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Young Teachers' Adaptation to Professional Activity in France

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Abstract

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The article contains the results and analysis of the researches carried out in France and devoted to the social and psychological adaptation of young teachers during their first working years. The investigations of Russian and foreign authors on psychological, social and pedagogical aspects of young teachers' adaptation process serve as a theoretical and methodological base of this study.

The core of the social-psychological adaptation subject lays in the formation of special way of teacher's interaction with social environment, the establishment of close relations between the adaptive and the ambience, and in active participation of the individual in the psychological atmosphere of the collective. The gradual pedagogical preparation in France is promoted by integrative nature of approaches to the organization and content of professional and pedagogical training of future teachers of France. French scientists consider that the quality of adaptation is measured by three main categories: academic institution, colleagues and students. The article gives detailed information about different kinds of young teachers' assistance and their difficulties. The article lights up the factors explaining the reasons of young teachers' difficulties. The great value in France is attached to the first weeks of teachers' work at school, to methodological engineering and pedagogical tools. The analysis suggests that the success of young teachers' consolidation in academic institution depends on a favorable psychological climate in the team, young specialists' positive attitude to their pedagogical activity, availability of adequate working conditions, and satisfaction of the assistance provided by the teaching staff. Besides, an integrative approach to the practice-oriented training of future specialists contributes to the improvement of teachers' adaptation. Various forms of estimation taken in France are of special interest (summative, forming, standard and criteria). The submitted results and information could contribute to improve the quality of pedagogical education in Russia.

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Keywords: Young French teachers, social and psychological adaptation, professional activity, pedagogical education system.



1. Introduction

1.1. Relevance of the problem

The article contains the analysis of results of the researches carried out in France and devoted to the social and psychological adaptation of young teachers during their first working years.

The problem is relevant to Russian Federation, therefore studying of the foreign experience of young teachers' social and psychological adaptation, in particular in France, can be useful to the Russian system of higher education.

The investigations of Russian and foreign authors on psychological, social and pedagogical aspects of young teachers' adaptation process serve as a theoretical and methodological base of this study (V.I. Zagvyazinsky, V.A. Slastenin, E. Breuse, M. Altet, A. De Peretti, N. Esquieu, S. Pean, etc.).

1.2. Problem statement

The formation of teacher's social-physiological adaptation is a part of the course of general adaptation problems elaboration, which is becoming more and more of current importance. Content of social-psychological adaptation consists of several key aspects as social status, professional self-determination, position in the team and in the system of interpersonal relations of the immediate social environment.

2. Purposes and research problems

The purpose of this study is to find out the reasons of main difficulties for young teachers, problems of professional-pedagogical preparation, measures of help and also advanced training by widening the basic pedagogical education, the maintenance of pedagogical tools, mastering necessary social-psychological and professional abilities, scope of professional training.

The core of the subject of social-psychological adaptation lays in the special way of teacher's interaction formation with social environment, the establishment of close relations between the adaptive and the ambience, and in active participation of the individual in the psychological atmosphere of the collective. The analysis of the available research results, which were carried out in France by E. Breuse (1991), A. De Peretti (1991), N. Esbye, S. Pean (1996), etc., demonstrates that in many cases the emphasis is placed on psychological (Breuse, 1991) or pedagogical (De Peretti, 1991) aspects of teachers' adaptation process. In France gradual pedagogical preparation generates self-consciousness and favors young teachers' formation by integrative nature of approaches to the organization and content of professional and pedagogical training of future teachers.

3. Research materials

A new modern system of professional and pedagogical preparation provides a combination of the theory and practice from the very beginning of study at university with domination of knowledge of disciplines during university training and domination of professional and pedagogical preparation in

magistracy. Professional guidance becomes gradual and concentric: the analysis of educational operations in a broad sense is gradually narrowed to the analysis of pedagogical situations, up to teaching this or that concrete discipline. According to the curriculum of the 3rd year of study at university, the act of the doctrine is been analyzed, and the offered contents are being developed for this purpose. Integrative nature of future teachers' training is confirmed by the program of module education, which is practiced in universities. Its topics are as follow: "the analysis of professional practice and ambience where it occurs"; "creating favorable conditions for everyone's success"; "formation of future adults in their partnership with social, cultural and economic environment"; "use of new information technologies" (Formations generales, 1998).

French scientists consider that one of the main factors of young teachers' adaptation is difficulties faced by them in their practical activities (N. Equeiu S&S. Pean, 1996; Fumat 1991). It should be noted that difficulties, which are caused by change of former students' status are of great importance. The essence of a pedagogical profession lays in the fact that there is a full inversion of students' roles. A young teacher often has an impression that he "has come over to another side of a barrier". Inversion of roles can lead to two opposite reactions: refusing change of roles, the teacher remains on the students' part or, on the contrary, he builds the line of defense. Both positions do not favor implementation of teacher's functions.

According to I. Fumat (1991), despite all efforts on prevention of difficulties and their mitigation by means of the professional and pedagogical preparation (training), which is more evenly distributed on time, it is necessary to admit that discrepancy between professional and pedagogical preparation and practical activities is inevitable. It is impossible to claim that young teachers are well trained. There are two reasons for this purpose.

First, there is always a distinction between a real educational situation and its imitation (by means of the story, the image or the comment), between reality and its idea. Secondly, young teachers have natural desire to deny and cancel the connection with their professional and pedagogical preparation. Everything previous is made a start, denied, depreciated.

The point of view of the French scientists N. Esquieu and S. Pean is of interest (N. Equeiu S&S. Pean, 1996). They consider that the quality of social-psychological adaptation of young teachers is measured by three main categories: academic institution, colleagues and students. The indicators of adaptation are the knowledge of academic institution's plans, professional motivation and the wish to continue working in this particular institution.

Social-psychological teacher's adaptation also depends on his relationship with the colleagues, for example, more than two thirds of teachers of the first year after graduating had no support of colleagues during their first working year whereas they needed practical advice. In seven cases from ten teachers who often exchange experience with the colleagues in the academic institution regularly meet colleagues from other educational institutions. The analysis proves that more than 40% of young teachers want to have the supervisor among the colleagues during the first months after their appointment. Teachers from prior zones of education are mainly interested in it.

Young teachers face two kinds of difficulties in relationship with their students: to motivate students of different levels to work and to interest the least motivated ones. Surveys show that three quarters of

foreign language teachers have confirmed their difficulties in the work with students of different levels, and two thirds of teachers of natural-science disciplines had difficulties with the motivation of uninterested students. Teachers of natural-science disciplines have fewer problems with the misbehavior even in classes with students of different levels, but they face students' disinterest more.

Students' misbehavior represents a big problem for a third of teachers after the first year of training. The ratio changes in accordance with gender, teaching subject and school type. Teachers of humanities and "other" subjects have more difficulties with misbehavior than those of technical disciplines. Besides, misbehavior at humanity lessons of female teachers is higher than of male teachers. In all types of educational institutions of France, young teachers consider that the difficulties are mainly related to the following factors: misbehavior of a particular student, large class, lack of student's motivation and the problem of violence in French schools. The most frequent acts of violence are fights among students, verbal cruelty and insults in relation to teachers, aggressive behavior and threats, material damage and thefts. According to the study, teachers try to convince a student, then to draw attention of administration, to share and meet agreements of colleagues, to demand a meeting with parents or temporary exception of the student (N. Equeiu S&S. Pean, 1996).

The reasons of difficulties of young teachers, according to the French scientists, are explained by the following factors:

- features of the young teacher (lack of calling, bad professional guidance, insufficiently developed mental capacities); level of initial pedagogical education (inadequate, formal, low-informative preparation without direct link with school reality); absence or insufficiency of professional development; the shortcomings connected with policy of reception, the help and the management of young specialists to educational institutions; professional ambiance (conservatism of colleagues, hobby for conservative traditions, unwillingness of colleagues to share the privileges, strict subordination observance); school practice (too remote from the theory); problems of relationships (a teacher - students, parents, colleagues), insufficient material status of the teacher; insufficient material support of working conditions; disdain of public opinion about teachers (Breuse, 1991).

Difficulties of young teachers can be the following:

- young teachers' refusal from teaching after finishing the educational institution or in several weeks after taking up the position; the requirement of long unpaid holiday to young teachers; allergy to work; psychosomatic manifestations; psychological difficulties; nervous diseases, depression and even suicides.

Among the measures of assistance offered for the best young teachers' adaptation are the following (the report on the Council of Europe):

- equitable distribution of duties in the educational institution; the indication of places where it is possible to receive the help in case of difficulties, support in critical situations; reviewing the role of the inspector who has to be an adviser, but not a controller.

Among other offers it is possible to note the following:

- improvement of teaching material conditions; reduction of the quantitative structure of classes and the quantity of lessons which a young teacher has to give; reduction of administrative loadings; ensuring stability of the carried-out loading; the prevention of the conflicts which can lead to

depression; development of means to prevent access to professional training programs to incapable people for this profession; addition of basic pedagogical education during the first working year; facilitation for the transition to another job in case of failure or serious difficulties; assistance of action coherence and to exchange experiences among young teachers and teachers with little experience; improvement of cooperation with parents (Open Days, meetings).

According to the practice-oriented approach, the most significant ideas belong to A. De Peretti who has developed seminars to train teachers to take up office (De Peretti, 1991). From A. De Peretti's point of view, one of the main abilities, which a future teacher has to possess, is the ability to analyze numerous types of the professional activity. In his opinion, those conclusions which are drawn by the teacher from this analysis are especially important. Besides, we think that in the adaptation process, the greater focus is placed on the improvement of teacher's social knowledges related with the modern youth problems of pedagogical public surrounding.

The great value is attached to the first weeks of teachers' work at school as well as necessary tools which French teachers subdivide into so-called "methodological engineering" and "pedagogical tools" (De Peretti, 1991). "Methodological engineering of prime necessity" includes the list of initial tasks of a trainee, tests, models of exercises, lesson plans, the audio-and video records, etc. During the first working weeks at school the trainee needs to know specificity of a lesson, various options of the beginning and the end of a lesson, features of forming and summative assessment, etc. The trainee has to know methods of communication both with the colleagues and with the students and their parents very well.

Pedagogical tools consist of a huge layer of didactic methods, ways of various lesson types; knowledge of the necessary terminology belonging to them. According to the French teachers, such interesting information layer including the list of necessary addresses (for example, addresses of the consultants who know the trainee), the list of available libraries, centers of scientific documentation, museums, associations of specialists on the subject interesting for him, etc., belongs to pedagogical tools. Future teachers-trainees are taught to make tables of "alarm signals and key moments" (d'alertes et de points-clefs) in their professional activity. There is a list of students' major mistakes; a detailed list of necessary recommendations to overcome training difficulties; a list of instructions to avoid information overloading and congestion of the training program in the table.

Future French teachers learn what abilities and professional characteristics are to be considered in the process of preparation for the profession (knowledge of the studied subject, psycho-pedagogical knowledge, organizational abilities, creativity, ease of communication, ability to direct, susceptibility to culture, ability to understand innovations, preservation of intellectual inquisitiveness). French scientists inform that the main purpose in preparation for teacher's activity is to perform in the development of the following abilities:

- Abilities to accept and represent (yourself, students, program, purposes, requirements), cheerfulness, mobility;
- abilities to collect and analyze students' representations and motivations concerning the basic concepts of school organization, general professional plans, plans of the educational institution and teaching discipline;

- abilities to develop and represent the knowledge, versions of the lesson or lecture plans, lists of goals, documentation, tools, control methods);

- Abilities to organize and supervise the class (division into subgroups, split the roles and training rules, the tables of observation over students and own behavior, the short review of the most repeating difficulties);

- Abilities to stimulate and motivate students (tools of forming assessment, specific features of the personalized contacts, elementary methodical tips for the groups, the ability to organize the moments of discharge and holidays);

- abilities to prepare for the lessons (studying of documents, catalogs of tools and didactic means, characteristic features of the goal setting and the lesson, a list of guidelines, exercises on imagination and creativity, the choice of metaphors to illustrate the lesson and the help in storing);

- abilities of improve personal and professional competences constantly (a continuous search of missing elements of the competence, meetings with the supervisor and other colleagues, the detailed description of the used training methods, regular reading of professional editions according to the drawn-up plan, cultural activities).

Mastering pedagogical competences last during all working activity of the teacher. It becomes an expression of a tendency to the increasing continuity and interrelation of professional and pedagogical preparation at various educational stages. In this regard, the scope of vocational training throughout all career of the teacher is of interest.

In the system of the initial pedagogical education the following topics are of particular interest:

- Student: psychology of the child, psychology of the teenager, school psychology, nervous system and psychology of the doctrine, memory.

- Class: group management, cast, psychological resilience, transactional analysis, communication, empathy, supervision over the class.

- Educational institution: school sociology, collective pedagogics, school management, ultimate goals and problems of education, scientific researches in the field of education.

- Evaluation: various forms of evaluation (summative, forming, standard, criterial), constant control, precautions and requirements.

- Educational technologies: audiovisual, informatics, statistics, modeling (imitating experiment).

Within the first five years of teaching, the following subjects are recommended:

- Various pedagogical techniques: teaching creativity, experimenting with various duration of lessons, cross-cultural communications in pedagogics, teaching the technique of the work in small and big groups, seminars on studying practical experiences, pedagogics of goals, theoretical synthesis of the practical experience.

- Differentiated pedagogics: introduction of different types of mutual support between students, experimenting in creation of various groups, experiments on interdisciplinary training, the practice-oriented scientific activity, contract pedagogics.

- Various forms of activity in the field of education: educational seminars on management and economy of training, seminars on collective management, groups of deep professional training.

- Professional orientation of students: studying and reception possibilities, knowledge of the market of employment, training of pedagogical conversations.

- Personal steadiness of training: voice training, hygiene of breath, the ability to express ideas orally, practice in companies, artistic culture, and the analysis of a new role.

For the middle of the career the following subjects are offered:

- Didactic updating: in the same discipline, in a new discipline, in the history and discipline philosophy, in an epistemology.

- Methodological modernization: acquaintance with the scientific researches about training psychosociology, approbation of new tools and techniques, studying foreign experiences, seminars on the results of students' supervision, studying theories of the doctrine and understanding.

- Improvement of technology application: teaching new technical means, new programs, new software, audiovisual means, and programming.

- Multidisciplinary approach: studying of evolution of customs in the life of a family and education, acquaintance with the bases of acting, modern scientific problems, participation in national and international colloquiums, sport.

- Practice in companies and laboratories: contacts with the working social environment, involvement research activity.

4. Results and Conclusion

According to the analysis of the French psychological and pedagogical researches, it is possible to conclude that the conscious choice of the profession, integrative nature of the approaches to methodological, theoretical and methodical students' training in higher educational institutions and independent students' practice in academic institutions could contribute to young specialists' adaptation.

The success of young teachers' consolidation in school depends on a favorable psychological climate in the team, availability of adequate working conditions and positive attitude of young specialists to pedagogical activity, satisfaction of the assistance provided by the teaching staff.

Thus, taking into account the above mentioned it is possible to claim that the integrative approach to the practice-oriented training of future specialists contributes to the improvement of teachers' adaptation. At the same time, it should be noted that the process of professional - pedagogical training is permanent and mastering pedagogical competences lasts during all professional activity of the teacher.

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