

**DCCD 2020****Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****OCCUPATIONAL FLEXIBILITY IN CORE OF TEACHERS  
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING**

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***Abstract***

The article deals with the issue of formation of occupational flexibility of a master’s degree student during pedagogical practice. The issue is regarded with reference to subject area 44.04.01 “Pedagogical Education”. Based on the analysis of master’s degree programs, the authors describe the potential of pedagogical practice consisting in: a long period of time allotted to it; high variability and individualization of practice programs; opportunity to purposefully change the professional status of the master’s degree student. To demonstrate the process of formation of occupational flexibility during pedagogical practice in a more salient manner, the article presents the stages of pedagogical practice and the corresponding forms and means of work at these stages. The formation of occupational flexibility of the master’s degree student is represented by four stages: cognitive (acquisition of knowledge by the master’s degree student about the essence and peculiarities of various types of problems of professional activity), motivational (enhancing the students’ interest in their practice and professional activity of different specialists in the sphere of education), activity-centered (involving the master’s degree student in the practical activity in which they will have to solve professional problems in different professional situations), and prognostic-reflexive (formation of the student’s striving for self-development and continuing self-education). At the activity-centered stage, the article describes some tasks to be completed during practice, which, on the one hand, facilitate the fulfillment of the educational standard requirements and, on the other hand, improve the satisfaction of the demands of the education services customers.

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## 1. Introduction

After signing the Bologna Declaration, Russia engaged in the process of formation of the unified European space of higher education. In this connection, a new level of higher education – a master’s degree level – was established in Russia. Nowadays, the total number of students to be enrolled in basic educational master’s degree programs at pedagogical universities is 17,765. This figure is 60% higher than it was, for example, in 2014, when it totaled to 6901. This fact proves the interest of the modern Russian society in master’s degree professionals and demonstrates the demand for them by the society and economy. In spite of an increase in the number of master’s degree students, discussions about the role and content of master’s degree programs at conferences and on the pages of scholarly journals have been actively carried on since the moment of their introduction in the system of higher education of Russia (Senashenko & Pyhtina, 2017).

A pilot study has shown that the majority of master’s degree students express a desire to be demanded in the labor market, which would enable them to make a career, strive to make a new contribution to the activity of their institutions, or look upon their study at master’s degree courses as a way to professional advancement and mobility (Lomakina & Idrisova, 2019). Hence, the goal of education on the master’s degree level is not only to acquire certain professional competences by the student, but also to create conditions for the solution of professional problems in various professional situations, proceeding from feasible professional statuses. This will enable a master’s degree student to timely respond to the changing conditions and to properly solve the problems set for them by their professional activity. In addition, the existing social demand addressed to the system of higher education, and specifically to the master’s degree programs also presupposes training of the graduate, who is not only prepared to perform a certain kind of professional activity, but is also ready to master new methods and kinds of activity within their profession and to pursue professional and academic development. This perspective is corroborated by the task formulated in the Federal Project “New Opportunities for Everyone”, which is part of the National Education Project. Thus, the Federal Project “New Opportunities for Everyone” states that it is necessary to form such a system within which workers can refresh their professional knowledge and acquire new professional skills on the basis of continuing education (National Education Project, 2018).

## 2. Problem Statement

Taking into account the social demand of the educational service customers, as well as the opportunities of the education institutions, with reference to independent design of the basic professional education master’s degree programs, the existing situation needs turning attention to the content of education on the master’s degree level. Specifically, according to the FSES HE, a master’s degree graduate must be able to perform various professional duties including: pedagogical, project design, cultural and educational, methods, organizational and managerial, support, and scientific research activity (Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education, level of master of pedagogical education, 2018). Acquisition of the skills to solve all these types of problems of occupational activity presupposes the formation of such a professional personal quality of the master’s degree student as occupational flexibility. Analysis of the literature and the teaching methods support materials on training masters of education has shown that the content of formation of occupational flexibility of the master’s degree student has not been properly formed

yet. The supervisor of a master's educational program does not usually choose all types of professional activity problems but selects two or three of them, among which scientific research, pedagogical and project design types are more often found. The experience of training masters at the Urals State Pedagogical University proves that occupational flexibility of students is not formed at random. This situation actualizes the problem of content-centered description of the process of formation of occupational flexibility on the level of master's degree education.

### **3. Research Questions**

The key issue of the paper is occupational flexibility and its formation in the process of acquisition of the master's program, and specifically during the pedagogical practice of master's degree students. Thus, in order to answer the main question of research, it is necessary to give answers to the questions about the content of the categories of "occupational flexibility" and "pedagogical practice", to define the notion of "occupational flexibility of a master's degree student" used in the study, to determine the real pedagogical practice potential, and to describe the stages of pedagogical practice and samples of the tasks targeted at the master's degree student's acquisition of the means of solution of all types of professional activity problems.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to provide a theoretical description of the process of formation of occupational flexibility of the master's degree student in the course of pedagogical practice. Special focus is given to the stages of this practice.

### **5. Research Methods**

The study employs the following theoretical and empirical methods of pedagogical research: analysis, abstraction, concretization, generalization, argumentation, study of special literature, documents and activity outcomes, and experimental work.

### **6. Findings**

Scholarly studies on the problem of occupational flexibility formation appeared in the early 1950s and at first treated it as various kinds of occupations or professions related to the basic kinds of labor: physical, non-physical and farming (Lipset & Bendix, 1959). Interest in the investigation of this phenomenon in the World is considerable (Abdikerova et al., 2014; Goryunova, 2006; Igoshev, 2008; Iucu et al., 2011; Lisaitėhas, 2012; Mishchenko & Orobchenko, 2019; Prokhorenko, 2017). And besides, occupational flexibility is regarded by researchers as *the ability of the subject* to acquire adjacent kinds of professional activity, to easily change the profile of their professional activity, and to pass on from one level of professional activity to another (Goryunova, 2006); as a *personality trait* manifested by their ability to move up and down career ladder demonstrating the subject's ability and readiness to change their professional position or status and to move in the professional sphere; (Igoshev, 2008; Meshkova, 2019).

Two main approaches can be singled out in sociological research of occupational flexibility: investigations in which professional change is regarded as a result of external motivation (Hachen, 1990; Sorokin, 1959), and studies of subjective factors influencing occupational flexibility (Weber, 1990 and his followers).

Yet these studies do not take into consideration the questions of formation of occupational flexibility on the level of master's degree programs and disregard the conditions of learning at this particular level of higher education.

A considerable number of works dealing with the role and content of master's programs can be found in pedagogy (Judith, 2005; Schneider & de Alva Jorge, 2018; Senashenko & Pyhtina, 2017). Issues of organization of pedagogical practice of master's degree students are dealt with in the works by (Kiseleva, 2014; Nazarova & Chistova, 2015).

Our study interprets *occupational flexibility of a master's degree student* as a personality trait which is manifested in practical activity via the person's readiness and ability to solve professional problems in various professional situations on the basis of their professional status and to acquire adjacent kinds of professional activity in a fast and efficient manner.

Formation of occupational flexibility facilitates the satisfaction of both the basic needs of a person and the needs of a higher level – for social advancement, self-development and self-actualization. Mobility of future professionals in the field of education is one of the conditions of stability and constancy of its development. The achievement of such a result is possible through the change of the content and organization of the education process, especially in its practical constituent. The research findings of Goryunova (2006), Igoshev (2008) and Nikulina (2017) prove that occupational flexibility is formed in professional activity only, therefore emphasis in professional training should be shifted towards the practical forms of academic and non-academic activity – tutorials, practical sessions, seminars and projects.

Pedagogical practice of master's degree students has a powerful potential in the formation of occupational flexibility. Practice is looked upon as a process of mastering various kinds of professional activity by the student, which creates the conditions for self-cognition and self-determination of this student in various professional roles and forms the need for professional self-improvement. In this case, the potential of pedagogical practice is characterized by such features as:

- a long enough period of time allotted to it. Master's degree programs are characterized by a relatively short period of study: two or two and a half years – 120 credits (4320 academic hours). One third of the time of the master's degree program – not less than 40 credits (1440 academic hours) – is allotted to practices. During this period, master's degree students have several types of practice: scientific research activity and pedagogical practices (project design, school practice, and pre-diploma practice);

- high variability and individualization of practice programs, which creates an opportunity to pay special attention to the process of practice base selection. Given the areas and spheres of professional activity in which master's degree students can function as pedagogues include education, science, culture, arts, etc. and provided their knowledge and skills meet the requirements to the level of their professional qualification, master's degree students can have practice at various education institutions: pre-school education institutions, general education institutions (schools, gymnasiums, lyceums), professional educational institutions, higher education institutions, supplementary education institutions (at youth clubs,

recreation centers, social rehabilitation centers, etc.), and supplementary professional education institutions;

- opportunity to purposefully change the professional status of the master's degree student. The student can change their professional status to meet the requirements of the dominating tasks of professional activity of a concrete kind of practice over a certain period of time. The professional status of the student can change during practice into the bargain. Thus, the master's degree student can be asked to perform actions typical of the following positions and professions during practice: records clerk, assistant to the head, pioneer leader (or scoutmaster), specialist in methods, supplementary education teacher, pedagogue-organizer, tutor and teacher.

The formation of occupational flexibility of the master's degree student is represented by four stages of practice and by the forms and means of work at these stages.

*Stage 1: cognitive* – is aimed at consistent acquisition of the curriculum subjects by the student. The following forms of instruction are used at this stage: classroom studies – lectures, practical sessions, and lab works in certain subjects; self-study; professional debates; case study. The support materials used include: discipline programs and learning and methods support materials. As a result of the work at this stage, the student's scope of knowledge about the essence and peculiarities of the types of the tasks of professional activity of the future master of education becomes wider, which makes it easier for them to adapt and feel at home in professional sphere. This stage ensures successful application of the knowledge, habits and skills obtained during pedagogical practice.

*Stage 2: motivational* – is targeted at stimulation and formation of a conscious positive attitude of the master's degree student to their future practice. The following forms of instruction are used at this stage: training seminars “The role of scientific research activity in the professional development of the master of pedagogical education”, “The role of pedagogical practice in the professional development of the master of pedagogical education”, and “The role of pre-diploma practice in the professional development of the master of pedagogical education”, depending on the kind of practice, and business games. The support materials used include: programs of training seminars, business games programs, individual blog of the student on practice; information bulletins with a list of urgent conferences, courses, and grant competitions. Training seminars focus on acquainting master's degree students with the program of the future practice, on informing them about the requirements to its conduct and outcomes, and on presenting the opportunities of using interactive technologies in the learning/teaching process. An important constituent of the seminars is made up by the information about the achievements of the students that had practice before them, meetings with expert specialists of different professional statuses in whose positions the master's degree student is to work during practice, and acquaintance with various types of education institutions and the peculiarities of professional activity in them. The master's degree students are informed about the opportunity to publish the results of their work during practice, about current grant competitions, and about the chances of professional advancement. The work carried out at this stage results in the heightened interest of the master's degree students in their future practice, which enhances their own motivation to demonstrate high quality and responsible work during practice.

*Stage 3: activity-centered* – is presented by a complex of professional actions, performed by the student, typical of certain positions and professions in accordance with the types of tasks of professional

activity. Depending on the kind of practice, different forms of instruction are significant: lessons, lectures, homerooms, games, out-of-class activities, situation room meetings, conferences, seminars in teaching methods, etc. The support materials used include: academic and methods documentation; normative-legal acts, programs, instructions, recommended and additional literature, individual blog and portfolio of the student on practice, etc. The key issue at this stage boils down to involving the student in practical activity, in which the master's degree student will be asked to solve professional problems in various professional situations. Below are some examples of such tasks.

**Pedagogical activity:**

– make up and realize a program of a course (discipline, class, lesson), which you are going to implement in practice (indicating the topic, literature, content, discussion questions, tasks, practical situations, etc.). The material should be formatted in accordance with the corresponding requirements of the particular education institution.

**Project design activity:**

– work out and realize in a group of learners (form, group of children at a center for supplementary education, group of college students) a socially significant project; present its results in video format and on the web site of the education institution.

**Cultural and educational:**

– work out and implement a cultural educational program which would meet the interest and demand of the subjects of the education institution (learners, parents, administration of the education institution, and local community).

**Activity in the sphere of teaching methods:**

– in the course of joint activity with the specialist in methods and the methods council of the education institution, outline the range of problematic issues (content of educational programs, forms, methods and means of instruction, etc.). In order to solve the problems, make up an analytical report about the solution of these problems on the basis of home and foreign experience and deliver this report at the sitting of the methods council.

**Organization and management activity:**

– organize, provide the corresponding documentation and conduct a regional scientific-practical event (round table discussion, seminar, conference, master class, etc.) at the education institution in which you have practice.

**Scientific research activity:**

– write a grant application on the topic of your research and submit it to your education institution or the department under which you are supposed to send joint grant applications to various Russian and foreign science foundations.

The outcomes of this stage include improvement of the skills of application of the knowledge obtained in the course of studying various disciplines in real professional situations, readiness to work in different positions, and expansion of the professional experience of the master's degree student.

*Stage 4: prognostic-reflexive* – focuses on the formation of the students' skills of self-analysis and analysis of the outcomes of the work performed: identification of the causes of success or failure and correction of their own actions in practical activity. The forms of instruction at the final stage include the

following: individual counseling by practice supervisors from the base education institution and the university and a final conference at the end of each kind of practice accompanied by the presentation of the work done. The support materials used are: individual blog of the student on practice with charts for self-evaluation and self-analysis. The final conference focuses on discussion of the work carried out. Its outcomes are summed up, the achievements and drawbacks are analyzed, and recommendations for its improvement are formulated. The prognostic-reflexive stage results in the student's stable striving for self-development and continuing self-education, in their ability to analyze their own activity, to create the trajectory of future activity within the professional ego-concept, and to comprehend and evaluate their work experience from the position of pedagogical social significance.

Thus, the well-formed occupational flexibility allows the master's degree student, as the customer of education services, to bridge the gap between the real kind of education obtained and its social demand. The true occupational flexibility presupposes high-quality solutions of professional problems in various professional situations typical of a certain education institution and the student's readiness to change their professional status and to adapt to new labor conditions, demonstrating at the same time invariably high pedagogical results. Mastering a wide range of tasks of pedagogical activity may allow the master's degree student to feel at home under the modern socio-economic conditions and to find a suitable trajectory of professional activity.

## 7. Conclusion

The essence of the main conclusions about the process of formation of occupational flexibility of the master's degree student in the course of pedagogical practice can be presented in the following way:

- it is possible to form during practice such personal trait as occupational flexibility that enables the master's degree graduate to acquire adjacent professional skills in a fast and efficient manner and to move up or down the career ladder, which improves the labor market competitiveness of the master's degree student;
- the main aim of the pedagogical practice of master's degree students boils down to the creation of conditions for self-realization, self-expression and self-determination of the personality as a subject of professional activity in various professional statuses;
- the formation of occupational flexibility of the master's degree student is effected via performing professional actions typical of certain positions and occupations in the field of pedagogical education in real professional situations during pedagogical practice;
- the formation of occupational flexibility of the master's degree student in the process of pedagogical practice presupposes four stages: cognitive, motivational, activity-centered and prognostic-reflexive;
- the occupational flexibility of the master's degree graduate can be regarded as one of the stages of development of occupational flexibility of a specialist in the sphere of pedagogical education, because the more mobile the master's degree student is, the more open and susceptible to change he/she is as a professional.

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