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## **Professional Training of Teachers and the Problems of Their Self-Awareness**

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### **Abstract**

This article considers the problem of future teachers' professional self-awareness enhancement in preparing for effective professional activity. The current knowledge paradigm in professional pedagogical education does not ensure the progress of future teachers' professionally important qualities, such as professional self-awareness, a set of future teachers' knowledge of their inner world, abilities, and self-evaluation. The review of some special issues reveals a decreasing motivation, partial loss of valuable attitude to teaching career of pedagogical students possessing theoretical knowledge, practical skills acquired in the course of high school special training. Nowadays there are constantly conducted studies of students' personal characteristics and their ideas about themselves. However, experiments on the dynamics of future teachers' ideas about themselves as future professionals are not carrying out.

This paper highlights substantiation of the relevance and importance of this problem in terms of professional self-determination and future teachers' personality formation. It discovers approaches to professional self-awareness of modern future teachers' enhancement. Modeling of a common pedagogical system with interrelated structural components and stages united by students' professional self-awareness progress strategy presents a specially organized resource to solve this problem. Compliance with the developed complex of organizational and pedagogical conditions ensures progress in professional self-awareness of future teachers in the light of the selected criteria and indicators of this complex personal structure formation.

**Keywords:** Professional training of teachers, Professional self-awareness, Professional 'I-concept', Personal activity approach, Cultural-historical theory.

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## Introduction

One of the important goals of modern professional education is to develop future specialists' ability to take independent decisions in professional activity. The subjective paradigm contributes to the implementation of an effective life strategy and positive self-determination of an individual. It is connected first of all with life goals and acceptance of oneself as a personality. A person with a high rate of self-determination considers himself/herself a creator of their life.

There is a current tendency of transition from the development of descriptive normative models of personality and activity of a specialist to the study of professional consciousness and self-awareness of an activity subject. The leading researchers consider the concept "self-awareness" as the most important category really reflecting the essence of specialists' process of professional formation and development (Markova, 1996; Vaskovskay, 1987; Koziev, 1980; Mitina, 1990; Holland, 1966; Super, 1957; etc.).

The ideas of B.G. Ananiev (1977), A.N. Leontiev (1977), and S.L. Rubinstein (1973) had a significant impact on self-awareness study. They considered the process of self-awareness enhancement in the context of important personality structures' formation, creating a unique person's life "picture". They revealed the dependence of a person's self-awareness development on his "life path".

The conceptual basis of individuals' self-awareness development study is the activity approach, considering this process from the point of view of the subject-practical activity-forming role. According to L.S. Vygotsky's cultural and historical theory, the specific situation of personality development determines the self-awareness progress. The human life is reflected in the consciousness as a single plan, transforming "the history of a human life from a number of incoherent and disjointed episodes into a unified biographical process", subordinated to significant for the individual goals (Vygotsky, 1991).

Theoretical analysis of the problem allows determining that future specialists' professional self-awareness formation and their personality subjective development occur simultaneously. Self-awareness as a process of human awareness of his/her interaction with the objective and subjective worlds is a developmental product that can't be separated from the individual. Therefore, the main paradigm of its investigation and formation is the personal-activity approach in professional education. As a dynamic structure, it should be considered in the unity of time and content characteristics. B.G. Ananiev understands students' self-awareness as the consciousness of goals motives, teaching methods, and self-awareness of oneself as a subject of educational activity, who organizes, directs, and controls it. A students' self-awareness is the core of their activities, which determines its content and direction (Ananiev, 1977).

The phenomena and processes of self-awareness are also considered in studies of the psychological time of an individual. E.I. Golovakha and A.A. Kronik (2008) present a certain picture of inter-event relations in a person's consciousness to the extent, in which he/she is able to realize the needs and motives, goals, means, and results of his/her activity as a holistic view on logic of their life. In this regard, the time aspect of an individual's self-awareness development consists of acquiring a holistic view on the time of his/her life, its events and relations between them in the context of his/her life journey.

Indicators of a subjective life picture can become criteria of satisfaction with the professional choice and professional self-awareness enhancement. They may reflect the tendency to attribute their successes or failures only to internal or only external factors.

A person's vision of his/her life perspective seems to present one of the approaches to solving the problem of professional self-awareness development. Changes in professional consciousness relate to the status components associated with the individual's social assessment of his/her personal characteristics and efficient components associated with the experience of successful or unsuccessful performance of professional activities.

According to V.G. Vaskovskay (1987), S.V. Koziev (1980), and P.A. Shavir (1981), professional self-awareness is the main assessment criterion of future specialists' professionally significant qualities. It means that professional self-awareness is sensitive to the time perspective, to the beginning of specific professional self-realization. Teacher's professional self-awareness acts as an internal characteristic of a personality, as a subject of professional activity (Danilov, Kornilova, & Kornilov, 2019; Gryaznova, Goncharuk, & Blokhina, 2019).

The research of different approaches to this concept allows us to determine professional self-awareness as an individual's property, as a personality trait, characterized by an awareness of the significance of the chosen profession, by an emotionally evaluative attitude to the professional activity and to oneself as its subject, as well as by an assessment of one's professionally significant qualities, knowledge, abilities, skills at each stage of professional development. Professional self-awareness is a personal structure significantly determining the psychological and professional image of a person, his/her position and a way of existence in the profession.

Theoretical research methods provide an opportunity to highlight the following main stages in professional self-awareness of future teachers' enhancement: 1) an adaptive stage, 2) a theoretical stage, 3) an instrumental stage.

The adaptive stage is associated with students' entry into a new social environment. Freshmen, as a rule, do not have a clear idea about their own individual typological features and a future profession. The first academic year curricula's modules do not give students a true understanding of difficulties and contradictions in a teaching job.

The theoretical stage of training involves the formation of students' general ideas about the future profession in the process of studying humanitarian and professional disciplines. A student should be aware of his/her abilities, relate them to the requirements of the professional activity at this stage.

The instrumental stage is the period of students' professional self-awareness formation when students learn the fundamentals of professional activity and have pedagogical practice. Student's own activity becomes the object of reflection. Positive assessment of oneself as a whole, defining one's positive qualities and prospects leads to a positive I-concept formation. It is a relatively stable system of beliefs, an image of oneself. Its components are real I (the picture of oneself in the present tense), dynamic I (what the subject intends to be). The formation of an adequate 'I-concept' and professional consciousness are the most important conditions for the professional development.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted during the 2018/2019 academic year on the basis of the Naberezhnye Chelny State Pedagogical University. 188 students of pedagogical education took part in it. Participation in the research was voluntary.

The empirical material was collected with the help of the following techniques: adapted questionnaire "I am in the profession" (Karpinsky & Kolyshko, 2010), aimed at studying the social characteristics of people and their professional preferences; reflective self-test "Who am I?" by V.S. Mukhina (2008), which reveals the characteristics of psychological qualities and social roles of a

human being (Mukhina, 2008); a self-questionnaire by V.V. Stolin and S.R. Pantileev (1989); and a questionnaire to learn the motivation for studying at university by T.I. Ilyina, which includes three scales:

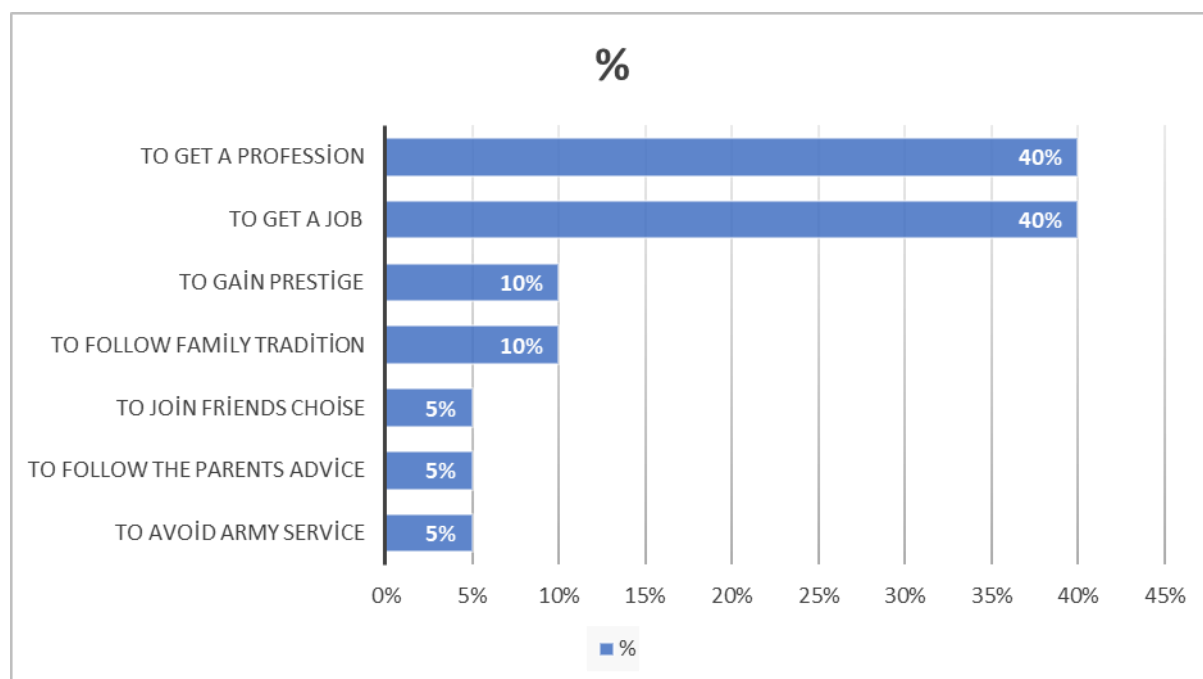
- 'acquisition of knowledge' (striving for new knowledge, curiosity),
- 'mastering the profession' (the desire to form professionally important qualities),
- 'obtaining a diploma' (the desire to acquire a diploma with the formal assimilation of knowledge, the desire to find workarounds for passing exams and tests) (Ilyin, 2011).

### Results and Discussion

The period of study at higher educational organizations is the most significant in personal self-awareness development. Young people need to recognize their own individual psychological characteristics corresponding to the future field of activity. It gives them an opportunity to organize purposeful management of the process of students' professional self-awareness and their professional 'I-concept' formation.

The study of future teachers' professional self-awareness enhancement process allowed defining that the formed axiological attitude to the future profession determines a professional motivation, which is the basis for professional self-awareness development.

At the first stage of the study, using the questionnaire "I am in the profession", we analyzed the peculiarities of students' opinions about their future profession. Analyzing the motives for choosing a profession among the tested students, we obtained the following results, presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Students' motives for receiving pedagogical education**

As we can see, the main motivation for getting a pedagogical education is obtaining a profession and a desire to get a job, i.e. in fact, students want to be teachers. These data suggest that for 40% of the sample it is important to receive this profession, to develop professional skills – that is, these students are most responsible for choosing their profession. The remaining indicators of motives in the total amounting of 60% show that the profession is a means of achieving other goals for students, rather than directly mastering professional knowledge, skills and abilities.

Therefore, freshmen have a high uncertainty of their own professional future, a poor motivation. It is not by chance that the first critical peak of students' difficulties occurs during the first exam session, which becomes insurmountable for a certain part of students. Unfortunately, many subjects studied during the first academic year have no links with the real pedagogical activity; which takes students away from an objective understanding of their future work.

Then in a second-year group, to prove our hypothesis, we tested the diagnostic tools according to the "Who Am I?" methodology. On the basis of the results of the content analysis of V.S. Mukhina's reflexive self-report test "Who Am I?" we received the characteristics of self-awareness of students. Some students associated themselves within the framework of their chosen profession (18%). These were answers like "I am a teacher", "I am a future teacher", "I am an educator", etc. The second-place association went to the occupation (28%). These were the answers: "I am a student." There was a tendency to characterize themselves through the prism of patriotism (27%). This choice included the answers "I am Russian", "I am a citizen of Russia", "I am a patriot", etc. There were students who determined themselves on the scale of a position in society (12%). They defined themselves as "active", "efficient", "with an active life position", etc. There was also observed a characteristic of personal qualities (33%). These were answers of the types: "I am a beautiful girl "," I am an interesting conversationalist "," I am a winner ", etc.

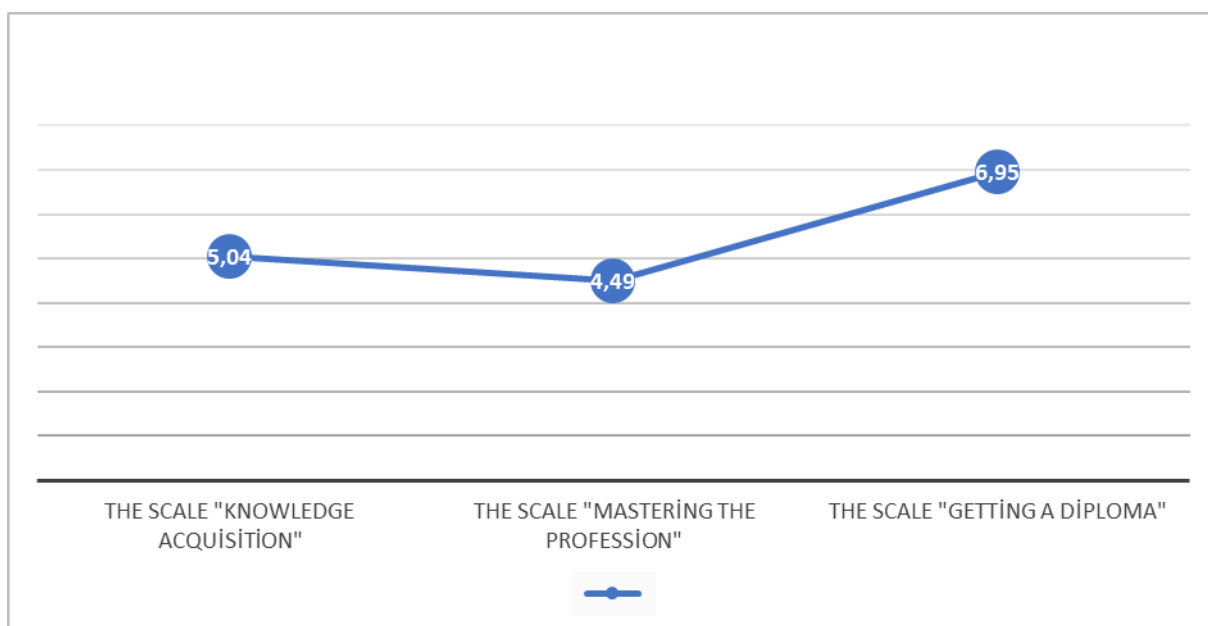
The results of the analysis show that students do not have a professional identity, as they to a lesser extent characterize themselves as future teachers. Students have vague ideas about themselves, they tend to give answers about themselves from the standpoint of assessing themselves, or assessing their environment. Sometimes their self-image comes down to gender identity. Such results indicate that boys and girls do not identify themselves with any significant professional values and professional qualities. We noted a low reflection of social qualities, and higher indicators of qualities related to the appearance of a person, to achievements and personal characteristics. Such results show a low identification with the image of a teacher, which is the result of low professional self-awareness.

Therefore, the second academic year to some extent brings students closer to understanding the nature of their future profession. The study of disciplines of psychological and pedagogical training does not contribute to the development of students' personal and professional qualities. They don't know what prospects a career of teacher opens.

Third-year students get into the real situation of the pedagogical process for the first time. The pedagogical practice provides material for understanding the content of their future job. They assess their choice more critically; and in less degree associate themselves with the future profession. The transition from the stage of 'I-concept' implementation to the stage 'Professional activity mastering' is always associated with an internal crisis (Super, 1957). Students' critical consideration of their abilities to fit the future career begins. The process causes doubt about whether they can be effective teachers. A positive attitude to the future profession is reducing. Prospects of their own professional development in teaching career become vague.

The conducted diagnostic survey makes it possible to state with a certain degree of probability how the future interaction with the chosen professional activity will develop, whether a student will work within the chosen profile of training or will change it at the first opportunity; whether he/she will love this profession or it will become a way of survival. This, in turn, will undoubtedly affect the quality of work, because an effective teacher requires a high degree of personal enthusiasm for professional activity.

Then we performed diagnostics using T. Ilyina's methodology of motivation for learning.



**Figure 2. Students' features of motivation, as an indicator of professional identity**

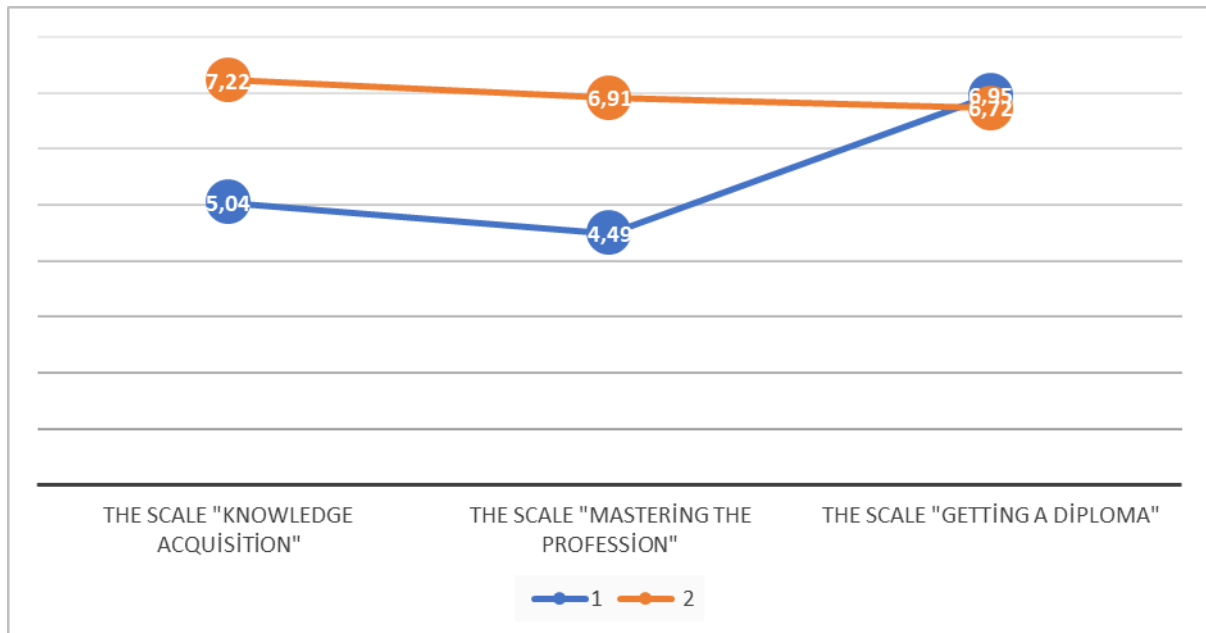
The results of diagnostics in this group of students showed low indicators for the scales "mastering the profession" (4.49) and "knowledge acquisition" (5.04). High rates were found within the graduation scale (getting a diploma) (6.95). Such indicators also characterize low students' professional identity. The lack of predominance of motives within the first two scales indicates that students are not satisfied with the profession of a teacher.

Professional and pedagogical training of the fourth-year students includes learning of special disciplines and pedagogical practice. After practical training, there appear 2 groups of students with a polar attitude to the future profession. In the first group, there is observed a rapprochement of the image "I am as a future teacher" with the image "Good teacher", and an appropriate removal from the image "Bad teacher". Consolidation of special knowledge, skills, analysis of professional activities becomes more active. In the second group, on the contrary, the negative significance of the profession increases, the student argues "any other profession, but not this one."

The application of the "Who Am I?" methodology for the fourth-year students showed changes in the indicators of students' professional self-awareness. The basic ideas of students about themselves were made up by associations with the profession and social and personal qualities, which could also be implemented in the profession of a teacher. Evaluation of their own qualities and values was centralized in the professional sphere, students managed to identify their own socially significant role "I am a teacher" and personal qualities corresponding to that role. Thus, we can speak about the development of professional self-awareness among students.

Fifth-year students have an adequate idea of themselves and their capabilities. The coordination of images "I am as a future teacher" and "Good teacher" is restored because of students' pedagogical activity experience. They are clearly aware of the importance of the chosen career and their belonging to it. Positive evaluation of themselves, their personal and professional qualities contribute to a positive 'I-concept'.

With the final-year students, we diagnosed the assessment of motivation for learning according to T. Ilyina's method (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3. Students' features of motivation for learning as an indicator of professional identity**

As we can see, the indicators for the scales "acquisition of knowledge" (7.22) "mastering the profession" (6.91) have changed, which means that graduate students are motivated to get professional teaching experience, and on the whole are more satisfied with the profession of a teacher if compared with the students of younger courses.

Thus, the necessity of the formation and development of students' valuable attitude to the future profession from the very beginning of University training requires developing a system of future teachers' professional self-awareness enhancement. It includes the following components: target, subject, content-activity, reflexive components.

The target component assumes simultaneous actualization of all the aspects of professional self-awareness (cognitive, emotional, evaluative, and behavioral) in the educational process. The cognitive aspect includes the representation and awareness of oneself as a subject of professional activity. However, the scope of professional self-awareness characteristics includes not only the accumulation of knowledge but also a certain attitude to this knowledge. Emotional and evaluative level manifests this attitude. It includes self-assessment of students' professional and personal qualities, the comprehension of their interests and needs in the implementation of the chosen professional activity. Cognitive, emotional and evaluative aspects are closely related to the self-regulation of mental conditions. The peculiarity of the behavioral aspect of professional self-awareness is in its focus on professional self-improvement. It includes a regulatory part (professional self-government and self-education). Each aspect of self-awareness structure needs interpreting in two ways from the point of view of effectiveness: the advent and availability of a certain product. In our opinion, it is necessary to distinguish between the process of self-awareness and the result (a system of knowledge about oneself) in the cognitive part of the professional self-awareness of a teacher.

The subject component involves a transition from a teacher's activity planning to a student's activity planning (of events, achievements). Future specialist acts as a subject of personal and professional self-realization, self-development and self-change in the educating process.

The content and activity component include;

a) the system of professional knowledge, skills, and experience in educational and practical activities;

b) methods, techniques, and means of professional self-awareness formation (methods of diagnostics, training, self-education; techniques of diagnostics, self-analysis, self-knowledge, self-correction; means: dialogue, game, questionnaire, test, exercise);

c) modeling of each discipline to the principle of "know-am able-competent";

d) pedagogical practical training as an 'immersion' into the professional environment.

The reflexive component consists of the results' analysis of future teachers' professional enhancement. Such events as project protection ("My personal and professional perspective", "Gaining the profession" etc.) demonstrate educational results.

A complex of organizational and pedagogical conditions provides effective functioning of the system: 1) purposeful orientation of students towards a positive attitude to the future career; 2) maximal concurrence of the educational process content to the conditions of the real professional activity; 3) students' cognitive activity stimulation; 4) the use of various forms of psychological training for the positive development and strengthening of the 'I-concept' of future teachers.

The stating experiment of the research using survey methods, self-assessment scale of professionally important qualities of future teachers showed that the majority of students lost personal meaning of the professional training during the first three years of study at university. They manifested dissatisfaction with their professional choice, unwillingness to continue the career of a teacher. If freshmen are generally satisfied with their professional choice, students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> academic years, on the contrary, are disappointed with their professional choice. This is due to the lack of knowledge of the essential features of the teaching job. Teaching practice brought changes to the opinion of the majority of students about their future profession.

Our study showed that in the process of teaching at the pedagogical university, two groups of students have formed under opposite views on their future profession. The students of the first group were aware of the importance of the chosen profession, felt psychological contiguity to the pedagogical work, and the students of the second group were experiencing a growing negative attitude to this profession. The proportion of those who considered themselves to be teachers decreased (61.5% in the fourth year and 53% in the fifth). The number of graduates wishing to realize themselves in the field of teaching also decreased (from 53% to 31%).

## **Conclusion**

Professional identity is an integral part of the structure of the subject of practical pedagogical activity. It represents a holistic psychological phenomenon and includes the necessary for a future teacher professional knowledge organically associated with them pedagogical tools (techniques), emotionally colored professional values, and educational programs.

The formation of ideas about professional competence is impossible without understanding the mechanisms of its formation, awareness of professional opportunities and identifying ways of professional growth. This process with a reference to pedagogical students has a number of aspects



that should be considered the criteria for professional self-determination of students: 1) self-knowledge (indicators: awareness of one's capabilities, self-image as a future specialist); 2) self-evaluation (indicators: emotionally positive attitude to the chosen professional activity, "I" as a professional of tomorrow, "I" as a professional of the distant future); 3) satisfaction with self-realization in the process of professional training (the need to perform professional duties in the chosen field).

The main indicators of the effectiveness of experimental work identified the levels of future teachers' professional self-awareness enhancement (high, average, low). Accordingly, each level has its own weight coefficient. Students with high level of professional self-awareness demonstrate full understanding of teacher's profession, complete knowledge of the requirements of the Professional Standard of a teacher; the ability to allocate labor functions, labor action; important professional qualities of the teacher; personal abilities and a positive emotional attitude to the future job.

The average level of professional self-awareness shows only partial understanding of the teacher's profession, inaccurate description of requirements of the teacher's profession, difficulty in allocation of labor functions and actions, the lack of important professional qualities reflected in the professional standard of a teacher. Professional interests are poorly expressed.

The low level of professional self-awareness is characterized by only general ideas about teacher's profession; partial knowledge of the requirements to teacher's profession based on the Professional standard of a teacher; difficulty in allocation of professional functions, labor actions and professionally significant qualities of a teacher; lack of interest to perform chosen professional activity.

The results of the experiment showed that the number of students with a high level of professional consciousness was only 4%. Up to 72% of students demonstrated a low level of professional consciousness. Comparative analysis showed that the level of future teachers' professional self-awareness was higher among students of the experimental group than in the control group. It proved the effectiveness of training in an experimental group. Statistical processing of the results of experimental work allows concluding that the enhancement of professional self-awareness of students is an effective means in future teachers' training for professional activity. But to do this it's necessary:

1. to develop and implement a unified pedagogical system for increasing professional self-awareness of future teachers with the help of interconnected structural components;
2. to connect the stages of the formation of students' professional self-awareness with the professional development strategy of 'I-concept';
3. to provide a set of organizational and pedagogical conditions for the foundation of effective professional activities of future teachers;
4. to develop and implement a special program, including a number of practical tasks and exercises aimed at increasing professional self-awareness of students.

The peculiarities of the formation of professional self-awareness of students, identified in our empirical studies, indicate an acute need for special work to develop adequate professional 'I-concept.' It should pursue the goal of changing the existing negative trend and provide an improvement of professional self-awareness of pedagogical university students for future effective professional activities.

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