

# Problems of the Formation of Readiness of Future Preschool Teachers for Professional Activities

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**Abstract:** This article is dedicated to theoretical and practical aspects of ensuring the readiness of future teachers of preschool education for professional activities. The aim of the research is to study the preparation of teachers of preschool education at a modern university; to determine the significance of the formation of professionally important qualities of future specialists; to determine the level of their psychological readiness for professional activities; and, based on the results obtained, to shape the stages of further research necessary for the subsequent development of programs for introducing the latest forms and methods in the studying process at universities.

To implement the set tasks, we used a complex of interrelated research methods. The analysis of the criteria allowed us to estimate the level of the students' readiness for future professional activities.

The analysis of the results of the research showed that the most effective formation of students' readiness is formed based on the personality criterion. The formation of the researched criterion of readiness based on the content-related and regulation-related parameters is also quite effective.

The formation of students' readiness for future professional activities requires the development of new forms and methods of teaching both within the university and in course of practical training.

It has been determined that shaping professional competencies and professional preparedness of future preschool teachers require further research, including that which is done through the development and implementation of comprehensive programs for the professional and psychological preparation of students, which include the latest forms and methods of teaching at modern universities.

**Keywords:** *psychological preparation; professional activity; professionally important qualities; preschool education; profesiogram.*

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## 1. Introduction.

The topicality of the issues with ensuring the readiness of future teachers of preschool education for professional activity is connected to the need of Ukrainian institutions and organizations for qualified specialists who quickly adapt to European standards and show active creative independence in solving professional problems.

At present, as the country is undergoing profound changes in all spheres of society, more and more attention is paid to the problems of professional education. The educational institutions are given the task of preparing not just a specialist with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities. In the light of modern development trends, there is a need for professionals who are able to independently solve the set tasks and to achieve a high level of success in the activity, who possess the complex of professionally important qualities required for the implementation of the activity.

The optimization of the educational process for the quality training of future specialists is described in the Laws of Ukraine "On Education" dated 05.09.2017 No. 2145-VIII and "On Higher Education" dated 01.07.2014 No. 1556-VII. The regulatory framework for the training of a future specialist is also reflected in the "Regulation on the Procedure for the Implementation of Innovative Educational Activities" (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine dated 11.07.2017 No. 994).

## 2. Analysis of research and publications

The problem of professional training of future specialists occupies a special place in the research of many famous scientists. The issues of ensuring the professional competence of future specialists on the basis of higher educational institutions and subsequent lifelong education throughout life is considered in the works of Arendachuk (2016), Frumos (2018), Legkauskas & Magelinskaite-Legkauskiene (2019), Lunegova (2006), Rudik (1988), Tampaki (2017), Subbotina (2011), Sysoeva (2013), Varetska (2019), Velichko (2011) and many others.

Special education as a whole is an equilateral triangle. It has the following sides: education as such (preparation), science (foundation of preparation) and production practice (result of preparation).

Moreover, each side is equally important and supports the other. It is clear that without science, it is impossible to build education; and without practice, education and science will be insufficient.

Accordingly, the above-mentioned aspect should be one whole, and any deviation turns it into a shapeless and useless figure that does not create either stability or development vectors. The question arises: to what extent does the current system of education - science - production practice work steadily and meet the needs and standards of the European Union.

In the context of professional activity, a person's readiness for it is studied from the standpoint of the psychological and activity approaches. In the activity approach, professional readiness is characterized as the ability and readiness of a person to perform a certain professional activity and as the effectiveness of professional training and education of a person, their readiness for work. It is also regarded as an active state of personality causing activity; as a result of activity; as a quality that defines attitudes to professional situations and tasks; as a prerequisite for purposeful activity, its regulation, sustainability, and effectiveness.

According to the statement of L. Y. Subbotina (2011), readiness not only shows the possibility, subject's predisposition to act at a sufficiently high level, but also acts as a decisive condition for quick adaptation to work, further professional development and advanced training.

In the psychological approach, the emphasis is moved onto the personality of the specialist at different stages of professional development; the structural components of psychological readiness for professional activity are highlighted, and their characteristics are described. Therefore, the authors define in their studies the psychological readiness for professional activity as a complex structural personal education. For example, according to P. A. Rudik (1988), its components are: cognitive mental processes that reflect the most important aspects of the performed activity; emotional components that can either enhance or weaken the activity of the individual; volitional components that contribute to the implementation of effective actions to achieve a goal; and lastly, behavior motives.

Analyzing the problem of ensuring psychological readiness for professional activities among future specialists, Lunegova (2006) identifies several other structural components: motivational one, manifested in the individual's needs to successfully complete the tasks, in the interest in the activity and its implementation opportunities; orientational one, including knowledge and understanding of the specifics of the activity and the conditions for its implementation; operational one, meaning mastery of the techniques and methods of the activity and the necessary skills; strong-willed one, reflecting the internal need of the individual in their control of actions; evaluative one, involving self-assessment of their readiness and relevance of the process of solving professional problems to the set goals.

In turn, Velichko (2011) identifies the functional blocks of students' psychological readiness for professional activities related to specific personality qualities:

- individually motivational one, which includes professionally important qualities that determine the attitude to professional activities;
- a system of ideas about the goals, content and methods of performing professional activities related to such qualities as the ability to define and understand professional tasks, possession of knowledge and skills necessary for their implementation;
- informational one, which combines the properties that ensure the perception, processing and preservation of information necessary for the implementation of professional activities;
- managerial one, providing the decision-making process associated with the qualities that ensure the planning, control and evaluation of their own professional activities.

Despite the diversity of the authors' concepts of the structural organization of the psychological readiness of the individual for professional activity, they share one common feature - special attention is paid to the motivational component, which is associated with the recognition by the person of their own needs; manifested in the need to successfully complete the tasks, in the interest in the activity, opportunities for its implementation; which includes professionally important qualities that determine the attitude to professional activity; which allows to effectively carry out practical activities.

Thus, the analysis of the sources showed a connection between the psychological readiness for activity and the formation of a successful specialist. In this regard, there arises a problem of determining, evaluating and developing the psychological components on which the effectiveness of future professional activity depends in the scope of university training.

The purpose of the research is to study the training of teachers of preschool education at a modern university, to determine the significance of the formation of professionally important qualities of future specialists, to determine the level of their psychological readiness for professional activities and, based on the results obtained, to form the stages of further research necessary for the subsequent development of programs for introducing the latest forms and methods in the learning process at universities.

The objectives are, on the one hand, to analyze the problem of professional training of future specialists, and on the other hand, to define the content of professionally important qualities of preschool teachers, as

well as to determine the level of their readiness for future professional activities.

The conducted theoretical research of the problem allows us to conclude that the professional readiness of a preschool teacher can be understood as the ability to carry out pedagogical activity at a level sufficient for the implementation of preschool education to form the prerequisites for universal study activities in children – personality-related, content-related, activity-related, regulation-related ones.

**Main statement.** The processes of globalization and digitalization, the development and widespread use of high technologies, together with Ukraine's intentions to integrate into the European community, have led to new requirements for the training of future higher education specialists. Modernization of higher education in Ukraine is in the direction of European integration and democratization; it is aimed at developing promising models for the training of qualified specialists in accordance with European standards.

An important problem of modern higher education is not merely the training of specialists with a certain system of professional competencies, but the preparation of specialists who are ready to work after the university exactly under the major they have received. The issue of quality higher education, in which a highly qualified and competitive specialist in their field would emerge, is very serious and assumes the character of an important problem of national higher education.

Over the many years of the existence of educational institutions, an element-wise approach to the training of preschool teachers has been established, where each teacher uses their own subject to form separate knowledge, abilities, not taking into account current trends in the development and reformation of the entire field, the latest approaches to the content and nature of the activities of a future preschool teacher, as well as their personal role in society. Some teachers of educational institutions believe that only the assimilation of knowledge on the subject of a particular branch of science brings a future specialist to a high enough level of professional training.

An analysis of the main characteristics of preschool teachers according to their profессиograms indicates that the dominant way of thinking is a stable personality characteristic and is characterized as adaptation-coordination. People with this way of thinking tend to coordinate goals and solutions to multiple problems at the same time. They are open to innovation and self-improvement.

Lately, scientists and practitioners are coming to the conclusion that it is necessary to reorient the basic principles of professional training of future specialists, as evidenced by the above-referenced scientific works of scientists.

Graduates of higher education institutions on pre-school education begin their work at a time when the country is at a stage of great changes, when innovations require the application of basic management concepts to new problems and new opportunities.

### **3. Research Methods**

A suite of interrelated research methods was used to solve the set tasks. These included:

- theoretical (analysis, synthesis, comparison, modeling, systematization, generalization): theoretical analysis of scientific literature with the goal of selecting and comprehending the actual material; analysis of concepts, theories and methods in order to identify ways to solve the problem under research.

- empirical (questionnaire, observation, pedagogical experiment, methods of mathematical statistics, computer technology for processing experimental data), which were used to study the results of educational, upbringing, practical, scientific work of students; and to identify the level of formation of the professional orientation.

The most studies on this subject are realized using a qualitative methodology: interviews (Lieber et al., 1998), life-history research (McMullen et al., 2006; Tampaki, 2017), with two notable exceptions: the study of Mitchell & Hedge (2007), which used a mixed-method approach, or quantitative instruments as Teacher Belief Scale and interviews with open-ended question, and Middleton's study which used a quantitative and qualitative methodology (Middleton, 2002).

An analysis of various methods showed that the use of personality questionnaires is most effective, such as the 16-factor personality test by R. B. Cattell & Mead (2008), and especially MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, modified as the Methodology of Multilateral Personality Research by F.B. Berezin and others, and modified as Standardized Methods of Multivariate Personality Research by L.N. Sobchik) with numerous additional scales. Using these techniques allows obtaining fairly adequate models of recognition of professional success in terms of content in various types of professional activity.

The first stage of the research included the study and analysis of respondents' views on determining the significance of the components of professionally important qualities of preschool teachers. For this purpose, firstly, a questionnaire was developed that contained a list of requirements for future specialists, and secondly, a team of respondent experts was built. The experts were chosen from among the teachers of the South Ukrainian K.D. Ushinsky National Pedagogical University, as well as the heads of Odessa institutions and organizations of preschool profile. In drawing up the requirements for the training of preschool teachers, the State Standard of Higher Education was taken into account, including the educational qualification characteristics (EQC) and the educational and professional program (EPP), approved on October 04, 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. After selecting the requirements for the training of preschool teachers, the questionnaire was supplemented with related questions.

The professional training of future specialists is aimed at the formation of certain integrative qualities, which include the student's readiness and preparedness for a future profession. At the second stage of the research, a criterion analysis of students' preparedness for professional activity was carried out according to the following indicators: determining the level of realization of the need for professional self-development; determining the level of students' knowledge; determining the skills of students; determining the ability to analyze and evaluate their own activities; assessing the preparedness of future preschool teachers to professional activities.

#### **4. The results of the research and their interpretation**

The survey was conducted in two groups of respondents - separately among people who actually compiled the list of requirements: 30 teachers of South Ukrainian K.D. Ushinsky National Pedagogical University, 50 heads of Odessa institutions and organizations of preschool profile (hereinafter referred to as respondents of the first group); and also among 4<sup>th</sup> year students of the faculty of preschool pedagogy and psychology of South Ukrainian K.D. Ushinsky National Pedagogical University - hereinafter referred to as respondents of the second group.

All respondents voluntarily participated in the survey; any participant could refuse to partake in the survey at any time free of any consequences for them. In such case, the responses of that participant were disregarded as the results were calculated.

The first group of respondents was asked to indicate the competencies that they consider necessary for the effective formation of the readiness of future preschool teachers for professional activities based on their personal work experience. Based on the assessment results, an average score was calculated for each competency. The ten most important competencies were listed in the questionnaires for the second group.

The count of the first group was 80 people, that of the second group – 84 people. In total, 164 people were involved in the research. It was proposed to determine and evaluate the significance of each of the proposed requirements for the preparation of future preschool teachers in the questionnaire: from the most to the least significant. Since the respondents identified 10 requirements for the personality of the future specialist, the weighting coefficient of each of them was set to be from 1 to 10, with the lower coefficient relating to the more significant indicator.

The authors of the questionnaire have set a goal to determine the competencies that a future specialist should have after graduation from university. The opinion of future specialists themselves and their vision of the value and social significance of their profession was not to be ignored either.

The list of basic requirements for the training of preschool teachers (according to the respondents) and the results of the survey in the two groups of respondents are given in table 1.

**Table 1.** Comparative analysis of the respondents' views on determining the importance of the components of professionally important qualities of preschool teachers

No.	List of professionally important personality traits	Weighting indicator	
		Group 1	Group 2
1.	Knowledge of relevant laws, rules and regulations	1,4	1,7
2.	Fundamental knowledge in the specialty, the ability to put the acquired knowledge into practice	1,2	1,3
3.	Work experience under the major	4,7	9,8
4.	Knowledge of pre-school education development trends	5,2	5,3
5.	Fluency in graphic editors, depending on specialization	3,3	4,0
6.	Fluency in foreign languages, primarily English	3,6	4,2
7.	The ability to make atypical decisions; think creatively; analyze; work in a team; work under guidance; work on non-fascinating projects; make independent decisions	4,1	7,5



8.	The ability to act in conditions of lack of time and information; to work in non-standard conditions requiring a creative approach; to manifest business activity, creativity, and initiative; to set goals and to achieve a specific result	5,1	5,0
9.	The ability to use verbal and non-verbal means of communication to a psychological effect; to establish psychological contact, taking into account one's psychological characteristics; to use psychological methods of exposure to increase the efficiency of solving professional problems; to control one's own emotions	8,4	7,2
10.	The ability to conduct dialogue and effective interaction	6,3	7,7

An analysis of the results of the study shows that the opinion common to both groups of respondents is that the most significant requirement for the personality of future preschool teachers is, undoubtedly, basic knowledge of fundamental sciences for the development of general professional disciplines (general scientific competencies). This is evidenced by the distribution of weighting coefficients, namely: both groups have prioritized requirement No. 2 among the above requirements with very significant indicators of significance - 1.2 in the first group and 1.3 in the second group of respondents. The importance of professional competence in the direction is also evidenced by the coefficients related to requirements No. 1 and No. 5. Both groups of respondents have marked these requirements with relevant indicators of significance (see Table) in second and third places. Not disregarded by the respondents, but marked with a less significant coefficient, are the instrumental competencies. This is evidenced by the fourth position of requirement No. 6 with an almost identical significance indicator for both groups – 3.6 and 4.2. At the fifth position, respondents place one of the components of social and personal competence, namely: requirement No. 8 with a weighting coefficient of 5.1 and 5.0 for the first and second groups of respondents respectively. Next, at sixth position, goes requirement No. 4 with weighting factors of 5.2 and 5.3 for the first and second groups of respondents respectively. This requirement is related to professional competence.

In seventh place, in the respondents' opinion, goes requirement No. 10 (instrumental competence) with weighting factors of 6.3 and 7.7 for the first and second groups of respondents respectively.

According to the significance and prioritization of the above requirements for professionally important qualities of a future specialist, respondents were almost unanimous. In other requirements (No. 3, No. 7), the opinions of respondents differ significantly. A clear explanation exists for controversy regarding requirement No. 3. Most university graduates do not have work experience under their major (which employers want to see) because they are mainly focused on their studies.

Professional training of future specialists is aimed at the formation of certain integrative qualities, among which are the student's readiness and preparedness for a future profession. To determine the readiness structure, the criteria presented in Table 2 were analyzed.

The selected criteria and indicators made it possible to determine the levels of readiness of future specialists for professional activity, and were presented as high, medium and low levels.

**Table 2.** Criteria structure for the analysis of students' professional readiness for professional activities

№	Criteria	Indicators
1	Personality-related	Motivational orientation on interpersonal communication; realization of the need for professional self-development.
2	Content-related	Availability of knowledge in the major.
3	Activity-related	Formation of didactic, organizational, communicative, diagnostic, perceptual, suggestive, academic skills.
4	Regulation-related	Capability to analyze and evaluate one's own activities.

The analysis of the indicator "realization of the need for professional self-development", related to the personality-related criterion, showed that 3 people manifested a stop in self-development, which makes 2.4%; 12 people manifested the absence of an established system of self-development (14.3%). 69 (82.1%) students are actively fulfilling their need for self-development (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Results of determining the fulfillment of the need for professional self-development

Manifested level	Number of students	%
Stop in self-development	2	2,4
Absence of an established system of self-development	12	14,3
Active fulfillment of need for self-development	69	82,1

Table 4 presents the results of data analysis by indicators of the content-related criterion.

**Table 4.** Results of determining the students' level of knowledge

Manifested level	Number of students	%
Low	11	13,09
Medium	51	60,7
High	22	26,2

As seen from Table 4, high level of knowledge formation was detected in 22 students, which is 26.2% of their total number, the average level in 51 or 60,7%, and the low level in 11 or 13.09% of students.

According to the indicators of the activity criterion, their results are shown in Table 5, which shows that a low level of formation of skills was recorded in 64 (76.2%), medium - in 14 (16.7%), and high - in 6 (7.1 %) of students, which is explained by a lack of practical experience in the process of training future teachers of preschool education.

**Table 5.** Results of determining the students' level of skills

Manifested level	Number of students	%
Low	64	76,2
Medium	14	16,7
High	6	7,1

The research of the ability to analyze and assess one's own activities has shown: 8 students (9.5) have a high, 71 (84.5%) – an average, and 5 (5.9%) - a low level of its manifestation (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Results of determining the capability to analyze and assess one's own activity

Manifested level	Number of students	%
Low	5	5,9
Medium	71	84,5
High	8	9,5

The analysis of the results on the readiness levels for each criterion as a whole is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Results on the readiness of future preschool teachers for professional activities

Criteria	Manifested level					
	High		Sufficient		Low	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
Personality-related	18	21,4	48	57,1	18	21,4
Content-related	16	19,04	43	51,2	25	29,8
Activity-related	11	13,09	36	42,9	37	44,04
Regulation-related	13	15,5	22	26,2	49	58,3
General readiness	22	26,2	35	41,7	27	32,1

Thus, high level of readiness under the personality-related criterion was recorded in 21.4% of future preschool teachers, under the content-related criterion - in 19.04%, under the activity-related criterion - in 13.09%, and under the regulation-related criterion - in 15.5%.

Sufficient level of readiness under the personality-related criterion was found in 57.1% of students, under the content-related criterion - in 51.2%, under the activity-related criterion - in 42.9%, and under the regulation-related criterion - in 26.2%.

21.4% of students showed a low level of readiness under the personality-related criterion, 29.8% under the content-related criterion, 44.04% under the activity-related criterion, and 58.3% under the regulation-related criterion.

High level of general readiness was recorded in 26.2% of future teachers of preschool education, sufficient level in 41.7%, and low level in 32.1% of respondents.

## 5. Conclusions

The results of the research show that students and employers (as well as teachers) differ in their understanding of the essence and content of the effective training of modern preschool teachers.

The analysis of the criteria allowed us to consider the level of the students' readiness for future professional activities. The following criteria for the formation of preparedness of students were selected: personality-related, content-related, activity-related and regulation-related.

The analysis of the results of the research showed that the most effective formation of students' readiness is shown under the personal criterion. The formation of the researched criterion of readiness under the content-related and regulation-related parameters is also quite effective.

The formation of students' readiness for future professional activities requires the development of new forms and methods of teaching both within the university and during practical training.

While conducting the research, we relied on the concept which determines that the modeling of an object, a phenomenon, an activity is carried out in two main forms. The first is to reproduce the functional requirements that a specialist must meet; the second features a list of relevant professionally important qualities, knowledge and skills that should be inherent in a specialist.

The personality of future teachers of preschool education, chosen by us as the object of research, belongs to such class of objects of social study as the personality of a professional. Therefore, in addition to the two main traditional areas of analysis of the personality (personality as an object of social relations and as a subject of social activity), we added a third direction - the study of the subject of a specific professional activity with their inherent psychological properties, qualities and features that are formed within the framework of this activity.

Thus, the introduction of new forms, methods and approaches to education and training is the basis for effective professional activity of future teachers of preschool education.

Presently, the teacher of preschool education is a specialist who has innovative professional thinking, is able to integrate lifelong learning, ready to solve any problems to ensure a civilized existence in a dynamic society. Therefore, the content of education should be necessary and sufficient for the integration of the graduate into modern reality.

Summing up, it should be noted that the prospect of further research is the development of the latest forms and methods of study at universities, the creation of comprehensive programs for professional and psychological preparation of students, providing for an increase in the number of training and practical classes, as well as hours spent on internship after each year of studies.

Having studied the features of interactive learning, such as the immersion in the communication process, which is currently gaining great popularity in Europe, we can assume that it will positively affect the formation of willingness for future preschool teachers to become professionals, which is why we plan to introduce a number of methods and

techniques of interactive learning into the educational process under certain majors.

The creation of various models of specialists' training and their comparative analysis remains the most promising area of research in the context of becoming of a preschool teacher in the education system. This direction will be able to guide specialists in the selection and adjustment of programs from various educational and methodological suites in order to comply not only with the requirements of preschool education standards, but also with personality needs and opportunities, which ultimately ensures the maximum achievement of the set goals of preschool pedagogy.

When developing pedagogical technology based on the research, it is planned to use the following algorithm of actions: diagnostics of students' readiness for professional activities at the initial stage; designing the logical structure of the process of forming the readiness of future preschool teachers and its design; development of special courses and practical exercises; the introduction of said special courses in the curriculum; the introduction some sections of the special courses in related disciplines; the creation of new internship programs, the development of guidelines for employers for the period of students' internships, and the final assessment of the readiness of future preschool teachers for professional activities.

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