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#### DIAGNOSTICS OF ABILITY OF FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS TO INTERACT WITH SPECIALISTS

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#### *Abstract*

The paper justifies the relevance of a key competence of an educational psychologist. The authors conducted philosophical and psychological-pedagogical analysis of the problem of interaction and concluded that the ability to interact is a fundamental factor within all areas of professional activity of an educational psychologist. The optimal psychological and pedagogical conditions at a higher educational institution ensuring the development of this important attribute of future experts require careful analysis of the term “interaction”, definition of modern requirements to educational psychologists within their professional activity and structuring of the studied ability. Theoretical and methodological study conducted by the authors allowed identifying the main and key structural components of the considered ability of an educational psychologist: cognitive-informational, empathic-communicative, andragogical-subjective, standard-behavioral components. Such system and structural approach facilitates the understanding of complex qualities, thus defining place and functionality of each component. The paper characterizes the identified components and criteria of their diagnostics, which are considered essential to select the best diagnostic methods and techniques in order to identify the maturity level regarding the ability of future educational psychologists to interact with specialists of educational institutions. The results of the study allowed defining the maturity level of each component of this complex integrated professional quality of an educational psychologist separately and the studied ability in general. The obtained data may be considered in the creation of special psychological and pedagogical conditions of the educational process and extracurricular activities of students studying within the program *Psychology and Pedagogics*.

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## 1. Introduction

The relevance of the problem related to the development of the ability of a future educational psychologist to interact with experts of the educational process fulfilling educational objectives and problems, ensuring education and development of students is caused by the importance of the given quality within the professional activity of a psychologist. The Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) concerning the program *Psychology and Pedagogics* (44.03.02) highlights professional competences of a graduate reflecting this ability, mainly the “ability to interact effectively with the academic staff of general educational organizations and other specialists regarding the development of students within communicative, role-play and educational activity” (PK-38) (MES RF, 2015).

The ability to interact is one of the key professional abilities of an educational psychologist. Its maturity level determines the efficiency of awareness-building work, counseling, psychotherapy and psychocorrection. Complex interaction of an educational psychologist with all agents of teaching and educational process implies the ability of the former one to build relationship, to establish the necessary contacts, including professional communication with colleagues based on the principles of andragogy – mutual respect, cooperation, credibility. Besides, it is important to demonstrate sincere interest in people, benevolence, humanity, kindness (Minazova, 2016a).

The need of philosophical and psychological-pedagogical analysis of the interaction of educational psychologists with specialists of educational institutions, as well as with children and their parents is beyond any doubt since interaction is considered the “deepest source, the basis and the reason for formation and development of the interacting objects” (Gritsanov, 1998, p. 18). Ozhegov gives the following definition to “interaction”: “a) interrelation of phenomena and b) mutual support, coordinated actions” (as cited in Ozhegov & Shvedova, 1999, p. 98). The second part of Ozhegov’s definition – mutual support and coordinated actions – contains a deep meaning of the entire professional activity of an educational psychologist. The sociological encyclopedia defines the term “interaction” even closer to the understanding of content of the chosen competence – “the process of direct contacts, communication of group members among themselves; systematic influence of group members on each other; development of general values and standards of behavior ...” (Semigin, 2003, p.74).

Psychology and pedagogics considers interaction alongside with relations and communication. Social psychology identifies the interactive aspect of communication (communication as interaction) focused on the general behavioral strategy in actions (Andreyeva, 2017). The Psychology Dictionary by Petrovsky and Yaroshevsky (1990) defines interaction as “the process of direct or mediated influence of objects (subjects) on each other thus fostering their mutual conditionality and communication” (p. 68). Bogomolova (2008) notes that “the individual influence is a process and result of change by one person of behavior of the other – his patterns, outlook, certain values, ideas, opinions, evaluations ...” (p. 55).

Pedagogical interaction is a key concept of pedagogics. Bim-Bud (2002) defines this term as follows: “interaction in pedagogical activity is the process between a teacher and a student during educational activity aimed at personal development” (p. 49). Pedagogical interaction implies numerous interrelations between subjects and objects of the educational process. In this particular case, it implies communication between educational psychologists and specialists of educational institutions engaged in training, education and development of students.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Thus, the development of the ability for effective interaction with specialists of educational institutions is a relevant problem in psychological practice and pedagogical science caused by modern requirements to professional activity of educational psychologists, specifics of the profession and FSES requirements to graduates in psychology and pedagogics. To define the most effective psychological and pedagogical conditions at any higher educational institution thus optimizing the ability of students to interact with specialists of educational institutions there is a need to analyze the development of certain competences or structural components of this ability among future educational psychologists.

## **3. Research Questions**

The ability to interact, to influence, and hence to change the other person and yourself is a complex integrated attribute of a future educational psychologist, which understanding requires thorough structuring, division of this quality into separate components with further systematization, i.e. future coordination of certain elements to achieve a more effective result. The analysis of the term “interaction”, modern requirements to educational psychologists within professional activity (Minazova, 2016a), as well as structural and functional approach (Coser, 1956; Romanenko, 2008) made it possible to conclude that the main and essential structural components of the studied ability of educational psychologists are as follows: cognitive-informational, empathic-communicative, andragogical-subjective, standard-behavioral components.

To understand what qualities reflect the identified components and what shall be formed and instilled in future educational psychologists, let us briefly address the characteristic of each component (Minazova, 2016b).

The cognitive-informational component reflects the ability of an educational psychologist for professional information search; vigorous cognitive activity to acquire professional knowledge; possession of various techniques and technologies of effective teamwork.

The empathic-communicative component reflects the ability and readiness of an educational psychologist to sympathize, empathize and understand the emotional condition of a client. The empathy of interpersonal communication allows an educational psychologist understanding the inner world of a client having taken on the role of another person, to find a way out of a difficult situation from his personal perspective. This valuable feature fosters mutual trust thus making the communication process pleasant. As a rule, empathy makes human interactions flexible. In the psychology of education, empathy is defined as “the ability to communicate so that the audience gets the feeling of being understood” (Mikheeva, Gorodilova, Brykina, Fabrikov, & Usmanova, 2018, p. 669).

The andragogical-subjective component emphasizes the need to consider andragogical principles within the interaction of an educational psychologist with other experts of the educational process: equality of relations; minimization of authority; sight of respect, understanding and interest in colleagues; principle of professional teamwork; support of equality of parties at all stages of activities of an educational psychologist.

The standard-behavioral component implies professional behavior and activity of an educational psychologist based on the regulatory framework governing the activity and behavior of an educational psychologist within the education system.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to select the battery of diagnostic methods and techniques for further identification of the maturity level regarding the ability of future educational psychologists to interact with specialists of educational institutions and to carry out diagnostics of the considered ability among students.

#### 5. Research Methods

The diagnostic study was based on the following methods: observations; polling and conversation with students on their understanding of such important professional quality as the ability to interact with teachers of educational institutions concerning students' development; content analysis; methods of mathematical statistics. The study was conducted in 2018 at the Department of Philology of Chechen State University. Full-time and part-time students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of study within the program *Psychology and Pedagogics* (in total 100 people) participated in the study.

#### 6. Findings

Let us describe the results obtained through the test of the maturity level of each component of the studied ability of future educational psychologists.

*Cognitive-informational component* was studied against the following criteria: students' knowledge of the phenomenon "interaction"; knowledge of various approaches, mechanisms and techniques of effective interaction with colleagues; ability to get and be aware of professional information and to transfer it to colleagues; ability of future educational psychologists to evaluate the abilities to build relations with others and to understand the style of interaction with colleagues. Students were offered to answer some questions such as: How do you understand the ability of an educational psychologist to interact with specialists of educational institutions? What qualities shall an educational psychologist have for efficient interaction with specialists of educational institutions in order to transfer the psychological knowledge? etc.).

Table 1 shows the qualities of an educational psychologist capable to interact effectively with teachers and other experts in order to transfer the psychological knowledge.

**Table 01.** Ranking of cognitive-informational criteria by students

No.	Criteria of cognitive-informational component	Responses, %
1.	Awareness of a psychologist on various techniques and approaches of efficient interaction	23
2.	Possession of interaction techniques	20
3.	Ability of active listening	13
4.	Ability to avoid conflicts	13
5.	Readiness for openness	9

6.	Readiness to defend personal opinion	9
7.	Emotional reaction to feelings of the other person	6
8.	Knowledge of regulatory framework	4
9.	Compliance of a teacher with equality of relations	3

The analysis of obtained data on the development of the *cognitive-informational component* showed that students do not fully realize the importance of some qualities essential for effective collaboration of an educational psychologist and other experts. Unfortunately, the evidence presented suggests that students put the information component (25%) on the first place, whereas the equality and subject-subject relations between experts – one of the key conditions of effective interaction – took the lowest position – 3%.

Then, we tried to identify the maturity levels of the *cognitive-informational component*. Namely, regarding three questions 13% of the total number of students achieved the high level of qualities; 29% – medium level; 58% – low level. Thus, the majority of students showed the low maturity level of the *cognitive-informational component*.

The study of the *empathic-communicative component* was based on the “Diagnostics of the level of empathic-communicative abilities” by Boyko (as cited in Raygorodsky, 2001). The answers to 36 questions were counted and distributed according to high, medium and low maturity levels of the *empathic-communicative component*. The obtained results show that 12% of students demonstrate high level; 37% – medium level; 51% – low level of empathy and communication.

In order to diagnose the maturity level of the *andragogical-subjective component* we analyzed the development of such qualities as respect, strive for equality in interpersonal and intergroup relations, respect for equality. This task was based on the “Diagnostics of factors in establishing equal and polite contact or difficulties in establishing equal and polite contact” by V.V. Boyko (as cited in Raygorodsky, 2001) adjusted to the needs of the study.

According to the results of the survey, the students were split into three groups, each corresponding to a certain maturity level of the given personal quality. The students that put “yes” against the first group of factors (establishing equal and polite contact) demonstrated the *high level* of andragogical-subjective qualities and made 5% of all students. The students that put “yes” against the second group of factors (difficulties in establishing equal and polite contact) demonstrated the *medium level* of andragogical-subjective qualities and made 46% of students. The students that put “yes” against the third group of factors (resistance to establishing a contact) demonstrated the *low level* of andragogical-subjective qualities and made 49% of the total number of students participating in the study.

The diagnostics of the *standard-behavioral component* was based on the test “Regulatory framework of professional activity of an educational psychologist”, which included questions and approximate answers to students’ knowledge of a regulatory framework and certain steps and behavioral acts of a psychologist in their interaction with specialists of educational institutions.

The test contained over 25 questions and more than 70 approximate answers. The analysis of students’ answers made it possible to conclude that students are not really aware of the main documents and legal terms regulating their future professional activity; it is not clear for them what does the Regulatory Framework regulating their activity is based on; they do not attach importance to the knowledge of the Regulatory Framework, etc. The future educational psychologists demonstrated especially weak knowledge

regarding their interaction with specialists of educational institutions. Hence, only 4% of students demonstrated the high level of standard-behavioral component; 20% – medium level; 76% – low level. The obtained results illustrate the need to increase the knowledge of regulatory framework as well as legal and ethical behavior of students – future educational psychologists.

The table 02 below shows the main personal qualities of future educational psychologists that were systematized based on the analysis of structural components of the ability to interact with specialists of educational institutions.

**Table 02.** Indicators Of Maturity Level Of Key Components Of The Ability Of Future Educational Psychologists To Interact With Specialists Of Educational Institutions

Maturity Level	Components Of The Ability Of Future Educational Psychologists To Interact With Specialists Of Educational Institutions			
	Cognitive-Informational	Empathic-Communicative	Andragogical-Subjective	Standard-Behavioral
High	13	12	5	4
Medium	29	37	46	20
Low	58	51	49	76

Using the data on each component, we calculated the indicators of maturity level of the ability of future educational psychologists to interact with specialists of educational institutions:

- high level – 8.5% of the total number of students;
- medium level – 33% of the total number of students;
- low level – 58.5% of the total number of students.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the task to reveal the maturity level of future educational psychologists regarding the ability to interact with specialists of educational institutions made it possible to identify a series of diagnostic methods and techniques. They include the following: development of questions for future educational psychologists (How do you understand the ability of an educational psychologist to interact with specialists of educational institutions? and What qualities shall an educational psychologist have for efficient interaction with specialists of educational institutions in order to transfer the psychological knowledge?).

The obtained data demonstrating relatively low level of future educational psychologists regarding their ability to interact with specialists of educational institutions are focused on and aimed at the need to create special psychological and pedagogical conditions of the educational process and extracurricular activities of students. In our opinion, it is critical to introduce additional elective courses, and take some practical measures that would change the initial indicators of the above ability in the long-term perspective thus becoming a subject of our further research.

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