

Editorial

The Importance of Psychological Teachers' Preparation for Educational Activity

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In recent years university study quality questions are discussed a lot. It is obvious that the competition between universities is getting stronger, it becomes the cornerstone subject of academic activity. Despite the fact that universities are more or less autonomic, they experience strong competition both in a separate country context and internationally. On the other hand, labour market pressure and the requirements for prepared specialists are increasing. These are the most serious challenges for universities.

Without going deep into general study quality questions, there is a wish to draw attention to the fact, that one of the most important study quality components is psychological preparation of the future student. Urgent pedagogical practice organization and improvement questions were discussed in the international scientific conference, which took place on July 1-5, 2013, in Yerevan (Armenia) ([Armenian State Pedagogical University After Khachatur Abovyan, 2013](#)). General outcome of the conference would be such - that various objective and subjective difficulties exist for organizing students' pedagogical practice in many countries. Pedagogical practice becomes a significant component of university education related to future teachers' preparation. Pedagogical practice of future teachers is, undoubtedly, one of the most important elements of university studies. However, up to now pedagogical practice remains a very problematic sphere. Pedagogical activity, on the whole, is complicated, diverse and manifold. After all, it is an activity requiring creativity, high intellect and good psychological preparation. A student doing pedagogical practice, inevitably encounters various hardships – both specialty/professional and psychological. During the practice, many different kinds of pedagogical situations are revealed. Various scientific research studies carried out in the last few years show the common situation – students-practitioners lack psychological preparation in communication with students, understanding them, adjusting to a new environment and so on ([Lamanuskas, 2013](#)).

However, pedagogical practice, how much important it might be, still does not guarantee that pedagogical future teacher's preparation is suitable and matches nowadays requirements. One of the most essential problems is to find an appropriate, optimal balance between teachers' professional, pedagogical and psychological preparation. Opinions are quite different here. It is without doubt that the future teacher has to be qualified professionally, for example, to have knowledge in a concrete field - physics, chemistry or biology and so on. And this is understandable, because it depends on proper professional preparation, how the students are going to be taught in comprehensive schools. Those, who are supporting this direction, pay less attention to the other components of university education. One of the most frequent arguments is that in comprehensive schools work psychologists who are very well prepared to carry out their job. In this respect, teacher specialist's psychological preparation seems to become a thing of a minor importance.

Why psychological teacher's preparation becomes very significant? First of all, it cannot be claimed that such preparation was not important earlier. However, declarative and realistic levels differed greatly. Today's teacher works in a different environment. Schools are more or less suitably provided with varied technological equipment. There is no doubt that teacher's working tools are not only a textbook, a chalk and a board. Educational technology penetration is intensive. On the other hand, today we have different generation of young people. We are different; we have the most varied, very often opposed and incompatible demands. The teacher inevitably must know this and correspondingly act in the most unexpected situations. Psychological teachers' preparation, first of all, should be treated as a disposition to overcome present day challenges arising in his everyday educational activity. The teacher is "plunged" into a special educational environment in which stress conditions and situations are very frequent. How to find a proper balance with such an environment? Challenges are the most varied. This is, of course, school fears, schoolchildren and teachers' interrelationship, communication and cooperation with schoolchildren's parents, society and so on. It is obvious, that teachers also need to understand the person, the spirit of every child and find a way to nurture that spirit (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Another psychological preparation component is psychological hardening, resistance and strength after collision with hardships arising in educational activity. All this has already to be acquired in the university study process and later constantly improved in work practice. The problem perhaps is this, that study process very often remains fragmental, psychology courses are poorly integrated with professional and especially pedagogical future teacher's preparation. Personal observations and discussions with the other country university colleagues allow claiming that such fragmentation is very distinct. As a rule, much less attention is devoted to psychology subject component in the study programs. Study modules are very much individualized, especially speaking about professional teacher's preparation. A little bit closer links are observed between psychological and pedagogical study modules. Very often psychology and psychological preparation tasks carried out by students are too much individualized, poorly related with future activity practice and they are formal. Even more problematic is future teachers' ability of learning to identify psychological preparation problems. The teacher cannot be required to be able to solve various types of psychological situations, but s/he has to be able to adequately evaluate them and according to the possibilities, solve them. Working with various children, the teacher inevitably encounters with the most unexpected situations. The ability to discern them, to preventively solve them with the help of professional psychologists is very important. On the other hand, every teacher has to be able to give children even minimal psychological support.

Teacher's psychological stability is no less important. Teacher's work is marked by big emotional load. It is very important for the teacher to confide in his/her efforts, in himself/herself, in his/her pupils and colleagues. Psycho-

logical stability definitely is the result of such confidence. From the point of view of the pupil, it is obvious, that every pupil is expecting his/her teacher's support and understanding.

Thus, improving study process, it is necessary to evaluate how much study time and other resources are allotted for the psychological future teachers' preparation. Lithuanian university practice shows that in the study process individual student work is overestimated, the workload of direct work with the students is being diminished. However, another extreme can easily be presented here. Lithuanian universities for many years already encounter with the pedagogical profile study programme students' motivation growing weaker. The research, carried out in Lithuania, in 2005 showed that the majority of future teachers do not have inner motivation to do pedagogical work (Paliukaitė, 2005). Another problem is directly related with this – undermined importance of psychological discipline studies. The student, lacking motivation to become a pedagogue, pays very little attention to this field studies as well. Very often the purpose of learning is to get a credit or to pass an exam. Evaluating more exhaustively the research studies related with this problematic, one can claim that many people, having entered teacher preparing schools, are not in the mood to do that job from the beginning already, do not have pedagogical purposefulness, therefore, psychological, pedagogical disciplines do not make a big sense for them and their studies do not have direct motivation. Such situation is very apparent in present Lithuania, Latvia, in some other European countries. Of course, it is necessary to tell here, that in various countries the situation is different in fact, regardless of common things preparing future teachers. For example, in Japan one seventh receive a pedagogue's diploma of all wishing to receive it and only about one third of them are accepted to work (Veidas.lt, 2013). In Lithuania the situation has been observed for more than a decade, when not the very brightest school leavers choose pedagogy studies.

Classical psychology subject modules in the study programmes are important and this is undoubted, however, specialized modules oriented more to practice are very necessary at present stage. Communication with children psychology should become a module integrating all psychological student preparation.

This is a serious challenge for the whole academic society. Guaranteeing proper psychological student preparation, much more attention and real time has to be devoted to self-analysis, reflexion and training, learning to analyze and assess concrete practical situations. Today's teacher is not only knowledge provider; s/he makes a direct influence on a young man's personality formation, talent and ability revelation, communication with people around. Therefore, it is very important that psychologically prepared teachers worked at schools. And here is one more quite often forgettable moment. Regardless of what psychologists-specialists work at school, the teacher works alone in the classroom. Success of the lesson, in general, depends first of all on how the teacher will be able to create a favourable psychological climate of the lesson. The question whether psychological future teachers' preparation increases their ability to create a favourable psychological climate of the lesson or of any other occupation remains open. Future teachers' psychological preparation aspects, discussed in brief, emphasize once again the importance of such preparation. More exhaustive scientific research studies, study process analysis and optimal recommendations for study process improvement are necessary.

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