## THE PEDAGOGY STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS FOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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**Abstract:** The author of the article has viewed at the dynamics of psychological readiness for professional activities from the observation and methodology practice to the practice of independent activities. The author of the article grounds her work on the assumption that the readiness for professional activities is formed of two components – psychological readiness and competence based readiness. The author has analyzed the pedagogy students' psychological readiness, the evaluation of which is based on the methodology for the self-evaluation of the readiness for professional activities; the methodology has been developed by the author of the article and comprises particular indicators characterizing a teacher's activities according to the environmental levels of a school. The methodological basis for the research is the ecological approach on which there is based the developed conception of pedagogical practice in the school environment. The results of experiment prove the development of psychological readiness during the pedagogical practice in the school environment.

**Keywords**: readiness for activities, psychological readiness for professional readiness, ecological approach, pedagogical practice.

## Introduction

Nowadays the educational content becomes out-of-date and does not comply with the new educational paradigm anymore. At the same time the educational content cannot comprise all the nuances of mankind's development, including also the history of science and the discoveries known to mankind. Having evaluated the educational content (also the curriculum), we can draw a conclusion that education was falling behind the scientific achievements, but education is only a mediator, who develops the image of the society's thinking and activities (Ласло, 1995). Therefore it is important what would it choose for the content of its further development. This, in its turn, sets new requirements for the teachers, who will work at schools at least during the next thirty years. The keywords for this period of time could be - heart education (broadening of a personality's (also pedagogical) awareness, understanding of the unity of the world and its laws, understanding of own and a pupil's mission, creativity), lifelong learning (own and society's perfection, critical approach when working with information, formal and non-formal education), multicultural environment, leadership (a teacher as a leader, the teacher's active attitude towards life), mobility (Baltušīte, 2012). The former generation of teachers respond to the challenges of the time of changes (the largest group of teachers represent those of the age from 40 to 64) (Baltušīte, 2012); however, for a certain group of teachers it is difficult to accept the teacher's new roles (for example, a teacher as an advisor or, vice versa, to find the balance between the role of an advisor and the role of a relay of knowledge), to organize the work with pupils, who possess different abilities, using diverse teaching methods and information technologies. These issues within the study process are dealt with by the academic staff of all higher education institutions of Latvia. The members of academic staff of the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Latvia University of Agriculture also consider how to ensure the professional development of competent teachers. One of the research directions of Institute is ecological approach in education. Ecological approach in the conception of pedagogical practice provides new opportunities for the education of prospective teachers, facilitating not only the changes in professional competence, thinking, but also in the lifestyle on the whole. The environment of a school is the environment for the pedagogy students' professional activities. The motivation to become a teacher depends on the fact how successful would be the pedagogical practice. Irrespective of the fact that theoretical knowledge and pedagogical practice form a single study process, it is the practice in the school environment, particularly the practice of independent activities, which determines the pedagogy student's readiness for professional activities. Alongside with the changes that take place in the society (also in education), the content of the concept a teacher's readiness for professional activities has considerably changed under the circumstances of current situation. Readiness is a

precondition for successful professional activities, as well as the result that is developed and improved within the process of a personality's self-development.

# Methodology

In order to facilitate the pedagogy students' readiness for professional activities it was important, as a result of theoretical research, to substantiate scientifically *a teacher's readiness for professional activities*, as one of its components, viewing the psychological readiness.

**The aim of research:** To evaluate the development of pedagogy students' psychological readiness for professional activities in the school environment.

**Research methods:** Pedagogical experiment (establishing and developing); Information and data collection methods: reflection on experience; survey; pedagogical experiment.

The research was carried out from 2007 till 2010 and from 2008 till 2011, evaluating the development of pedagogy students' readiness for professional activities during the practice in the school environment. There were 34 students (18 students – at the first stage and 16 students – at the second stage) involved in the research; the involved students were studying in the study programme "Home Environment and Informatics/Visual Art in Education". The readiness for pedagogical activities was evaluated according to our developed indicators after each stage of practice (after the observation and methodology practice, assisting and technology practice, practice of independent activities).

#### **Results and discussion**

The society has always expected an ideal from a teacher – both regarding qualities of character, professional activities and the teacher's image. The school needs educators who: are aware of an educator's mission under the circumstances of modern changes; do their best to fulfil their educators' duties; are creative as concerns their pedagogical activities; set high standards not only towards others, but also towards themselves; respect their colleagues, pupils, pupils' parents and themselves in a modern school; feel the responsibility in front of the society for the new generation's desire and ability to find its place in the life, for their pupils' destiny in the future (Amonašvili, 2009; Katane, 2006). The following qualities of a teacher have been always important: love towards pupils, good sense of humour, righteousness, creativity etc. Each era introduce corrections in the significant teacher's qualities. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century more significant become the following: awareness of own emotions, evaluation of own activities (reflection), the skill to work in a team, independence.

Since there are two keywords (readiness and activities) in the conception readiness for activities, the development of its substantiation was commenced with the substantiation of the concept readiness. In the scientific literature the concept readiness is defined differently. There is no single viewpoint on the definition of this concept in the psychology and pedagogy science. The diverse meaning of the concept is determined by different approaches in research. This problem has been studied by several scientists (Дьяченко, Кандыбович, 1986; Узнадзе, 1966). The basis for the research on the readiness for activities and readiness for professional activities could be found in the works of I. Pavlov on the conditioned reflexes and the research performed by D. Uznadze (Узнадзе, 1966) on the disposition (Колосов, 2009). The concept of disposition was introduced by German psychologist L. Lange in 1888 (Колосов, 2009). The disposition is the psychological condition of a subject's inclination for a particular activity in a particular situation. Many authors relate the readiness for activities not only to the disposition, but also to the awareness of an objective, to the model of possible behaviour, the determination of the optimal type of activity, to the evaluation of own opportunities in comparison to the expected difficulty and the necessity to achieve particular result (Митина, 2002). The personality's readiness for activities is determined by the set requirements and aims of activities, the psychological processes and conditions, the gained experience and personality's qualities. As a result of theoretical research there was a conclusion drawn that, according to the aspect of different approaches and views, the concept readiness is defined as follows (Колосов, 2009) according to the functional approach, readiness is a particular functional condition, the psychological and social disposition of attitude that describes the personality's behaviour; b) personality-oriented approach enables to substantiate the readiness for activities as a totality of individually significant professional qualities that differ according to their role regarding the regulating of professional activities; in this approach the integrating significance is attributed to those personality's qualities, which indicate progress towards a particular activity; c) within the framework of *the personality and activity-oriented complex approach* the readiness for activities is understood as a totality of an individual, a personality and a subject's peculiarities and a human being's qualities that ensures the possibility to perform functions efficiently.

The theoretical research proves that there are several explanations of the concept readiness for activities (Baltušīte, Katane, 2007; Katane, Baltušīte, 2007; Katane, Krugļija, 2009): readiness as a disposition (Дьяченко, Кандыбович, 1986; Узнадзе, 1966); readiness as a pre-start condition for the activities (Пуни, 1993); readiness as a mobilization for the activities (Гогунов, Мартьянов, 2000); readiness as a professional preparedness (Деркач, 2004; Иванова, 1983); readiness as a manifestation of abilities (Ананьев, 2001); readiness as a synthesis of a personality's qualities (Айсмонтас, 2005); readiness as a complex formation, the totality of a personality's parameters that develops as a result of the influence of educational (including professional education) and do-it-yourself experience (Хмель, 1998). Having evaluated the results of theoretical research, the author of the article drew a conclusion that readiness for activities is an integral formation, because it reflects the personality's entirety condition that comprises knowledge, skills and competences, different personality's qualities, for example, abilities that are necessary for a particular activity, as well as the personality's progress (also professional progress) that is formed by aims and motives, values and attitudes, needs, interests and desires.

The conclusions of authors viewed prove that the scientists include into the substantiation of the component of psychological readiness, first of all, the substantiation of a personality's progress. The personality's progress determines the success of pedagogical activities. In the theories of psychology the personality's progress is characterized as a totality of qualities determining its psychological basis. Each of the conceptions reveal this characterization differently (Айсмонтас, 2005): dynamic tendency (Рубинштейн, 2004); sense developing motive (Леонтьев, 1982); basic progress of life (Ананьев, 2001); dynamic organization of an individual's significant strength (Прангишвили, 1978). Irrespective of the definition of a personality's progress in the conception, it is attributed the main role in the personality's structure. S. Rubinstein (Рубинштейн, 2004) viewed the personality's progress as the dynamic tendencies that, in a form of motives, determine the individual's activities, but they are determined by its aims and objectives. The personality's progress comprises two interconnected aspects: the subject content (the content component) that means a particular subject of progress; the tension (personal dynamic tendency) that determines the source of progress. According to A. Leontev (Леонтьев, 1982), the personality's core is the totality of stable hierarchical motives as being the main promoters of activities. Some motives, by promoting the activities, ensure them with the individual sense and particular progress, but others are promoting factors. L. Bozhovich (Божович, 1997) and her collaborators defined the personality's progress as a stable dominating system of motives that determine the structure of a personality's wholeness. According to the scientists' point of view, a mature personality organizes his/her behaviour with the several motives functioning, chooses the aims of activities and by means of a specially organized motivation sphere regulates his/her behaviour so that the undesirable motives would be suppressed (Айсмонтас, 2005). The structure of progress consists of three groups of motives; the humane, personal and applied motives. Most of the psychology scientists *view the personality's progress as*: the totality of phenomena (Талызина, 1998): the system of needs; (Dodonov; cited in Айсмонтас, 2005); the totality of tendencies, desires, interests, predispositions, ideals, (Platonov; cited in Айсмонтас, 2005); beliefs; the totality of motives (Hemob, 1995). There is also another aspect in the personality's progress. The formations of motivation determine the progress of an individual's activities and behaviour that determines an individual's image in the social plan, because the personality's progress becomes the vector of behaviour (Айсмонтас, 2005).

In the humanistic psychology there is also emphasized the view that the personality's behaviour and activities are promoted, directed and regulated by a totality of hierarchical motives (Лешин, 2006). The motives could be an aim, values orientation (Karpova, 1994; Vidnere, 1999). Majority of authors find that motivation is based on needs (Ильин, 2000). Any external impact and influence facilitates the corresponding result only, if it meets the individual's needs. The sphere of motivation ensures

purposeful, consciousness character of an individual's activities and determines the personality's potential possibilities, manifesting as a stimulus for the personality's development on the whole. Due to this, there is actualized the problem of the motivation of the readiness for activities. For example, according to R. Sanzhayeva and R. Cvetkova (Цветкова, 2006, Санжаева, 1997; Санжаева, 2000), there is no action possible beyond the motive and meaning, there cannot be applied any, even the best acquired knowledge and perfectly developed skills. The action is a specific type of an individual's activity, which is oriented towards the creative transformation, the improvement of reality and oneself. It is related also to the studies at a higher education institution. D. Reeve (Reeve, 2001, 14) emphasizes the dynamic character of motivation. We should take into account that the direction and force of motivation are determined by the fact, which motive dominates in the totality of the personality's motives at a particular moment and how strong is it at that particular moment (Fig. 1). There is an interaction between the external influences and an individual's internal condition takes place in the motivation. A. Maslow (Maslow, 1987) believed that the human activities are based on the self-actualization need. By meeting this need, the personality becomes mentally healthy, independent, free and creative. However, in the real life most of the people do not raise up to this level. Even those, who achieve this level, cannot stay at the activity level that is ensured by the self-realization need, because this activity, instead of being a stable personality's condition, is a complicated process. Professor I. Zogla (Žogla, 2001) defines motivation as a totality of motives. The conscious reflection of future using the experience of past takes place in the motive. The developmental process of motive is not always a linear one, but it could be also cyclic, because the return to particular objectives takes place (Иванников, 1991). J. Iljin (Ильин, 2000) believes that the main components of motive needs and aim – should be consciouss.

We can agree to the conclusion drawn by J. Iljin (Ильин, 2000) on the inner essence of a motive, because the personality's particular motive is important. The changes in the content of the motive are determined by the personality's developmental level. Thus, any activity is determined by several motives (Божович, 1997; Ковалёв, 1988; Ильин, 2000). This totality of motives is the motivation for an activity. But the motives of activities could differ for one and the same person: some motives are more explicit, others - less explicit; some are stable, other - more related to a particular situation. There is no unmotivated activity (Леонтьев, 1982; Санжаева, 1997, 2000). In this case the subject either is not aware of the motive or hides it. However, J. Iljin (Ильин, 2000) points out that it is possible to speak about the true polymotivation only, if a person has set a distant aim, for example, learning, directed by a long-term motivation disposition. Learning is related to several separate activities, promoted by smaller motives that do not fall within a general progress. They are relatively independent psychological formations, facilitating the achievement of the goal. The force of the motive is mostly determined by emotions; therefore the motive may have also an affective character. The force of the motive is greater, if the motivation is internally organized. Speaking of a motive, the personality's attitude towards it is important. The awareness of motive does not mean its acceptance vet. The acceptance takes place, when the motive has a meaning and is related to the personality's opinion. The personality's activities depend on the motive, but the motive – on the personality's inner activity. In order to find out the meaning of the promotion, the personality needs to analyze it, i.e., to address the scale of own subjective values. The quality of motive depends on the personality's developmental level. According to their content, peculiarities and development, the motives are close to the personality's qualities and are included into the personality's progress. In its turn, the progress is oriented towards a particular aim due to which a motive emerges on the basis of a need (Божович, 1997; Ермилин, 1999; Ковалёв, 1988). The peculiarities of these motives determine the subject's attitude towards the activity and its aim. The development of inner learning motivation takes place as a progress from the external motive towards the aim of learning. Each step in this process manifests as the progress of one motive towards another one that possesses a greater inner meaning and that is closer to the aim of learning. The development of inner motivation is the personality's progress upwards. The transformation of motive into an aim depends not only on the influence of university lecturers and supervisors of practice, but also on the student's inner position and the objective situation of learning. Therefore the broadening of the student's vision of life and world is particularly important (Леонтьев, 1982). Setting of an aim is closely related to the personality's emotional sphere. The readiness to act in a particular way comprises not only disposition, but also evaluation, i.e. the emotional component (Леонтьев, 1982) that creates the way to the meaning of activity. In the education of prospective teachers, particular significance is attributed to the attitude of the university lecturers, supervisors of practice (mentors) towards the teacher's profession, its significance in the society. The behaviour, that corresponds to the aim is possible only, if the external and internal factors are interrelated in the activity. This connection forms the psychological basis for the readiness for activities. The readiness for activities is a subject's qualitative new formation in the process of activities, already at the stage of setting an aim, when the connection between the objective (objectives, subject) and subjective (needs and aims) components of activities is developed. It is necessary to observe the diverse aspects of the structure of motivation, different motives, the components of which could be an aim, values orientation, personality's dispositions and needs. In the teachers' readiness for professional activities the main emphasis is placed on the professional knowledge, skills and personality's qualities.

Having analyzed concepts used by several scientists, the author of the article draws a conclusion that there is a diversity of concepts in the description of the teacher's psychological readiness for professional activities: the professional readiness of a specialist's psyche (Сластенин, 2004); readiness for perceiving of and dealing with pedagogical objectives (Кузьмина, 1990); psychological readiness for pedagogical activities (Иванова, 1983); socially psychological readiness for dealing with pedagogical objectives (Деркач, 2004). The basis for the teacher's professional progress is formed by the interest about a teacher's profession, the motives of professional activities, as well as the aims of professional development and career, a desire to acquire knowledge and skills useful for the profession, positive emotional attitude towards children, parents, pedagogical performance on the whole and its particular types. The pedagogical calling develops, when the theoretical and practical experience is acquired. The basis for the pedagogical calling is love towards people. It is the result of self-improvement, purposeful self-development of professionally important qualities that characterize the pedagogical progress. Thus, we can draw a conclusion that *the majority of scientists identify motives as the core of personality's progress*.

Many authors name the psychological readiness as motivation readiness, emphasizing the role of determining motives for the progress of a personality (Крылов, 2005; Молодкин, 2006; Санжаева, 1997; Яковец, 1999). Psychological readiness is always based on a particular activity that develops and transforms, but the activity emerges and changes due to the motivation, and, as a result, their mutual interaction takes place. Thus, through the transformation of the activity, its gradual transition from one stage to another, the transformation of motivation also takes place, which proves the dynamic character of this phenomenon. The formation of such new attitudes is possible within the framework of a complicated psychological system, formed by a person acting, the person's actions and the situation within which the actions take place. Thanks to this fact, psychological readiness not only influences the process and regulation of activity, but also raises it to a new level, changes and develops itself, preserving and improving its wholeness that provides an opportunity to identify it as the psychological new formation of an activity (Крылов, 2005; Молодкин, 2006; Санжаева, 1997). Scientist E. Hachataryan (Хачатрян, 2011) identifies in the structure of psychological readiness: 1) the necessity for the professional improvement, and 2) reflexive attitude, on the base of which there is emotional attitude formed towards own professional activities. Both necessity and attitude become significant motives for the professional activities and improvement. I. Gorbatkina (Горбаткина, 2003) also points out that psychological readiness for professional activities has several structural elements: 1) values; 2) attitudes; 3) future plans and the aims of professional activities and improvement; 4) interests and professional positions transforming into the significant motive of professional activities on the whole that is the personality's (also the one of professional progress) basic content and the core of psychological readiness. L. Subbotina (Субботина, 2011) provides the structural substantiation of the readiness for professional activities of students as the prospective teachers, where she, within the framework of psychological readiness, the socially perceptive, values based motivation and emotionally sensor component, identifying motives as the basic content of psychological readiness. When developing the methodology for the self-evaluation of the readiness for professional activities of pedagogy students as the prospective teachers, the author of the article also viewed the motives as the determinants in the structure of psychological readiness. When evaluating the students' gain in the pedagogical practice, we viewed the readiness for professional activities from this aspect. The academic experience, while performing the university mentor's responsibilities, organizing and supervising the students' pedagogical practice, proves that the positive motivation for the professional activities is closely related to the positive emotions during the practice. Scientist V. Vilunas (Вилюнас, 1990) also finds that emotions reflect the success of an activity from the aspect of a motive. It is important that the prospective educator would like to work as a teacher and would be motivated to acquire new competences and to improve the existing ones. This is proved by the experience of the author of the article, when after the first part of pedagogical practice she, together with the director of the programme, met with the pedagogy students in order to get the feedback, it was possible to observe that most of the students were motivated to work as teachers. Irrespective of the scientists' different approaches, it is possible to draw a conclusion that psychological readiness for professional activities is a complicated formation comprising several components. Psychological readiness for professional activities are developed during the professional studies and determine the effectiveness of prospective specialist's activities.

Performed research shows that psychological readiness for professional activities is characterized as an integral formation, ensuring successful performance of professional activities in the particular context, where the leading role is attributed to motives, forming positive attitude towards the chosen profession.

Within the experiment there was applied the methodology for the self-evaluation of readiness for professional activities; the methodology was developed by the author and identified the changes in the psychological and competence based readiness for professional activities according to the levels of school environment, starting from observation and methodology practice to the practice of independent activities (Baltušīte, 2012). The obtained data are showed in Table 1.

Table 1
The Indicators of the Proportion of the Students of Experimental Group (Latvia University of Agriculture) according to the Levels of Readiness for Professional Activities (Psychological Readiness )

Level	The indicators of students' proportion before the experiment (%)	The indicators of students' proportion in the interim stage of experiment (%)	The indicators of students' proportion after the experiment (%)	Interpretation of the level
Level 7	0	27.7	61.1	Very high level of readiness
Level 6	62.5	66.7	33.3	High level of readiness
Level 5	37.5	5.6	5.6	Above the average level of readiness
Level 4	0	0	0	Average level of readiness

When processing data, we were interested in the fact, whether during the pedagogical experiment any changes have taken place regarding the self-evaluation of experimental group students' readiness for professional activities; besides we performed comparative analysis between the first stage of practice (observation practice) and the second stage of practice (assisting practice), between the second and third stage of practice (the practice of independent professional activities), and also between the first and final stage. Besides, the comparative analysis of data took place separately according to the components of readiness (psychological readiness and competence based readiness), as well as summing up the results of the evaluation of both components. For the purposes of data processing we applied SPSS 17.0, as well as data processing software online, using the test for determining of  $\chi^2$  criterion, as well as the Wilcoxon test for determining differences (Paura, Arhipova, 2002).

At the beginning of data processing, we determined the changes in the psychological readiness and competence based readiness for professional activities (Table 1). The indicators of the self-evaluation of students' motivation to perform certain educator's activities are rather high. For 37.5% of respondents already after the observation practice the motivation component of psychological readiness is at Level 5 (177 - 220 points) and for 62.5% - at Level 6 (221 – 264). After the practice of assisting it was possible to observe considerable increase of the number of respondents whose indicators of psychological readiness are at Level 7 (27.7%). There was a considerable decrease of the number of respondents whose psychological readiness for activities is at Level 5 (from 37.5% to 5.6%). There was an insignificant increase of the number of respondents whose psychological readiness for activities is at Level 6 (from 62.5% up to 66.7%). (Table 1).

But after the practice of independent activities there was the increase of the number of the indicators of Level 7 (from 27.7% up to 61.1%). Thus, 61.1% of respondents have high level of psychological readiness, 33.3% of respondents have high level of readiness, and 5.6% of respondents have above the average level of readiness. It shows the students' psychological readiness for performing pedagogical activities. It is possible to observe the dynamics in the development of psychological readiness; this dynamics is related to the enrichment of theoretical and practical experience. It should be emphasized that students in the experimental group were motivated for pedagogical activities, and those, who found work at school, continue to work, teaching their subjects and trying to perform the duties of the supervisors of practical training.

#### Conclusions

- As a result of theoretical research, in the scientific substantiations of readiness for professional activities, provided by various authors, there has been identified the tendency to emphasize two basic components: 1) psychological readiness and 2) competence based readiness.
- The performed research shows that psychological readiness for professional activities is characterised as an integral formation, ensuring successful performance of professional activities in a particular context, where the leading role have motives, developing positive attitude towards the chosen profession.
- The aspect of time and environment provides an opportunity to observe and evaluate the student's readiness for professional activities in its development on the basis of ecological approach (including the model of school multilevel environment and the stages and types of dyads as the systems of interaction) to the organization of practical training in the school environment that enables to organize practical training in several stages, gradually broadening the scope of student's functions and duties, as well as his responsibility for his professional activities, gradually becoming acquainted with and integrating into all levels of school environment (observation practice in the formal teaching-learning environment; assisting practice in the pedagogical environment; the practice of independent professional activities in the educational environment).
- The evaluation of data obtained as a result of experiment shows that there are significant changes in the psychological readiness and competence based readiness, as well as in the readiness for pedagogical activities on the whole. The results of the Wilcoxon test and Sign Test show the significant changes in the self-evaluation of indicators in comparison to the observation practice and the practice of independent activities.

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