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THE THEORETICAL BASIS FOR DETERMINING THE POTENTIAL OF SCHOOL PEDAGOGICAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

The teachers' professional skills development in the school is an urgent problem, which is the subject of pedagogical, psychological and sociological researches. In the Russian Federation the special attention is paid to the teacher's professional development as an educator. It leads to the necessity of the formation of his personal and professional positions as an educator. So, the purpose of the article is to identify theoretical approaches to the determination of the pedagogical communities' potential in the teacher's professional skills development as an educator. Because of the analysis of the scientific literature, it was revealed that the school's pedagogical communities' potential could be determined by using systemic, interdisciplinary, comparative, phenomenological, andragogical, axiological, environmental and ambivalent approaches. External and internal factors were presented, both facilitating and hampering the teacher's professional skills development as an educator. Also, the article provides the justification that the factor of the teacher's professional development as an educator is a special type of professional community, which is a being general community, created on the common value-semantic basis and joint activity of its participants.

Keywords: Pedagogical community, teacher as an educator, professional development, professional skills.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the various models have been explored and presented. They characterize communities as environments which promote students' learning and teachers' professional development. It is used various constructions (concepts) in the researches: the community of learning, the community of practice and the professional community. The common for the represented professionals' associations is the orientation towards creating conditions for improving the quality of students' education, creating a discussion environment and developing the teachers' professionalism. We share the position of authors who believe that the teachers' ambition to their professional development is the main mechanism which can be used by schools. This will contribute to the fact that teachers will continuously develop their competencies, strives for their continuous education and improve their skills over time. The highlighted problem has been widely studied in recent decades (Andrienko & Romm, 2014; Belyakov, 2012; Brettell, 2016; Fortun, 2016; Krasnoshlykova, 2005; Kriskovec, 2013; Kuznecova, 2010; Qureshi, 2016; Yoon, 2017; etc.). Many strategies and initiatives have been developed to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers' professional development, which will be discussed below.

The vector of our research is aimed at the studying of the processes of the teacher's professional skills development as an educator, primarily oriented in his activity to education. According to V. A. Slastenin, the pedagogical activity which "is characterized by the transformation of the spiritual world of the teacher into the leading component of the content of education, the priority of the personality-development function, his organic interaction with the society and the real situation of the life of the pupils" is the priority for such kind of a teacher (Slastenin, 2011, p.3).

Now, there are many theories and concepts about the development of the professional and the teacher (Brookfield, 2005; Burden & Derkach, 2004; Elmore, 2002; Gibb, 1960; Klimov, 1996; Knowles, 1984, 1990; Kuz'mina, 1995; Markova, 1996; Mitina, 2004; Slastenin, 2011; Zeer, 2003). At the same time, the question remains, which mechanisms and factors are most effective in the context of the influence on the processes of personal and professional development.

In the presented research one of such factors is considered, namely, the school's pedagogical communities' potential in the teacher's professional skills development as an educator. To do this, it is necessary to determine the theoretical approaches of identifying this potential.

2. Problem Statement

The problem of the professional communities' influence on the teacher's professionalism development has been studied by many scientists (Bordás, 2017; Brennan, 2017; Clonan, 2017; Ferranti, 2013; McCarthy, 2011; McKenzie-Mills, 2009; Murphy, 2011; Nyström, 2009; Ó Murchú, 2011; Phillips, 2007; Sergeeva & Rytov, 2012; Slobodchikov, 2010; Tammets, 2013; Yoon, 2017).

Recently, the special attention has been paid to the influence of network forms of professional communities (Holmes & Sime, 2012; Natejkina, 2015; Tsiotakis, 2015).

In many countries in education the communities, created by professionals with the aim of achieving effective results of their activities, have become widespread in the last decade. There are various approaches

of the describing of the content of activities, the structure and results of the professional communities' activities in the studies.

For our research, the most valuable definition of the concept of "community" is the definition which has been proposed by Rick Parrish who is the researcher of virtual communities. He thinks that "... the community is a group of people sharing common goals, interests and fears which are virtual (through mass communication) or real (face-to-face) interact, cooperate, help each other, maintain continuous contact" (Parrish, 2002).

In foreign studies the term "professional learning communities" is most often encountered in the name of such communities, which, as a rule, serve two broad purposes: (1) improving the skills and knowledge of educators through collaborative study, expertise exchange and professional dialogue, and (2) improving the educational aspirations, achievement and attainment of students through stronger leadership and teaching (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

Analyzing the conceptual provisions which were characterized the professional learning communities, Richard DuFour (2004) identified three main ideas (principles) which were important for the determining of the effectiveness of such communities: (1) ensuring that students learn; (2) a culture of collaboration; (3) a focus on results. The success of the professional learning communities' activity, in the opinion of R. DuFour, was in the orientation of teachers' joint efforts to achieve a common goal which was the successful learning activity of the student. "Educators must stop working in isolation and hoarding their ideas, materials, and strategies and begin to work together to meet the needs of all students" (DuFour, 2004: 11).

In the studies of Sergeyeva and Rytov (2012), the professional community is viewed as "a group of people from two or more people who regularly enter into communication (personally or virtually) to exchange experiences and practices, develop knowledge and search for new, more effective approaches to solving the problems posed before them professional tasks" (p. 128).

Understanding the leading characteristics of professional communities, we share the position expressed in the study of Ivanov and Karlyukova (2017). They have identified the following characteristics of professional communities:

(1) communities are predominantly informal and separate from traditional organizational units;

(2) the participation in the professional communities' activities is voluntary and is based on the personal interest of each participants in such activities;

(3) self-regulation mechanisms are the main characteristic of such communities;

(4) the subject of community's activities is a joint initiative which is understood and shared by its members;

(5) a way of functioning of the community is numerous meetings what unite members in a social group;

(6) the result developed by the community is resources shared by the members (a used dictionary, certain subjects, the style of communication, everyday practice, etc.) (Ivanov & Karlyukova, 2017).

Mainly the peculiarity of communities' network forms is focused on professionals' informational support, providing access to various kinds of professional information, and they act as a "platform" for collective discussion of problem situations arising in a professional environment. The possibility of this

kind of professional discussion is a leading factor ensuring the maintenance of active communication of such communities. Thus, the main function of networked communities is support, which ensures the development of the teacher's professionalism. We can also describe network professional communities as the most active modern forms of teachers' self-education (Natejkina, 2015).

Our analysis has made it possible to determine the leading signs of professional communities such as: informality (structures and organizations), high personal interest and responsibility of participants, adoption of common rules and values of group interaction, orientation to cooperation and support, cohesion, results orientation, personal (professional) development of community members.

School's professional communities are recognized by the researchers as the factor of the teacher's professionalism formation, but it remains unclear how these communities influence on this process.

3. Research Questions

The main issues which are solved in this article are:

What theoretical approaches can be applied to determine such definition as the school's pedagogical communities' potential?

How do the pedagogical communities influence on the teacher's professional skills development?

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the theoretical approaches to such definition as the school's pedagogical communities' potential.

5. Research Methods

During the study we have been using such methods as: analysis, comparison, questioning, studying and summarizing the results of the problem under consideration, interview, expertise and interpretation.

6. Findings

To identify the theoretical foundations of the teacher's professional skills development as an educator, it was necessary to rely on a few approaches. Such approaches were: system, interdisciplinary, comparative, phenomenological, andragogic, axiological, environmental, ambivalent.

In researchers devoted to the study of factors affecting teachers' professional and personal development, the authors usually unite them in groups and propose different approaches to their classification.

Thus, the structure-dynamic model of the teacher's professional and personal development, proposed by Slastenin (2012), includes three groups of factors such as:

(1) subjective or personal factors which are internal and connected with the value-semantic sphere, self-consciousness, self-actualization, reflection, competence, skills, satisfaction, creativity;

(2) objective or external factors associated with the requirements of professional activities carried out in the personal and professional paradigm, which act as the regulatory basis for the professional and personal self-determination of the teacher;

(3) objectively subjective factors associated with the organization of the educational and professional environments (Slastenin, 2012, p. 14).

In general, sharing the position of Slastenin (2012), we believe that factors, related to the organizations of the educational and professional environments (identified by the author as an independent group), must be considered as external factors. Thus, analyzing the factors influencing on the teacher's professional development as an educator, in our study we have identified external and internal factors, but we consider it important to describe not only the factors that positively affect development, but also identify the factors that have a negative impact.

Naturally, first of all, we have turned to the factors which contributed to the teacher's professional skills development as an educator. To such external factors we have included: teacher's membership in professional communities with intergenerational and interstatus relations formed in them; the positive nature of the teacher's relationship with students; the constructive nature of the teacher's relationship with colleagues and the administration; the use of facilitation in the process of the teacher's qualifications improving as an educator, moral and material stimulation of an educator.

Internal factors are the teacher's motivation to educational activities; his ability to professional reflection; the teacher's aspiration for his self-realization and self-improvement; the presence of an individual trajectory of professional development; the teacher has a professional ideal, a positive outlook, a broad outlook.

Among the factors hampering the teacher's professional skills development as an educator, we have also similarly identified two groups.

External factors are: the lack of personal work of the administration of the educational organization with each teacher; the lack of clear criteria for the successful performance of educators; the nature of control over the professional activity of an educator, which is reduced not so much to the training and support of the teacher as to accusations and disciplinary measures; not the inclusion of teachers in the real innovative practice of the educational organization; the lack of interaction with various professional communities, which includes the teacher in various types of social practice; the formal character of continuing education of teachers and educators.

Internal factors are, first of all, the symptoms of professional burnout. They are: pronounced manifestations of fatigue, characterized by external behavior; emotional and physical exhaustion; reduction of tension in the process of work; reduction of social, professional and personal needs, interests, needs of the highest level; substitution of a romantic and optimistic view of life with criticality, cynicism or indifference; absence or decrease of peak positive bright sensations; occurrence of fears, exaggeration of the level of danger, narrowing of the horizon of life opportunities due to small negative or deviating facts (Lysinsky et al., 2017: 50-51).

The factors of the educator's professional growth characterized by us are interrelated. External factors such as "launch" and "accompany" the manifestation of internal factors are the original catalysts for their action.

In our opinion, one of the leading external factors, including the most optimal manifestation of internal factors, is the professional community.

This conclusion confirms the questioning of 142 teachers of Chelyabinsk, Ulyanovsk regions, the Republic of Tatarstan. During the survey the respondents were asked to rank 17 factors according to their importance for two criteria: (1) the factors which had been influenced on the formation of a teacher as an educator; (2) the factors which have to be created in the school to form the position of a teacher as an educator.

Table 01. The factors' rating influencing on the formation of their position as an educator

The rating position of the factor	Factors which had been influenced on the formation of a teacher as an educator	Factors which have to be created in the school to form the position of a teacher as an educator
1	Help of an experienced teacher	School's educational traditions
2	Professional and personal beliefs	Help of an experienced teacher
3	Observing the experience of colleagues' educational activities	Team of like-minded people
4	The need to participate in solving children's problems	The need to participate in solving children's problems
5	School's educational traditions	Observing the experience of colleagues' educational activities
6	Communication with colleagues	Reading of educational literature
7	The image of a teacher as an educator	School professional events dedicated to the issues of upbringing (seminars, pedagogical councils, meetings, etc.)
8	Reading of educational literature	Professional and personal beliefs
9	Team of like-minded people	Participation in creative groups with colleagues
10	Pedagogical reflection of own experience of educational activity	Pedagogical reflection of own experience of educational activity

The analysis of the results, obtained in Tab. 01, gives us reasons to conclude that, in the opinion of respondents, the internal factors have been influencing on the formation of the teacher's position as an educator. Among them are: professional and personal beliefs (rank 2); the observation of the experience of colleagues' educational activities (rank 3). The factors characterizing the professional community such as a communication with colleagues and a team of like-minded people, occupy 6th and 9th positions in the ranking, i.e. were less significant. We see an entirely different picture in the educators' views about the factors which have to be created in the school. The collective of like-minded people occupies the third position in the rating, and the number of factors characterizing the professional community has increased. To the above mentioned were added two more: school professional events devoted to the issues of upbringing; participation in creative groups with colleagues.

Thus, the professional community is considered by the teachers participating in the survey as a factor which has been influencing on the teacher's development. At the same time, the professional community, as we noted above, has a number of characteristics that define it as a social union of people opposite to the notion of "social structure (organization)" (Slobodchikov, 2010) and defined as "unstructured being generality, which is formed on a common value-semantic basis of its participants" (Slobodchikov, 2010, p. 8). As Slobodchikov has noted, this kind of community differs in that "people meet in common, it is created

by the joint efforts of its participants; norms, goals, values, meanings of communication and interaction in the community are introduced by them themselves, making it a truly co-existential community" (Slobodchikov, 2010, p. 8).

I. U. Schustova determines the next main signs of co-existence of commonality:

- co-being, co-existence of being of equal individuals, meeting of interested in each other and in the general being of subjects;

- voluntary participation, free entry and exit;

- freedom and equality of participants, who determine their position;

- open inter-position interaction;

- general target orientations, aspirations of community;

- value-semantic space formed by the commonality in the inter-position interaction of participants and meaningful for all;

- reflexive processes, individual and group reflection is carried out in it, allowing pupils to recognize the processes and phenomena occurring in the community, to deduce them for individual self-determination (Shustova, 2010).

It is the being community that will promote the development of the position of the teacher as an educator because, on the one hand, "the completeness and dynamics of the transformation of connections and relationships between people realized in the structure of the co-being community, ensure its main function in the being of man such as the function of the development" (Slobodchikov, 2010, p. 6), on the other hand, "such a community is the fundamental ontological basis of the very possibility of the emergence of the human proper in man, the foundation of its normal development and full life" (Slobodchikov, 2010, p.6).

7. Conclusion

Modern studies of the problem of the teachers' professional skills development pay special attention to various professional communities as effective forms of realizing this process. Professional communities are created to exchange experience and practices, to develop knowledge and to search for new, more effective approaches to solving the professional tasks assigned to them. They are characterized by the following leading signs: informality (structures and organizations), high personal interest and responsibility of participants, adoption of common rules and values of group interaction, orientation to cooperation and support, cohesion, result orientation, personal (professional) development of community members.

The leading methodological approaches in determining the theoretical foundations for the teacher's professional skills development as an educator in the conditions of the pedagogical communities of the school are: systemic, interdisciplinary, comparative, phenomenological, androgogic, axiological, environmental and ambivalent approaches.

The analysis of external and internal factors contributing to and impeding the teacher's professional skills development as an educator, as well as a survey of teachers, allowed us to conclude that one of the leading external factors, including the most optimal manifestation of internal factors, is a special type of professional community which is a being common to all formed on the common value-semantic basis and joint activity of its participants.

Acknowledgments

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