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Analyzing Professional Competences of Future Teachers

Abstract: The article deals with defining professional competences for future teachers training. Along with tracing back the origins and various interpretations of the concept, competences of science and English teachers are analyzed.

Keywords: competence, competency, professional competences, components of professional competences, science teachers, English teachers.

The current changes in Ukraine in general and the educational system in particular are stimulating great interest in training highly qualified specialists. The Bologna Declaration, which is considered the main benchmark of European education system, focuses on building professional competences (the approach of "I can do") of university graduates. Therefore the competency-based approach is widely used nowadays.

When dealing with professional competence, the requirement is twice as important for teachers-to-be who will be lately held responsible for educating future generations. The ability to predict learning results and model educational processes is crucial nowadays. Thus, it is of the highest priority to the Ukrainian society to train an open-minded, creative and highly skilled teacher, a competent professional.

The term "competence" had a substantial impact on education worldwide. In 1959 it was first introduced by Robert W. White. For about 60 years hot debates have been on concerning differences between terms "competence" and "competency", though both of them are interpreted as the ability to do something well by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English [1]. Unlike dictionaries, which stress interchangeable meanings of the terms, researchers use the former to describe a person's general ability, while the latter is more about the ability of performing a certain task.

O. Pometun came to the conclusion that education can be characterized by competence of graduates. It has several levels, where the lowest threshold is

considered necessary and sufficient for minimal success in attaining expected results [2, p. 17].

Later the term genealogy got more complicated as more notions were introduced. Among them professional competence is one of the most essential. It has been widely studied since the 1990s by researchers worldwide, including V. Adolf, V. Barkasi, D. Freeman, M. Fullan, A. Khutorsky, T. Rudnev, Iu. Shapran, G. Stein and others.

The Ukrainian Pedagogical Dictionary describes professional competence of teachers as basic pedagogical knowledge, abilities and skills for pedagogical activities and communication, with a key role of a teacher [3, p. 62]. In general, it is a range of both professional and personal skills necessary for efficient task performing.

Teaching competence is mostly affected by personal initiatives and the environment. The former centers on self-development. The latter is about outer stimulation, e.g. financial and prestige incentives, aimed at experience sharing, competition participation, etc.

Prominent foreign and Ukrainian researchers (B. Ananiev, T. Guskey, J. Hamilton, T. Shamova etc.) have created a three-aspect system of pedagogical competence: management (planning, organizing, regulating educational process), psychological (dealing with and influencing students) and pedagogical (applying various teaching forms and methods to receive set goals). Other pedagogical works point out a professionalism component of methodological, pedagogical and psychological training, a work component including an atmosphere and relations at work, a learning process, etc., and creativity of combining oratory and acting skills.

It is V. Kraievsky and A. Khutorsky who point out cognitive (general pedagogical and certain subject mastery), operation-technological (certain subject techniques and technologies) and personal components (teacher personality) [4]. Meanwhile, L. Elagina pays particular attention to motivation (enthusiasm for self-improvement), actions (self-awareness/esteem, goal-setting, etc.), emotions (emotional attachment to professional activities), as well as to cognitive [5, p. 30].

To sum up, professional competence is considered a range of knowledge and skills, pedagogical qualities presenting the mix of theoretical and practical readiness. As for its structure, cognitive, operational-technological, personal, and motivation components are chosen.

Generally, the components tend to vary depending on the specialization of future teachers. Studying professional competence of future science teachers, motivation and value orientations, theoretical base, technological skills, professional and reflection qualities are fundamental. As a result, the structure of professional competence includes:

- motivation and reflection (positive attitudes with high satisfactory expectations to the profession of teacher, internal and external motives, close connection with reflection practices which stimulate further professional development);

- cognitive and conative components combine professional knowledge of subject, methodology, methods and educational skills of design (e.g. setting educational goals and strategies), diagnosis (evaluation), technology (optimal training techniques), organizing classes and researches, etc.;

- social and personal components are about developing positive psychological attitudes to educational process and students, integrity, independence, social adaptability, responsibility, reliability, respect and applying pedagogical rules and models of which a teacher must be aware.

It is particularly important for future science teachers to generate a sense of professional "belonging": mastering laws of origin, nature and development of the living matter, taking care of own health and that of students, applying techniques for health preservation, environmental and ecological education, etc.

Interestingly, the main components of professional competence of future science teachers are quite similar to those of language teachers, though there are some differences. For the former, they are motivational-reflexive, cognitive-conative and socio-personal. For the latter, language proficiency is at the heart of success. Generally, the main difference is about teaching to communicate in English. Plus, speaking, writing, reading and listening skills are key.

In the English literature, the approach of four questions is used: the "why" (motivation and incentives), the "what" (knowledge competences, performance competences, and consequence competences), the "how" and the "who" (competences are to be assessable with assessment standards). Arends points out four attributes of a good teacher: personal qualities, knowledge base, an arsenal of teaching strategies, and reflection and problem solving practices [6].

Mirjam Anugerahwati from State University of Malan carried out a research in Indonesia centered on studying professional competence of English teachers. The chosen participants were exemplary, often having leading positions. According to the study, most of them selected personal competence as the most significant one, e.g. patience, understanding, good relations, helpfulness, etc. Number two is pedagogical competence – an ability to juggle with various teaching methods with the main purpose of making lessons interesting and challenging. Another competence is trustful partnership among colleagues. The last but not least is discipline aka professional competence which is about being a model of using English properly for students with enough exposure to the language [6].

Often, it is European Language Portfolio that is recommended to adopt as an influential model [7]. It is used worldwide as now one of four people is learning English.

Analyzing professional competence of English teachers in Uzbekistan, Barno Toshboeva draws out the following components: a friendly environment with close peer cooperation and guidance, educational researches and innovative practices, development of skills (both self-improvement on the basis of own teaching practices analysis and participation in seminars, workshops etc.) [8, p. 2].

Yevheniya Protsko took interest in studying professional competences of English teachers in Belgium. The scholar highlights the following components of the professional competence structure: communicative competence (cognitive, linguistic, phonetic, semantic and manual skills), sociolinguistic (the aspect of linguistic markers) and pragmatic competences (discourse, functions, design) [9, p. 80].

In training teachers of foreign languages communicative and interpersonal communication plays an important role. As for professional competences, they are linguistic, thematic, socio-cultural, educational and cognitive.

Choosing proper training methods and techniques is of utmost importance. It is believed they should blend several principles: goal-setting (for students to know an expected result and understand competences to master), problem-solving (settling contradictions) and the binary system (teacher-student relations).

After comparing the competences of science and English teachers, the authors agree on choosing professional (subject), personal, social and pedagogical ones as the most prominent.

In conclusion, for training highly qualified teachers it is a must to establish an appraisal framework, to maintain on-site training, build a partnership between universities and local schools, as well as to ensure training programs are based on teachers' competences.

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