

IFTE 2018
4th International Forum on Teacher Education

**QUALITY OF PSYCHO-PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING OF
PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS: THE EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract

The article describes the strategy and tools of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers at the main stages of professional education at a university, which is based on the professional standards for teachers and the demands of the regional labour market.

The methods employed to research this issue are pedagogical modeling, studying laws and regulations in the educational sphere, studying the experience of universities related to employer integration into the process of quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training, surveying employers, and mathematical statistics methods which made it possible to comprehensively investigate the effectiveness of psycho-pedagogical training and provide some recommendations for improving its quality taking into account the employer assessment.

The findings can be used to modernize the process of professional education and training, they can be of interest for higher education institutions which aim at improving the system of assessing the quality of teacher training, including the quality of psycho-pedagogical training, which, according to the requirements of the updated Federal State Education Standard of Higher Education, requires the involvement of employers and (or) employers' associations to assess education quality.

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Keywords: Psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers, quality of psycho-pedagogical training, professional standards for teachers, Federal State Educational Standard.

1. Introduction

The significance of the study is determined by the requirements to improve the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers. At present, it is impossible to solve this task without involving employers into the process; the employers are educational institution administration, regional and municipal educational authorities, as well as employers' associations. They should be brought by educational institutions in the process of consistent assessment of the course and results of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers as they are both end-users interested in the quality of the “educational product” and experts who are well informed about the current state of the educational systems at various levels and implement educational policies in practice.

In this regard, studying the key approaches, as well as tools and procedures used by the employers to assess the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers at the principal stages of university educational process, based on the professional standards for teachers and the requirements of the regional labour market, seems to be quite significant.

The quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is described in psychological and pedagogical literature (Rubtsov, Margolis, & Guruzhapov, 2010; Makarenko, 2016; Strokova, & Volosnikova, 2017) as a characteristic which provides the future education specialists with a set of competencies allowing them to implement the activity approach to the training and educational process, i.e. to use productive kinds of joint activity of children and adults. It will be possible for prospective teachers to successfully apply theoretical knowledge in practice if they have a comprehensive idea of what the educational process, its entities and objects, and professional activities are.

The quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is seen as a key component of assessment of the pedagogical education quality as a whole. The quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers involves determining the degree to which the process and the results of psycho-pedagogical training meets the regulatory requirements and social and personal expectations; it is conducted by means of diagnostic and evaluation procedures (Glebova, Kuznetsova, & Shadrikov, 2012; Stolbova, 2012; Zolotareva, 2014).

In the studies carried out as part of the Pedagogical Education Modernization Project, the methodology and tools of quality assessment of teacher training are described. Development of independent assessment of the professional competencies of students (prospective teachers), which should be in line with the professional standards for teachers and the Federal State Educational Standard, is given special emphasis (Margolis, Safronova, Shishlyannikova, & Panfilova, 2015; Merkulova, 2016).

Some scholars emphasize the fact that evaluation of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is becoming, to a great degree, the domain of the professional community and requires stronger employer involvement in the process at all assessment stages (Bolotov, & Efremova, 2005; Rubtsov, 2010; Margolis, 2014; Sobolev, 2015; Cai, Youngblood, Khodyreva, & Khuziakhmetov, 2017).

The concept of the employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is based on the competency and systems approaches (Radionova, & Tryapitsyna, 2006; Kalimullin, Khodyreva, & Koinova-Zoellner, 2016). From the standpoint of these approaches, the quality of psycho-pedagogical training is seen as a multifaceted characteristic property of the educational activity, revealing

the degree to which its progress and results comply with particular standards, as well as with the requirements of the consumers of educational services.

The employer assessment of the quality of the psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is based on the following key ideas:

- the assessment procedures should be aligned with the future professional activity, taking into consideration the current and projected requirements for the teacher which are determined by the goals and objectives of the development of educational institutions, as well as of the educational system as a whole;
- credibility and reliability, which ensures sound management decisions in respect of quality improvement of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers;
- completeness and consistency of information on the quality of psycho-pedagogical training allowing employers to assess the quality of psycho-pedagogical training at each stage of the university educational process;
- openness and transparency of assessment procedures ensuring reliable information about the course and results of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers at each stage and its timely correction and updating;
- available information on the quality of psycho-pedagogical training for various consumer groups ensuring their willingness to cooperate and consistency of actions of all entities interested in the quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers;
- aiming at improvement and development of educational activities which means that the analysis of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training can help to reveal tendencies and define directions for its improvement, which, in turn, can ensure successful solution of the urgent tasks of the teaching professional activities.

In our opinion, the regulatory requirements stated in the Professional Standard: Teacher (teaching activities in preschool, primary general, basic general, secondary general education (educator, teacher), as well as in the Federal State Educational Standard for the program 44.03.01 Pedagogical Education should be taken as a basis for the employer quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers

2. Problem Statement

A model for employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers at the prognostic, main, and final stages is proposed; it is based on the existing professional standards for teachers. The tasks, content of this activity, as well as the tools for assessing the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers by employers are determined. For each stage, the methods and forms of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers are established on the ground of the best experiences of higher education institutions which are the participants in the Pedagogical Education Modernization Project; among them, those associated with the system of professional tests are given special attention.

3. Research Questions

The research analyzes the effectiveness of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers based on the professional standards for teachers. The assessment criteria are correlated with the structure of the professional teaching activity. The assessment tools are constructed on the basis of analysis of the generalized professional functions, among which there are pedagogical activities associated with designing and implementing the educational process, as well as pedagogical activities associated with designing and implementing the educational programs. The article represents the results of a pilot study of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers. The results show the degree of preparedness of prospective teachers to implement their professional functions: general pedagogical function. Training; educational activity; development activity; pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs; pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs.

4. Purpose of the Study

The objectives of the research were as follows:

1. to justify the methodological basis of the study; to determine the concept of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training;
2. to develop a model for the employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers at university at the initial, principal, and final stages of the professional education on the basis of the professional standard for teachers;
3. to analyze the effectiveness of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers taking into consideration the requirements of the professional standard for teachers.

5. Research Methods

The research methods used in the study were as follows:

- the theoretical methods: the hind-sight analysis made it possible to identify the essence and specificity of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers; pedagogical modeling was used to create the concept and model of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers at the main stages of professional education on the basis of the professional standard for teachers and the requirements of the regional labor market; studying the normative legal documents: the Professional Standard: Teacher (teaching activities in preschool, primary general, basic general, secondary general education (educator, teacher), as well as the Federal State Educational Standard for the program 44.03.01 Pedagogical Education on the basis of which the employers gave assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers.

- the empirical methods: studying and summarizing the pedagogical experience of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers; surveying employers on the issues of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training; the pedagogical experiment; the mathematical statistics methods – which made it possible to comprehensively investigate the effectiveness of employer

assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers and to correct and update it in conformity with the current and projected requirements. The research was conducted at the Vyatka State University.

The three stages of the research are described below.

The first stage: the methodological basis of the study was justified; the concept of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers was defined.

The second stage: employers assessed the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers; the assessment procedures were carried out on the basis of the professional standard for teachers at the initial, main and final stages of professional higher education.

The third stage: the effectiveness of the suggested concept and model for employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers was analyzed.

The criteria for assessing the quality of psycho-pedagogical training used in questionnaires for the employers were correlated with the structure of the professional teaching activity. The questionnaire was made on the basis of the generalized professional functions defined in the professional standards for teachers. In the questionnaire, these generalized professional functions, correlated with the professional standard for teachers, are specified as the following functions: general pedagogical function. Training; educational activity; development activity; pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool education programs; pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs; pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs. In accordance with the professional standards for teachers, 57 professional activities were identified within the framework of these professional functions; the employers evaluated the degree of their development on a 10-point scale.

6. Findings

In general, the model of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers is implemented at the prognostic, main, and final stages on the basis of the Professional Standard: Teacher (teaching activities in preschool, primary general, basic general, secondary general education (educator, teacher), as well as the current Federal State Educational Standard for the program 44.03.01 Pedagogical Education.

The stages of the employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers can be presented as follows:

At the prognostic stage, the concept of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers has been developed; the objectives of this activity have been identified on the basis of its basic ideas, among which are the following:

- obtaining objective information from employers about the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers and passing it to the interested entities involved in the educational process and to the general public;

- making well-grounded and timely managerial decisions targeted at improving the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers and raising consumer awareness of the educational services when making such decisions;

– improving the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers, taking into account the requirements of employers, i.e. educational institution administrators, regional and municipal educational authorities, as well as employers' associations.

At the prognostic stage, the data describing the current situation on the regional labour market in the field of education were studied, and we identified the key employers willing to participate consistently in assessing the quality of the psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers. In general, evaluating the demand for teachers on the regional labor market in the sphere of education, employers – the educational institution administrators (50 respondents) said that on the whole (82%) there was a need for less than 3 young teaching professionals per year, and from 3 to 5 teachers per year were required in each tenth educational institution (8%). Evaluating the quality of professional education in the pedagogical fields of training, 56% of the surveyed employers noted that the competence level of the Vyatka State University graduates fully conforms to their requirements. 44% of employers – educational administrators and educational authorities – made a point that there was a need for consistent quality improvement of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers due to significant changes in the requirements of the regional labour market in the field of education. These results confirmed the importance of consistency in employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers.

At the main stage, the assessment criteria of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers by employers were identified on the basis of the conceptual ideas. The structure of the teaching professional activity was described following the analysis of the structure and content of the Professional Standard: Teacher (teaching activities in preschool, primary general, basic general, secondary general education (educator, teacher). It outlines generalized professional functions: pedagogical activity associated with the designing and implementation of the educational process; pedagogical activity associated with the designing and implementation of educational programs; as well as the following professional functions, which were taken as the main lines along which employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training was carried out in the study:

- general pedagogical function. Training;
- educational activity;
- development activity;
- pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool education programs;
- pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs;
- pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs.

Each of the professional functions comprises professional actions, which were considered in the study as the criteria for evaluating the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers. The procedures, methods, and tools of the employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers were defined following the systems and competence approaches and relying on the best practices of higher education institutions participating in the Pedagogical Education Modernization Project. Those which are of the competence-oriented nature and associated with the system of professional tests are represented in Table 1.

Table 01. Methods and Tools for Employer Assessment of the Quality of Psycho-pedagogical Training of Prospective Teachers

Content of Psycho-Pedagogical Training	Procedures for quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers	Methods and tools for assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers
Theoretical Training. The Degree of Mastering the Disciplines (Modules) Of The Curriculum	Employer participation and involvement in the implementation of the curriculum (its disciplines or modules)	Students have to solve case tasks and problems revealing the level of professional competencies within the framework of the teacher's professional functions.
	Employer participation as organizers and jurors of psychological and pedagogical olympiads, competitions, conferences, WorldSkills Russia industry competitions	Students perform practical assignments revealing the level of professional competencies within the framework of the teacher's professional functions.
	Employer participation as supervisors of student project activities	Students design and implement projects to master certain professional competencies within the framework of the teacher's professional functions. Evaluation of results and procedures used to implement the project. The project, its implementation and results are assessed.
Practical Training	Employer practical training supervision on behalf of a higher education institution	Students perform individual tasks to master certain professional competencies within the framework of the teacher's professional functions in a particular educational institution.
	Employer practical training supervision on behalf of a general education institution	Students perform individual tasks related to the solution of problems relevant for a particular educational institution to master certain professional competencies within the framework of the teacher's professional functions in a particular educational institution.
State Final Attestation	Involvement of employers as members of the state examination board administering exams and defence of graduation theses including <u>WorldSkills Russia</u> format	Students solve case tasks and problems, design and conduct classes, defend the graduation theses thus demonstrating their preparedness to perform the teacher's professional functions.
	Reviewing graduation theses written by students upon request of an educational institution	Preparedness to perform the teacher's professional functions is assessed with account of the requirements of a particular educational institution.
	Best Graduation Thesis competitions organized by educational institutions and authorities	Preparedness to perform the teacher's professional functions is assessed with account of the current and projected requirements of educational institutions and educational authorities

At the stage of effectiveness evaluation, a pilot study was carried out to find out how employers assess the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers, which characterizes the preparedness of prospective teachers to fulfil their professional functions: general pedagogical function. Training; educational activity; educational activity; development activity; pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool general education programs; pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs; pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs. The results of the pilot study are represented in Table 2.

It was found out in the course of the research that the professional function “General pedagogical function. Training” is assessed as having the highest value of preparedness to fulfil it which is 8.77. The degree of preparedness to fulfil the professional function “Pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs” has the lowest value – 7.71.

Table 02. Employer assessment of the preparedness of prospective teachers to fulfil their professional functions

№	Professional functions	Level of preparedness of prospective teachers to fulfil their professional functions as assessed by employers
1	General pedagogical function. Training	8.77
2	Educational activity	8.1
3	Development activity	7.6
4	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool education programs	7.83
5	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs	7.85
6	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs	7.71

The employers also assessed the level of professional teaching competencies within the framework of professional functions represented in Table 2 which were considered to be indicators of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers. The level of professional teaching competencies represented in Table 3 is assessed quite highly by the employers. According to the survey results, the following professional teaching competencies have the highest quality values: creating and maintaining a favourable psychological climate in the group and establishing an atmosphere that promotes friendly relations between children, including those belonging to different national, cultural, religious communities and social groups, as well as special needs children – 9.24; organizing olympiads, conferences, math and language contests at schools etc. – 9.24; developing skills related to Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) – 9.12; promoting learners’ cognitive activity, independence, initiative, creative thinking, facilitating development of civic-mindedness, developing the ability to work and live under modern conditions, developing healthy and safe lifestyle attitude in students – 9.12.

Table 03. Employer assessment of the level of professional teaching competencies of prospective teachers (maximum values)

№	Professional functions	Professional teaching competencies	Level of professional teaching competencies of prospective teachers as assessed by employers
1	General pedagogical function. Training	Developing skills related to Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)	9.12
		Objective assessment of students' knowledge employing testing and other assessment techniques taking into account children's learning abilities	8.76
2	Educational activity	Implementing modern, including interactive, kinds and methods of learning activity, using them both in class and extracurricular activities	8.89
		Promoting learners' cognitive activity, independence, initiative, creative thinking, facilitating development of civic-mindedness, developing the ability to work and live under modern conditions, developing healthy and safe lifestyle attitude in students	9.12
		Promoting tolerance and maintaining standards for student behaviour in the changing multicultural environment	8.94
3	Development activity	Promoting learners' cognitive activity, independence, initiative, creative thinking, facilitating development of civic-mindedness, developing the ability to work and live under modern conditions, developing healthy and safe lifestyle attitude in students	8.7
4	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool education programs	Creating and maintaining a favourable psychological climate in the group and establishing an atmosphere that promotes friendly relations between children, including those belonging to different national, cultural, religious communities and social groups, as well as special needs children	9.24
		Organizing activities characteristic of early and preschool years: substantive, cognitive-research, play (role-playing, directed play, playing by rule), productive activities; Designing and creating possibilities for children's free play, including establishing and maintaining the play time and space	8.86
5	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs	Organizing activities in the fourth grade of primary school (in cooperation with a psychologist) to prevent possible difficulties in children's adaptation to the learning and educational process in the secondary school	8.94
6	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs	Organizing olympiads, conferences, math and language contests at schools, etc.	9.14

It was established that employers do not assess highly enough the level of the professional teaching competencies represented in Table 4. According to the results of the survey, the following professional teaching competencies have the lowest values: participating in the development and implementation of the educational institution development programs aimed at creating a safe and comfortable educational environment – 6.12; establishing the zone of proximal development along with the student, his parents (legal representatives), other participants in the educational process (school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, educator, etc.); designing and implementing (if necessary) individual educational routes and individual development programs for students – 6.33; developing the student's meta-subject competencies, learning ability, and universal learning activities to the level necessary to successfully complete the educational programs of basic general education – 6.55.

Table 04. Employer assessment of the level of professional teaching competencies of prospective teachers (lowest values)

№	Professional functions	Professional teaching competencies	Level of professional teaching competencies of prospective teachers as assessed by employers
1	General pedagogical function. Training	Participating in the development and implementation of the educational institution development programs aimed at creating a safe and comfortable educational environment	6.12
		Developing universal learning activities	6.87
2	Educational activity	Drawing on constructive educational efforts of students' parents (legal representatives), rendering assistance to the family in matters of child upbringing	7.06
3	Development activity	Learning and applying psycho-pedagogical technologies (including inclusive ones), which can be used in targeted work with different groups of students: gifted children, socially vulnerable children, children in difficult life situations, migrant children, orphans, special needs children (autism, children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, etc.), disabled children, children with behavior disorders, addicted children	6.95
4	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of preschool education programs	Pedagogic monitoring of children's learning outcomes and analyzing educational activities employed when working with children of early and/or preschool age	6.79
5	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of primary general education programs	Developing the student's meta-subject competencies, learning ability, and universal learning activities to the level necessary to successfully complete the educational programs of basic general education	6.55

6	Pedagogical function associated with implementation of basic and secondary general education programs	Designing, on the basis of existing standard programs, a specialized educational process for a group, a class, and/or particular groups of students, for those having outstanding abilities and/or special educational needs; developing their own programs taking into account the specific characteristics of students, clarifying and modifying the educational process	7.09
		Establishing the student's zone of proximal development along with the student, his parents (legal representatives), other participants in the educational process (school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, educator, etc.); designing and implementing (if necessary) individual educational routes and individual development programs for students	6.33

The findings of the pilot study of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers can be used to improve the quality of teacher training education in order to ensure more successful professional adaptation of students on the regional labor market, taking into account the current and projected requirements of educational institutions and the education system as a whole.

The problem of assessing the quality of professional education in general, and the employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers, in particular, is being developed along the lines of systems and competence approaches, which are regarded the theoretical foundation of the proposed model of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers.

Despite the profound research concerning the methodology, tools and techniques for employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers on the basis of the professional standards for teachers, the issue of integrating the requirements of the FSES (Federal State Education Standards) and the Professional Standard in terms of improving the content and procedures for quality assessment of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers is of current interest, as the updated Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education (FSES HE) for the program 44.03.01 Pedagogical Education has come into force recently. It is necessary to define the competencies to be developed as the main outcomes of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers, and employers are to directly participate in this process. It is also essential to validate the indicators of the quality of the recommended professional competencies and the professional competencies self-established on the basis on the requirements for the graduate's professional activity in a particular educational system (regional, municipal) or in a particular educational institution.

7. Conclusion

The research conducted has made it possible to carry out employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical university training of prospective teachers on the basis of the approach the key ideas

of which are aligning assessment procedures with the future professional activity; credibility, reliability; completeness and consistency of information on the quality of psycho-pedagogical training; openness and transparency of assessment procedures; available information on quality of psycho-pedagogical training for various consumer groups; aiming at improving and developing educational activities. The implementation of these ideas will effectively solve the tasks of promoting active interaction of all the parties interested in the quality of professional education and teacher training: educational institution administrators, regional and municipal educational authorities, as well as associations of employers, educational institutions themselves, and students. The proposed model of employer assessment of the quality of psycho-pedagogical training of prospective teachers will ensure that the requirements of the regional labour market are taken into account at all stages of psycho-pedagogical training. It will contribute to the timely modernization of the content and techniques of psycho-pedagogical training with due regard to the opinion of the participants of the open educational environment; it will make it possible to update the goals and objectives of all types of the psycho-pedagogical activity, as well as their content and structure.

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