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Communicative Competence Management Approaches in Higher Education

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Abstract

In the context of lifelong learning it is necessary to train a person who will be able to get oriented appropriately in all spheres of social life and actively influence them, without which it is impossible to proceed to the educational community with a high level of spiritual, legal and professional culture. Not only the expertise but also the general communication skills in the professional activity of a specialist become important. Communicative component is now represented fragmentarily in the content of Russian higher education, while the necessity in its expansion and the constitution is growing as communicative education is becoming an important means of the formation of professionalism and if to look more broadly, a way to transform our social realities. Search for the mechanisms to manage communicative competence of students is an important task in the development of higher education. The solution to this problem will increase the efficiency of training of future specialists in the period of active development of new communication technologies and create the conditions for successful professional and personal fulfillment. The research presented in the paper is based on the hypothesis that the formation of communicative competence of university students is determined by the interconnectedness of competencies which make up the structure of communicative competence through the sequencing of the stages of development of communicative competence and determination of the algorithm of formation of communicative competence in higher education.

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1. Introduction

Development of communicative competence is the problem of training of future specialists for any professional sector, which acquires particular relevance in the conditions of modernization of national education, modern science and industry. Therefore, vocational education should solve the problems of formation and development of transformative, cognitive and managerial activities in all professionals.

In the context of lifelong learning it is necessary to train a person, who will be able to get oriented appropriately in all spheres of social life and actively influence them, without which it is impossible to proceed to the educational community with a high level of spiritual, legal and professional culture. Not only the expertise but also the general communication skills in the professional activity of a specialist become important. In particular, it is noted that “A great role belongs to forming a professional code of conduct” (Ospanova, Timokhina, Kassenova, 2013). Here communicative context acquires a special twist. For example, manufacturing specialists who are trained to work with foreign partners, such personal qualities as the ability to communicate, knowledge of the specific features (verbal and nonverbal) of other cultures should be formed along with the professional qualification requirements. Communication is a primary social process of co-creating, maintaining and transforming social realities (Pearce & Pearce, 2000), (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). Communication, and interaction in a narrower sense, is not a secondary process, not only a means to achieve certain goals (for example, I enter the conversation to express thoughts, feelings, and relationships already existing inside me). Communication is a formative process. In the most fundamental sense, communication is the state of human condition, the way of human existence, the fundamental, primary social process in which we, its inevitable participants jointly create, reproduce and transform our social worlds, the quality of our existence. Communication, in this sense, is life itself and, according to the well-known axiom of Paul Watzlawick, one cannot not to communicate. This allows emphasizing communicative competence as a key one in vocational education. It actualizes the necessity to develop new approaches to the training of future professionals.

Perceptions of competence/expertise are related to the language of credit-modular system that allows you establishing a relationship with such aspects of building of educational process as a multi-level and non-linear deployment of training, development of educational programs considering individual educational path, fixation of learning outcomes using the storage and portable units.

The university, setting the task to develop communicative expertise of the students can use both training programs and special teaching methods for this purpose. For the development of communicative qualities of a personality it is possible to use such methods of influence which may allow a person to look at the trends in their own behavior, to understand the peculiarities of their motives and attitudes.

Consequently, communicative potential is a characteristic of human abilities which determine the quality of communication. It includes two more components in communication along with competence: communicative qualities of personality which characterize the development of the need for communication, relation to the method of communication and communicative competences, that is the ability to own the initiative in communication, the ability to be active, emotionally respond to the state of dialogue partners, formulate and realize their own individual program of communication, the ability to self-stimulation and mutual stimulation in communication.

In this connection, the special role of communicative culture of the person is emphasized which is considered as one of the characteristics of its communicative potential as communicative competence does not arise from scratch, it is developed. But the foundation of its development is the experience of human communication.

Experience has a special place in the structure of communicative competence of the individual. On the one hand, it is social and includes the internalized norms and values of the culture, on the other it is unique because it is based on individual communication skills and psychological events connected with communication in a person's life. The dynamic aspect of this experience lies in the processes of socialization and individualization, implemented in communication and providing social development of the person, as well as the adequacy of his responses to the situation of communication and their identity.

Thus, communicative competence is a prerequisite for the successful development of a professional (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Communicative component is now represented fragmentarily in the content of Russian higher education, while the necessity in its expansion and the constitution is growing as communicative education is

becoming an important means of the formation of professionalism and if to look more broadly, a way to transform our social realities.

2. Author Artwork

Communication, communicative processes and interactions are the leading social force of creation, understanding, adoption and constitution of new relations in all spheres of social life. Communication skills and knowledge are increasingly being recognized as obligatory component of modern professionalism; and thus as an essential component of modern education. Competencies are thus the characteristics of a person that are related to superior performance in a job and can be common across situations (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

Search for the mechanisms to manage communicative competence of students is an important task in the development of higher education. The solution to this problem will increase the efficiency of training of future specialists in the period of active development of new communication technologies and create the conditions for successful professional and personal fulfillment.

Scientists have turned to the issue and considered it in different ways. In ancient Greece, the sophists simultaneously with the art of persuasion taught the art of speaking. The term “communicative competence” emerged as the development of the idea of N. Chomsky (1957) about linguistic competence which is a limited set of grammatical rules allowing generating an unlimited number of correct sentences. The idea was found attractive to the scientists working in the field of language testing as it was possible to measure (test) linguistic competence quite accurately using available funds of educational measurements (tests). Linguistic competence significantly limited the subject of language testing in terms of communicative language teaching and the idea of expanding this construct, which was called “communicative competence” appeared (Bachman, 1990), (Canale & Swain, 1980). On this basis, we consider the communicative competence as a demonstrated area (or areas) of successful communication activity on the basis of acquired tools and strategies of verbal communication supported by linguistic and language skills. All components of communicative competence can be measured by testing and objectively evaluated. However, communicative competence is a more global education, referred to as personal resource and going beyond the competence of the developers of language tests. There are currently no scientific works explaining the mechanisms of the formation of this competence within the existing educational programs.

The research is based on the hypothesis that the formation of communicative competence of university students is determined by the interconnectedness of competencies which make up the structure of communicative competence through the sequencing of the stages of development of communicative competence and determination of the algorithm of formation of communicative competence in higher education.

There are many definitions of the notion “communicative competence”. Without conducting a detailed analysis of all existing definitions we believe that this notion may most precisely correspond to the following definition: communicative competence is the ability of experts to solve a certain class of professional tasks. This conclusion is based on the allocation of the basic conditions necessary for the formation of professional communicative competence:

- free mastery of genres which are crucial for this professional specialty. This ability is considered fundamental as every genre has its own specific form and compositional structure according to the purpose of communication. A variety of genre forms is determined by communicative tasks and goals of communication. Knowledge of the specific features of each genre is extremely important for communication;
- ability to use the terms in a business context. The knowledge of words used in a business context is often very different from the common familiar words;
- knowledge of etiquette speech formulas in business communication, which are an integral part of professional speech communication;
- possession of the fundamentals of rhetorical knowledge and skills;
- considering a number of extra textual factors which serve as an important parameter to assess the communicative situation and plan a communicative action. Such factors include, first of all, the circumstances of communication process, personal qualities of a specialist;

- knowledge of the status and role characteristics of a partner (psychological competence). Success of communication often depends on the choice of the form and style of communication.

So “professional communicative competence”, as we see, is a polysemantic concept. This is confirmed by the thesis given in the UNESCO report (UNESCO, 1997): “More and more entrepreneurs need not a qualification, which in their view is too often associated with the ability to carry out certain operations of a material nature. but the competence, which is seen as a kind of cocktail of skills peculiar to each individual, where expertise is combined in the strict sense of the word ... social behavior, ability to work in team, initiative and a flair for risk”.

We affirm that the communicative component of university and graduate education is an important means of formation of professionalism, and, if to look more broadly, is a means to transform our social realities.

Within the framework of these challenges we see our task. The introduction of communicative practices in the Russian system of education should be based on certain methodological conditions. In other words, the communicative component, which corresponds to a certain level of training of the professional, should be provided in training of the specialists at any level. In this case, communicative competence manifests itself in an integrative combination of two components: (1) the ability to organize social and communicative functional space of management, (2) as well as the ability to identify and take into account established corporate features of the process of social communication in the activities. Thus, it appears that the communicative nature of competence is clearly evident in the management process.

Communicative competences, as we have emphasized above, are integrative. They can be divided into general and special.

The general competencies include: instrumental, interpersonal and systemic competencies (Chomsky, 1965), (Cronen, 1995).

Instrumental competences which include cognitive abilities, the ability to understand and use the ideas and concerns; methodological abilities, ability to understand and manage the environment, organize time, build learning, decision-making and problem-solving strategies; technological skills, skills related to the use of technologies, computer skills and the ability to manage information; linguistic skills. Instrumental competencies include **interpersonal competences**, i.e. individual abilities associated with the ability to express feelings and attitudes, critical thinking and the ability to self-criticize, as well as social skills related to the processes of social interaction and cooperation, ability to work in team, take social and ethical obligations: the ability to criticize and self-criticize. **Systemic competences** which are a combination of understanding, attitudes and knowledge allowing to perceive how the parts of a whole relate to each other and to evaluate the place of each component in the system, the ability to plan changes in order to improve the system and design new systems.

The following guidelines are offered to develop educational programs considering gradual formation of communicative competence. It should be underlined that to develop communicative competence, it is necessary to develop a range of competencies during the learning process, which are understood as the formation of a certain range of knowledge and skills. The following communicative competences should be formed in educational programs of the primary level of education (1-2 year of Bachelor's program):

- express their thoughts clearly;
- feel confident during any communication;
- speak in a bright, interesting and fascinating way;
- control the voice and expressive speech;
- have practical skills in public speaking;
- be confident in any communication: presentations, talks, debates, arguments, examinations, interviews, etc.

In educational programs of the second stage of training (3-4 year of Bachelor's program) communicative competences should be formulated based on technologies of effective work with the audience.

Students must have sufficient knowledge of the following:

- structure of speech;
- effective use of technologies to transfer the content and consistency of presentation;
- use peculiar features of perception by the audience with the course of time;
- knowledge of the interests of the audience and the ability to speak its language; visual perception peculiarities (methods of work with slides);

- techniques allowing to answer the questions: determining the intention of a listener, methods of avoiding conflicts.

In the third stage of training (2 years of Master's program) competencies are acquired allowing obtaining sufficient knowledge in the following areas:

- identifying and overcoming barriers to communication;
- business communication: methods and techniques of effective communication; logical and psychological techniques of polemical dialogue;
- ability to recognize aggressive, passive and manipulative behavior styles and counteract successfully;
- ability to defend own interests without conflict.

The fourth stage is post-graduate study. A large amount of time is devoted to self-education. Methodological basis for lectures in preparation for Ph.D. exams should be communicative technologies associated with the formation of creative and critical thinking. Graduate student must possess communicative competences in the following fields: situational analysis aimed at the development of critical thinking, formation of interest to the process of obtaining knowledge in problem situations. Undoubtedly, the communicative nature of contemporary social reality puts certain requirements to the methods and content of training; consequently, education itself is becoming a priority communicative practice. Individuals need a wide range of competencies in order to face the complex challenges of today's world (Bachman, 1990), (Canale & Swain, 1980).

So, education must be based on a combination of complex of communicative practices and aimed at the formation of active life position. This is the most important factor of a fundamental part of education. It is therefore particularly important to form professional skills, communication practices, moral qualities, intended to serve as a basic foundation of learning.

Research and teaching experience in higher school shows that the proposed structure and methodological principles of communicative practices in the various subjects are not just theoretical constructs, but the real effective technologies for the training of future professionals in the practical skills of dialogue with a focus on a partner and building of a trajectory of the future professional and personal life. Thus, communication is considered a constitutive foundation in the system of any professional environment. The study of the functioning and development of communicative practices in education as technologies working in a particular way gives opportunity, as noted above, to organize the educational process as communicative and semantic simultaneously.

3. Conclusions

In this context a number of the following conceptual conclusions can be made:

1. The study proved the necessity to manage the formation of communicative competence in the system of higher professional education which contributes to the improvement of the competitiveness of university graduates. Establishment of the status of communicative competence as extra-professional expertise determining the involvement of the specialist in the future professional activity conditions its importance for the formation and self-development of the person in general and for the future professional activity in particular. The conclusion is made that the possession of communicative competence is increasingly recognized as essential component of modern professionalism, and modern education.

2. Methodological principles of management of the communicative competence development on the basis of the identified interdependence of communication processes, dynamics of sign and control are set that allowed to develop the control mechanisms of formation and development of communicative competence in high school as a series of stages enabling inclusion of communication courses in the system of undergraduate and postgraduate education.

3. Methodological recommendations on the gradual "inclusion" of communicative practices necessary for the development of communicative competencies in the structure of educational programs are worked out. This sequence of communicative competencies formed within social and personal, economic and organizational-administrative, general scientific and general professional competencies is the foundation for the formation of communicative expertise, allowing the graduates to feel flexible in labor market and be prepared to continue their

education both on the second (Master's) degree of higher professional education (for a bachelor's degree), and in the sphere of additional and postgraduate education (for bachelors and masters).

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