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PROFESSIONAL SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE TEACHERS AS PERCEIVED BY POSTGRADUATE PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION COURSES ATTENDEES

Summary. The article studies the language and literature teachers' understanding of the characteristics and stages of professional self-development, their ability to plan their career growth. Attention is paid to the democratic principles and human-centered approach. The novelty of this article lies in the definition of the leading determinants of self-education as a factor of personal growth and professional development, the formation of a culture of personal development, emotional and volitional self-regulation.

The methodological basis of the study is identified by the following approaches: acmeological, axiological, anthropocentric, learning-by-doing, competence, culturological, personal, synergetic, systematic. The subject of the study is language and literature teachers' understanding of their professional development and postgraduate pedagogical education. Thus, this research demonstrates the relevance of the issues raised in this article. Future research needs to clarify the problems that hinder the creativity of teachers to deepen the knowledge about the theoretical and methodological principles of professional self-development, stimulate teachers to improve their professional competencies, focus on the creation of their trajectory of personal development.

Keywords: personal development, professional self-development, postgraduate pedagogical education, language and literature teachers.

Introduction. Nowadays, the ongoing democratic changes in educational institutions highlight the role of continuous acquisition of knowledge and the

readiness for professional self-development of teachers. This research studies the problem of teachers' beliefs and their understanding of the issues related to their professional self-growth. The novelty of this article lies in the definition of the leading determinants of self-education (as a factor of self-development) and professional self-growth, the experience of creative self-educational activity of language and literature teachers, their emotional experience of the value of theory and methods of professional self-education; establishment of a culture of self-development of the ability to self-regulate emotionally and volitionally and mastering the values of the content of postgraduate pedagogical education; reflexivity based on the interim results of the self-development process.

O. Semenoh noted that the society of the XXI century is waiting for a language and literature teacher with philological, psychological, and pedagogical knowledge, a developed language intuition, with folklore, literary, and artistic potential, creative style of thinking, flexible mind, oratory and business communication skills, who knows about the development of his/her nation. "The language and literature teacher needs to know new learning technologies; methods of formation of skills of independent work, development of creative abilities, logical thinking of students; (s)he should be able to design, construct, model, and conduct lessons and educational classes with elements of information and computer technologies..." [1].

The philosophy of anthropocentrism which, according to V. Kremen, is a theoretical component of the national idea, provides for the functioning of such educational institutions in which a democratic, humane educational environment is created. The subject of the educational process determines the level of his/her professional competencies and plans his/her personal and professional self-growth [2].

There are several interpretations of the concepts of *self-development* and *professional self-development* in the psychological and pedagogical literature. S. Sokolovska [3] explains self-development as "a purposeful, conscious process of forming oneself as a person which lasts throughout life and determines the

qualitative development of a holistic personality” [4]. She explains the professional self-development of a teacher as “a conscious purposeful process of personal and professional self-improvement for creative self-realization in the process of performing professional activity” [5]. According to A. Kononenko, “professional self-development of a teacher is an internal process aimed at achieving professionalism which is a qualitative self-change of the personal and professional sphere and professional activity” [6].

The methodological basis of the study is *the acmeological approach*. It considers the possibility of achieving the person’s peaks of creative and personal self-development. It helps to identify the hidden and unrealized opportunities to form a positive self-concept of the teacher. *The axiological approach* emphasizes the value of continuous professional self-development of professional activity. *The anthropocentric approach* considers the teacher's personality as a goal and subject of professional self-development, emphasizes the importance of the individual value system in human life. According to it, a human being creates a system of landmarks, goals, ideals that determine the logic and dynamics of her/his life path, and therefore (s)he is responsible for choosing his/her destiny and place in the world. *The activity approach* states that the activity of the subjects of the educational process results in self-actualization, acquisition of knowledge, self-organization, self-realization, self-control, and self-development. *The competence approach* promotes mastering of the methods of personal and professional growth, readiness for continuous professional development, the formation of practical skills of professional self-development. *The culturological approach* involves culturally appropriate development, considers the phenomenon of culture as a core in understanding and explaining human beings, their consciousness and life, sees the assimilation of culture as a process of personal discovery, creation of a world of culture in itself. Participation in the dialogue of cultures stimulates the actualization of individual and personal values of culture. *The personal approach* is aimed at the interaction of the subjects of the educational process. This contributes to the

personal and professional growth of the teacher by supporting his/her individuality, ability to self-development and self-assessment, learning through the cooperation of all subjects of the educational process. *The synergetic approach* considers teacher's self-development as an open, self-regulating holistic system that is characterized by dynamism, complexity, uncertainty, and autonomy. It ensures harmony and productivity of human life in society and its continuous personal and professional growth through the active use of both internal resources and opportunities which are determined by the conditions in the outside world. *The systematic approach* is associated primarily with the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the concepts of *professional self-development* and *continuous professional self-development of teachers* [7].

Aim and tasks. The purpose of this study is to examine the teachers' understanding of the specifics of professional self-development and their ability to plan their careers. The objectives of this study are:

- a) to investigate the factors that inhibit the professional self-development of the language and literature teacher and those that contribute to this process;
- b) to determine the level of skills and qualities of the teachers that help them to grow personally and professionally;
- c) to study the level of skills of the language and literature teachers that help them to plan their professional self-growth;
- d) to suggest possible ways for the teachers to adjust their guidelines for self-development.

Research methods. An online survey was shared among 126 teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 46 years (4–10 years – 39 participants; 12–25 – 59 participants; 30–46 – 28 participants). They were asked to write detailed answers in the questionnaire. The participants shared their vision on the problems that are related to the teachers' awareness of the scientific and theoretical components, possible stages of the formation of a culture of professional self-development, their willingness to identify ways and plan stages of personal and career self-growth. By counting

the same or different (sometimes non-standard) answers, the results of the survey were systematized and generalized, and the answers to the questions were compared and calculated.

Research results. Our research has demonstrated that the teachers of the Ukrainian language and literature (53%) answering the questions about the problems associated with the formation of a culture of professional self-development, their willingness to identify the ways of personal and career self-growth, their ability to plan the next stages of their career development, understand the concept of *personal self-development* as a comprehensive development. It is initiated by the subject with the help of nonviolent methods, through independent activities aimed at raising one's level of education, civility, etc., that is, external factors that motivate personal self-growth are not taken into account. About 37% of the study participants admitted that the teacher should be stimulated by external factors: social processes, scientific and technological development, international and interethnic integration processes, etc. About 7% of the study participants could not answer this question. According to 28% of the teachers surveyed, personal self-development is more important than professional, a true teacher, a professional must first develop such qualities as “a sense of dignity, national consciousness, pedagogical ethics, self-control, the ability to adequately assess their success and failures”.

Reflecting on the question of what meaning they attach to the concept of *professional self-development*, the language and literature teachers answered that it is a process of personality formation. Its main purpose is to reach the top of pedagogical skills, high results of educational activities through self-education, training courses, participation in competitions, pieces of training (37%), learning other languages and subjects with the subsequent integration of this information (7%). For 21% of the study participants, the concept of *professional self-development* means lifelong learning, keeping one's finger on the pulse of challenges, analysis of modern technologies. For them, it is a need required by the development of society. “This is personal development +

knowledge, experience, applied in the profession” (21%). As one can see, some teachers also emphasized that their professional self-development is possible only with the established personal qualities that a modern teacher should have. The life experience would also lead to professional self-growth. 7% of the teachers emphasized that this process is possible under favorable conditions in their educational environment, in particular with proper professional interaction.

All the participants of this study unanimously answered that a high level of self-development can be achieved only with a democratic approach to school management. Democratic, partnership, friendly relations between the subjects of the educational process contribute to high results, while authoritarian approaches generate formalism and passivity.

At the same time, 30% of the surveyed teachers answered that they cannot always use democratic methods in educational activities with their pupils. The explanation for this phenomenon is probably that the ideological, moral, and authoritarian psychological traits of some teachers were formed during the period of totalitarianism, and educational institutions were doomed to serve the dominant ideology. This suggests that one of the primary tasks of a teacher who is striving for self-development is to focus on updating one’s value paradigm. This promotes the development of democratic, partnership principles in the educational process.

The next question was to share the impressions about the importance of continuous professional self-development for a teacher. Almost everybody (93%) expressed the belief that the vocation of every teacher is to improve his/her professional qualities (one study participant stated: “on a scale of importance – 100%”) because “time does not stand still, so you need to constantly learn something new, to be interested in it”, to be competitive on the labor market because “professional self-development is a process of personality formation”; “You can teach others only when you are constantly improving yourself, moving with the times, navigating in the modern world, developing following the current trends, as teaching requires the use of various new forms

of teaching and education”. The educators understand that the continuous professional development of a teacher ensures the future of our society, a true educator “will never stop there, and life gives him/her more and more new tasks that need to be solved in new ways”.

The teachers of different ages and work experience have shown a desire for career growth. The young teachers realize that they cannot focus only on the knowledge that they have acquired while studying at higher education institutions. They emphasized the need for self-education activities: (“I acutely lack knowledge of my subject”). The recipients with thirty years of experience wrote that they do not have the right to focus only on the competencies acquired over the years: “the teacher must not lag behind modern technology to be interesting to their students, which means that the professional self-development must be continuous”. 86% of the study participants were convinced that everybody should be engaged in personal and professional self-growth throughout life. According to 14% of the respondents, it is necessary “when there is free time” or “when it is convenient”.

23% of the teachers wrote that thanks to their self-development activities their self-esteem and material well-being had increased, they felt “self-respect of colleagues, students, parents”, as they “constantly learn something new”. Therefore, the teachers get moral satisfaction by being constantly engaged in their career self-growth.

At the same time, the language and literature teachers noted that there are several obstacles to their readiness for professional self-growth, such as the imperfection of the educational system, the large amount of work that teachers have to do (competitions, tournaments, overload), lack of technical support, lack of time and limited resources, burnout, a large number of secondary responsibilities which sometimes have little to do with teaching (“a large number of unnecessary mandatory REQUIRED activities”) and which must be performed, unfavorable environment, lack of clear motivation, insufficient competence of teachers, inability to plan time, as well as a low level of

professional training. The ways to overcome this problem, according to the survey, are stimulation and motivation of teachers for creative work as a guarantee of personal and professional self-development. Only 7% of the teachers believed that “there are no problems at all concerning the teachers’ readiness for professional self-growth if a person has already chosen a pedagogical profession”.

Some educators (14%) pointed to the psychological factor as an obstacle and a cause of their inability or unwillingness to improve personal and professional self-development, “some character traits, health problems” play a role, too. 7% of the respondents indicated that the distance from the regional center, from cultural and educational institutions is an obstacle to their self-development.

33% of the study participants could not answer the question of what character traits that hinder their self-growth they would like to get rid of (they did not know them or such traits, in their opinion, were absent). Among the shortcomings pointed out by teachers were excessive demands, an exaggerated sense of responsibility (inflated expectations), and self-criticism. 21% of the study participants indicated excessive emotionality, insecurity, the habit of doing things earlier than others, shyness, disbelief in their strength, dependence on conventions, plans, and the expectations of unrealistic “sky-high results”.

According to the study participants, professional self-development is facilitated by both external and internal factors that depend on the teacher. First of all, this process is facilitated by the educational environment, such as a well-established system of methodical work, the presence of specialists “from whom you can learn”, the examples and influence of colleagues, support and attention of the head of the institution, personal examples from the administration, the opportunity to gain recognition in the team, the innovativeness of the institution, favorable working conditions, the opportunity to experiment, a well-established system of material incentives, an atmosphere of cooperation and support that has developed in the team, the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills in

advanced training courses, distance learning courses on portals, webinars, etc. Much depends on the teacher, first of all on his/her interest in the results of pedagogical activities, the desire to develop him/herself, feel the need for self-improvement, “to have an interest in work, in everything new that comes”. Similarly, according to 28% of the teachers, it is necessary to have formed values to improve the teaching profession, to feel responsible for the development of pupils, to have a desire to help them in personal development, in their creativity.

The next question was to determine the ways and means for effective professional self-development of a language and literature teacher. 21% of the teachers did not answer this question, 14% wrote that they needed more scientific and theoretical knowledge and practical skills on this topic. 100% of the teachers said that they wanted to know more about themselves. The other recipients offered such ways as self-knowledge, self-education, self-control, self-realization, self-improvement, “overcoming one's own fears, self-belief!!!” As one can see, many teachers feel the need to increase the basics of psychological and pedagogical knowledge, psychological support, practical methodological assistance, emphasizing that the system of postgraduate pedagogical education is designed to help master these competencies. In addition to self-educational activities, training, interactive forms of co-creation, the teachers (among the recipients were mostly teachers of rural regions) noted that they lack visits to theaters, museums, movies, exhibitions, various planned excursions with students.

100% of the teachers indicated that they were ready for change. 65% of the study participants wrote that they are constantly analyzing their behavior, actions, work and trying to change themselves. “And from the height of years... this desire becomes greater in life and at work”, shared her thoughts one of the respondents.

Answering the question of what qualities a teacher should have for effective professional activity (it was necessary to formulate several important

features), the majority of the study participants (67%) indicated such qualities as a high level of professional and pedagogical training. 33% of them believed that responsibility and discipline are among the important personal characteristics. Only 27% of the study participants indicated that the teacher should be creative; 13% of the study participants wrote that teachers should be self-critical, humanistic, be able to understand students and parents, love their work and children, have a sense of humor. 7% of the study participants considered optimism to be one of the important teachers' characteristics. Interestingly, some study participants believed that a teacher should be "universal: an actor, when necessary – a clown, an educator, an assistant, and a supporter" and "have a sense of humor".

Discussion. As one can see from the results of the survey, teachers tend to understand the need to be motivated for personal self-development (although sometimes they noted its absence). This coincides with the opinion of O. Kucheriavyi who believes that "the components of career development integrity are the formation of a specialist's motives for career activity that ensure goal-setting and planning of individual career processes as self-creation; direct organization of the career movement, stimulation of activity in the career growth of its subjects, control over the quality of the career process" [8].

Unfortunately, teachers underestimate such a necessary feature for the formation of their self-developing processes as the ability to think creatively, because, according to the famous psychologist L. Vygotsky, "...the task is not to develop a certain number of skills but... the creative abilities to orient fast and skillfully" in any life situations [9]. O. Demianchuk also states that the ability to think creatively is inherent for a professional teacher and a creative personality, it is characterized by appropriate features, provides "integrity and openness to uncertainty, paradox, lability of thinking, supersituationality promotes creative imagination, fantasy, ability to connect unconventionally pedagogical problems and situations, plasticity of thinking" [10]. N. Bohdanova calls 'life-creation' the highest manifestation of essential forces, vital and creative potential of the

individual. It is a “Spiritual and practical human activity that is aimed at conscious, independent and creative definition (design) and realization of one's own life as an individual and personal life project. Life-creation presupposes a conscious and purposeful attitude to the main crucial problems of life” [3].

The positive thing is that the study participants acknowledged the fact that the teachers' activity today is extremely multifaceted, their approaches to work need constant updating and enrichment. As O. Semenoh states, the modern European teacher of language and literature should have a self-concept that “combines European and national identity, has a developed self-awareness, self-esteem, self-regard, has a stable system of motives and needs to constantly improve his/her profession, can adapt to constant change, can adequately assess the situation and make the right decisions .., s/he is a professional teacher, who has a thorough cultural, professional, psychological, pedagogical, and methodological training, has a humanistic pedagogical position, philological, psychological, and pedagogical thinking, information and research culture, is universally educated, an erudite, a creative master communicator, an intellectual, an innovator” [11].

Conclusions. This research has demonstrated the relevance of the issues raised in this article. Postgraduate pedagogical education promotes continuous personal and professional self-growth of language and literature teachers by involving them in the various types of educational activities, such as further education, special courses, pieces of training, workshops, etc. It is necessary to continue researching to clarify the problems that hinder the creativity of teachers, to promote the deepening of their knowledge about the theoretical and methodological principles of creating a culture of professional self-development of language and literature teachers, to stimulate teachers to improve their professional competencies, to focus on the creation of a harmonious self-concept, individual and personal trajectory of self-development, to promote the establishment of a reflective culture based on the interim results of the self-development process.

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