Attracting..., 2005).

It is important that educational organizations of different levels take an active part in the development of new approaches to structuring professional careers (Dempsey, 2004). In this case, it is necessary to engage in the public dialogue those who are responsible for the implementation of educational reforms; it also presupposes that organizations that train teachers at different levels will participate in discussing professional careers of teachers (Committee of Experts..., 2003). The university is the most important step, it is the beginning of a professional pedagogical career, to which an educational demand is made by society, employers and educators themselves.

2. Problem Statement

New benchmarks of higher education are associated with the creation of conditions that maximize the students’ personal potential, become the most important stage in the formation of the personality, personal values, life position and predetermine the strategy of a person’s professional pedagogical career, active self-realization, the ability to creatively effective professional activities in varied educational environment.

The need to change approaches to the organization of the training process for future teachers arose due to the fact that, as an analysis of sociological studies has shown, in recent years, discontent among parents and the public about the quality of the educational process, about innovations in preschool

education, and the quality of teacher training has begun to grow in society. Now in educational organizations a new type of teacher is in demand: it is the teacher who is actively and effectively using modern information and communication technologies in the practice, characterized by the ability not only to solve professional problems, but also actively participate in the design of a successful educational process. In these conditions, teachers themselves began to realize the need to change their own position in relation to the increasing demands of consumers of educational services, which must be taken into account when modeling the regional system of continuing education.

The intensity of the participation of educators in building their careers varies greatly from country to country. Within one country, the difference in intensity can also be significant (Creating Effective Teaching..., 2009). Prospects for career growth, the quality of teachers' work depend, first of all, on the standards of professional training and, importantly, on the quality of their initial education. Career progression should not be strictly determined by compliance with organizational standards that ensure uniformity and a strong team spirit. The system of career development from the very beginning of study at a university should be flexible, capable of changes, prepared to meet the needs in different circumstances.

In Russia, the contemporary context of the problem of professional development of teachers is determined, first of all, by the strategic objectives of the state educational policy. Thus, the Federal State Educational Standard for Preschool Education and the Professional Standard "Teacher" define the conditions for the professional development of teachers, their advisory support, organizational and methodological escorts. At present higher demands are made on the teacher, the success of all educational reforms depends on the teacher first and foremost, therefore, special support for the teachers' self-determination in solving innovative problems defined by the standards is necessary even at the stage of their training at a pedagogical university.

As a methodological basis for developing a strategy for such support, we used the acmeological-synergetic approach. The acmeological-synergetic approach is based on the proposition that the achievement of maximum perfection by any social system is possible through self-organization (Chimarov, 2012). In the context of this approach, the basic category in the context of the implementation of the Professional Standard is the category "career", which in relation to the sphere of professional activity characterizes the growth of professional abilities and individual changes leading to the emergence of new qualities necessary for the most successful solution of professional problems. The acmeological component is represented by the project to achieve heights in the course of solving professional problems; the synergetic component is a strategy of professional and personal development based on self-concept and self-organization in achieving success, a prestigious position in society.

A generalized characteristic of a career is the career potential, which is determined by the reserve capabilities, manifested in the skills and abilities to design and implement an individual career path, which can be designed already at the university, at the initial stage of career formation. The main constituents of career potential are career orientations (individual hierarchy of values and the preferred type of career), career opportunities (degree of formation of ideas and skills in the field of career management and self-management) and career competence (meta-ability to solve career problems leading to career success).

Career support is defined as a system of special effects on factors affecting the development of career potential, including organizational and pedagogical components. The organizational component of support

involves the creation of the necessary external conditions for career growth, the career environment as a space that stimulates career self-determination. The pedagogical component includes support in career self-determination, success planning, the sequence of actions leading to it, analysis of one's capabilities, formulating requests, career realization, and reflection on career achievements. The effectiveness of career support can be assessed by the dynamics of the level of career potential of the environment and personality (Sheraizina, Kaplunovich, & Alexandrova, 2011).

Students are mostly motivated to get the profession of a teacher; while studying at a university they try themselves in professional and quasi-professional activities (Vakhitova, 2016), which helps them build a career path and gain unique experience in mentoring. Career planning includes determining the goals of the future teacher and ways aimed at their achievement and implementation in the process of training at the university. During the period of study at the university, career orientations are formed, which is reflected in the specifics of setting career goals, developing plans that determine the success of career-professional development as a whole. According to studies, in the fourth and fifth years of university training, a crisis of professional development begins, which is associated with career planning, job search, and career goals (Ternovskaya, 2006). Therefore, the career development of a future teacher depends on the specific steps of help in understanding and implementing personal professional plan, in correlating abilities with professional qualities.

3. Research Questions

The main research questions are:

- What is peculiar about the process of supporting the professional career of future teachers that meets the needs of modern preschool education?
- Are individual student educational needs taken into account in designing their career paths?
- How does the mentoring activity of students within the framework of inter-course interaction affect the development of their professional career?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is the development, justification and experimental testing of a career-forming strategy to support the professional development of future preschool teachers at the higher education institution.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study is the acmeological-synergetic approach to the career-forming strategy for supporting the professional development of future teachers.

The study used theoretical methods, including the study of scientific and methodological literature on the research problem, analysis of the content of support for mentoring students, a survey, and analysis of the results of mentoring.

6. Findings

In the course of vocational training at the university, the search for ways, their variability, actualizing the process of self-realization of future preschool teachers and its support, ensuring the process of professional development and career development design, is in demand.

The solution to this problem is the student mentoring system organized at Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University, which is distinguished by a variety of content, forms of organization of inter-course interaction of students, contributing to the assimilation of professional competencies in higher education in accordance with changing educational needs (Sheraizina, Migunova, & Zhigalik, 2018).

Inter-course student mentoring, as a component of the career path of professional activity, is considered as a way of direct and indirect personal influence on a person, a method of pedagogical support of subjects of the educational process. It is advisable to start mentoring activities already in the process of studying at a university, before the start of work at educational organizations where university graduates work independently and bear full responsibility for the educational result.

The experience of mentoring, organized for the students majoring in “Preschool education” in a developing community of diverse age, “a study group of senior students - a study group of junior students”, works as a system for supporting the educational activities of students - future preschool teachers under the influence of “involving” mentoring leaders.

In this context, the goal of mentoring is to accompany the process of professionalization of students, their career formation on the basis of strengthening inter-course interaction.

The range of tasks defined in accordance with the goal includes: orientation to the future profession through motivation for joint activities “mentor- the mentored”; modeling a comfortable career environment, organizing developing “student-teacher”, “student-student”, “junior student group - senior student group”, “student-employer” communities; training in team building, in leadership through inclusion in project activities; motivation for various levels of contests that develop students’ professional competencies and facilitate their early career formation.

Coordination, support of mentoring activities of students is carried out by a project group of teachers of the department, who create conditions for inter-course interaction in accordance with the developed “Regulation on mentoring undergraduate students”.

The activities of coordinators include the organization of training for mentors in the basics of research activities, forms and methods of active learning; invitation of employers (heads and teachers of preschool educational organizations) as experts, members of the jury, members of project groups; the provision of organizational and methodological assistance to mentors in the planning and implementation of training events at various levels; organization of reflection based on the results of mentoring activities with the aim of its adjustment and further design; assistance in spreading the positive experience of mentoring in the student and professional environment at scientific and practical conferences, at meetings of the public expert and analytical council of the department with the participation of employers and the city community representatives; stimulating of publication activity.

There are certain requirements for the mentored students: the ability for continuous learning, critical attitude to changes in education and society, the need for creative development, the ability to create a career environment, to design a career program based on self-management, including career goal-setting, analysis

of career opportunities, and the formation of requests for arranging conditions necessary for the implementation of a career strategy, and planning a career path.

In addition, a mentoring student gains experience in managing and teaching junior students and peers; gets recognition of fellow students; increases personal status; receives the opportunity for applying to special scholarships competitions of various levels (university, regional, international) which includes an indicator of social activity; manifests initiative and independence in the educational process; gets experience of mentoring in the volunteer movement; acquires the possibility to share personal experience in the media and at various conferences. These results allow the students to feel demanded, successful, capable of professional activity and able to predict their career.

By participating in mentoring, a student receives a new social status, which relates to a social career, accumulates certain achievements (achievement career), it reflects the acmeological essence of career success as a process of realizing personal abilities, actualizing personal potential in regards to value orientations.

Given the coordination actions of university teachers and preschool educational organizations, students-mentors organize and carry out joint activities with other students in the following areas: research, team building; integration of educational modules elements, creative and health-saving activities.

The most effective forms of joint activity with employers, when each student can be simultaneously in the position of both a mentor and the mentored, include interactive communication games, team building and leadership trainings, joint master classes, educational quests with preschool children, schoolchildren, educational business games, competitions, creativity festivals, “career portfolio”, etc.

Thus, during education, each student goes through certain stages of mentoring, he/she can be both a mentor (initiate, organize and be both a group mentor for the whole course and an individual mentor for a specific creative group, etc.) and the mentored (senior students who are having internships at preschool educational organizations or employers that perform the functions of mentors in the competitions). Such interaction contributes to continuous self-development, building personal educational route, the beginning of a student’s professional career, the formation of the ability to design career stages, and developing career competence.

Training students in career self-management involves several stages. Since career motivation is the leading goal, the first step is to help the students diagnose their career orientations, taking into account success zones, benchmarks, expected accomplishments, the forms of their presentations, and filling out the “career portfolio”.

The next stage is the analysis of one’s own capabilities in achieving career goals (professional and personal characteristics) necessary to achieve high results in future professional activities. The identification of such characteristics is not an easy task that can be solved with the help of consulting a student on the choice of a self-presentation strategy by university teachers and employers.

At the third stage, the teacher, together with the student, identifies the relevant competencies, their indicators, plans forms of development in the educational process of the university, of self-education, of the project activities implementation and participation in professional skills contests, etc.

In order to increase the level of career competence at all stages, it is important to use the techniques of developing support based on a communicative approach and reflection. The study of career orientations

was carried out using the questionnaire for students “Career Motivation” and an analysis of the essay “My profession”. Career opportunities were determined by the formation of ideas in the field of career self-management, the manifestation of the ability to plan and analyze achievements, according to the level of professional competence. Career competence was determined by the success of solving career problems - the quality of the career plan, the degree of independence of career path development, the analysis of career opportunities, and the level of reflection. At the beginning of the experiment, 25% of students showed skills in setting career goals, setting objectives to achieve them; during re-planning, taking into account the reflexive assessment of their mentoring experience, 72% showed these skills. Students mastered additional competencies, they received more letters of gratitude and certificates, were involved in expert groups in preschool educational organizations, were appointed tutors in contests “My profession” and others (an example of social career). The students increased their activity and productivity of participation in creative activities (career achievement). In the hierarchy of motivation for employment in the chosen profession, the “achievement” orientations and motives were still prevailing, as well as the possibility of self-realization, and then followed, as an important condition, the salary.

An independent direction was the organization of a comfortable educational environment among student majoring in “Preschool education” at a university and college, the creation on this basis of a student-professional community that implements a number of joint projects. Distinctive features of the interaction system implemented in the course of project activities were the definition of the goals of each project taking into account the needs of employers, the self-determination of the subjects of the educational process in regards to each other’s interests, co-organization and stimulation of self-organization in the implementation of projects, providing the opportunity to receive public recognition of personal contribution to project implementation activities.

The survey results showed that the majority of students (87%) are ready to learn and improve their mentoring skills, for this, in their opinion, it is necessary to train themselves, enrich the mentoring experience, learn to leave the comfort zone with a view to further development, broaden their horizons, have motivation, develop skills of introspection and a professional career design. More than 80% of students are focused on further employment in the chosen professional profile.

The results of the experimental work were presented to the professional pedagogical community in the form of publications and reports at research seminars, international scientific and practical conferences, the All-Russian forum “Mentor”, discussion platforms of various levels, etc.

7. Conclusion

All of the above allows us to determine the need for designing a mentoring system among undergraduate students, thus enriching activities in the educational process of the university. The results of an experimental study of achievements testify to the effectiveness of using a career strategy in the design and maintenance of individual mentoring routes at a university.

The proposed mentoring system in the student’s environment organically complements the education of a Bachelor of Preschool Education, identifying the best innovative and productive educational practices of interaction, contributing to the creation of a special career-forming educational and professional environment for training a future preschool teacher, designing an individual career path based on a single

team of teachers and students who solve the problems of modernizing the system of higher pedagogical education.

Supporting the professional development of future teachers (especially at the final stage of study at the university) based on student mentoring is aimed at creating the student's internal readiness for conscious and independent construction, adjustment and implementation of a self-development plan as a subject of a career path in constantly changing conditions.

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