Psychological assistance of communicative competence development in a prospective specialist in the conditions of pedagogical and medical universities

Asistencia psicológica en el desarrollo de competencias comunicacionales para un potencial especialista bajo las condiciones de universidades pedagógicas y médicas

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ABSTRACT:
In present article, we addressed one aspect of the problem of psychological assistance of prospective specialists in their fields. This aspect is the development of prospective specialists' communicative competence. In order to explore this problem, we reviewed the literature on the concept and problem of psychological assistance and communicative competence, which was based on the studies conducted on the examples of pedagogical and medical universities. Generalizing and analyzing the obtained data, we revealed the state of the problem of communicative competence development in the research literature. On the example of two universities (pedagogical and medical) we revealed the problems and perspectives of developing.
1. Introduction

The change in higher education paradigm and its transformation in psychological assistance allows conducting the educational process, which is aimed at developing personality potential in a prospective specialist. An important aspect of educational process is mental health, individualization of educational trajectories, creation of psychologically secure and comfortable educational environment for the prospective specialists. Assistance is defined as a specific type of professional activity aimed at creating social-psychological conditions for successful mentoring, teaching and developing a personality on each age stage. In the process of pedagogical interaction, a student is both an object and a subject (Kazakova 1998).

Communicative competence is one of the important components of undergraduate professional education of specialists that work in the “human-human” system, which includes doctor’s profession, as well as the teacher’s one. In the context of improving modern higher education, the problem of searching for psychologically validated directions of communicative competence development in students is rather relevant. The better this professional quality is developed in a prospective specialist, the more efficient is his communication in the professional field (Novgorodtseva 2010).

Highly efficient educational system is one of the core factors of providing robust growth and development of economy and society of any country, including the Republic of Kazakhstan. Integration of Kazakhstan in the global educational space, change of education’s paradigm and development of its new national model create a task of mentoring specialists with innovative type of thinking, well-developed culture of beliefs and multi-cultural conscience, creative style of thinking and acting, capable of conducting innovative processes. Education has to correspond with society’s interests and demands, and therefore, one of the goals of education is professional training of specialists aimed at society’s needs. These and other significant changes in direction, aims and content of education turn the orientation toward creative initiative, independence, competitiveness and mobility of a prospective specialist. These accumulating changes signify the process of educational paradigm change, which is noted by many researchers (Akanov, et. al. 2010). Therefore, we can conclude that high rates of changes that are happening in Kazakhstan and in the world, growing globalization and inevitably increasing involvement of Kazakhstani society in global processes and rapid technological progress, particularly, informational revolution, lead to growing need in highly qualified and professionally competent specialists.

We would like to reveal the content of the concepts of “assistance” and “psychological assistance”. Currently, the concept of assistance is widely used in pedagogics and in psychology. It was first introduced in the works of Russian researchers E.I. Kazakova and M.R. Bityanova. According to E.I. Kazakova, assistance is helping the subject to make a decision in situations of life choice. As the author points out, it is a complex process of interaction between the assistant and client, which results in progress in development. The author also concludes that psychological assistance, as a direction of work, consists of: assistance in natural development of a personality; and support in complicated crisis situations (Kazakova 1997). M.R. Bityanova defines assistance as “...a system of psychologist’s professional activity aimed at creating social-psychological conditions for successful learning and psychological development ... in situation of interaction” (Bityanova 1998). It is possible to conclude that the result of assistance is an action that leads to the development of subject’s, i.e. student’s, personality. Therefore, when we talk about assistance as a process, we primarily imply two acting subjects in the context of a
professional situation. Moreover, prospective specialist’s personality acts as a subject. According to Yu. Slyusarev, assistance is targeted psychological help that launches the mechanisms of self-development and activates person’s own resources (Slyusarev 1992). Based on this, we can conclude that assistance is prolonged help that reveals the resources for personality development and provides an opportunity to rely upon one’s own strengths.

Analysis of a number of research works on the problem of professional training of prospective specialists showed that the problem of prospective specialist’s personality development is not fully described. According to V.E. Orel, this process begins from the moment of choosing the profession and lasts throughout the whole professional life (Orel 2006). Hence, the main idea of psychological assistance is to find and support positive internal potential of prospective specialist’s personality.

In the opinion of Kazakhstani researcher Zh.I. Namazbaeva, psychological assistance of the process of prospective specialist’s personality development is a promising direction of activity. She states that, in the process of education modernization, the focus shifted to the development of prospective specialist’s personality, satisfaction of his cognitive needs and fulfillment of creative skills. And this, in turn, requires including professional disciplines that analyze education as ethnographic, cultural, historical, social and economic phenomena in the process of prospective specialists’ training (Namazbaeva, et. al. 2012). The author points out the importance of creating special conditions in the teaching process for developing a number of individual-psychological characteristics of a student, such as motivation, adaptation, skills, cognitive style, etc. (Namazbaeva 1992). Therefore, education and personality development are mutually connected and mutually dependent, and thus, in the new conditions, it is necessary to activate the potential of a prospective specialist himself for solving social, economic, professional and personal problems.

The basis for developing theory and practice of systemic psychological assistance of prospective specialist’s personality development has to become competence approach, while its main point should be the reliance in subject’s internal development potential. The most general goal of psychological assistance of prospective specialist’s personality development is protecting him from emotional overloads, inconsistency between educational environment and prospective specialists’ potential capabilities, as well as preserving “positive health”. Therefore, psychological assistance of prospective specialist’s personality development is tightly linked with both protection of his mental and physical health and creation of the conditions for complete and maximal manifestation of the positive sides of his individuality. And thus, it has to proceed as a systemic technology of social- psychological assistance of prospective specialist’s personality development.

In our study, we define psychological assistance as a set of methods, which facilitate the development of prospective specialist’s personality through interaction of students and teachers, and therefore we focus of developing students’ communicative competence as a necessary part of psychological assistance of the development of their personality.

The concept of “competence/competency” served as a general definition of such integral social, personality and behavioral phenomenon as the result of education in a system of motivational, axiological and cognitive components.

Currently, our Republic has a demand for the new “competence-based” educational paradigm. Furthermore, the result of educational institution’s activity is so-called competencies, which reflect the results of education, system of values, urges to perform a certain type of activity, communication and behavior; moral norms, social-cultural gains and interaction with the surrounding reality. In can be concluded that the transition of Kazakhstani education to the new State compulsory educational standards require a higher educational institution to improve the training of a specialist, who is competent not only in professional but also in communicative aspect.

The problem of developing specialist’s communicative competence is rather relevant in
pedagogics, linguistics, legal studies, medicine, psychology (particularly, in social psychology) and psychotherapy. For example, pedagogics addresses the patterns and specifics of pedagogic communication in relation to the need in developing teacher’s communicative culture. Linguistics studies verbal norms and culture of speech, ethnics of verbal activity for improving the skills of written and oral speech.

The conducted analysis of the models of doctor’s professional competence, which were proposed by different authors and scientific medical schools, allowed the group of teachers from Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University to develop a model of competence of a medical-profile specialist, which implies the development of the following components: cognitive component (knowledge), operational component (skills), axiological component (communicative skills), legal component and continuous learning (Akanov, et. al. 2010).

Competence approach in education means gradual reorientation of the dominating educational paradigm from leading translation of knowledge and development of skills to creation of conditions for mastering a system of competencies, which represent potential and graduate’s abilities to survive and maintain life activity in the conditions of modern multi-factorial social-political, market-economic, informational and communicatively-satiated space (Bolotov and Serikov 2003).

Upon the reformation of educational system for the competence basis, the priority goes to the orientation on such educational vectors as learning abilities, self-definition, self-actualization, socialization and development of individuality. Moreover, the instrumental means for reaching these goals are fundamentally new educational constructs – competencies and competences. Competence is defined as a normative requirement toward student’s training, which is articulated in the State compulsory educational standard, while competency is an already established personal and professional quality (integration of qualities) of a student and minimal experience in the activity in the defined field (Zimnyaya 2004). Therefore, competency acts as a personal characteristic that reflects the level of professionalism, and competence is a set of requirements towards a person from the profession, which is defined by a range of authority.

**Competence approach to professional education** is defined as an integral system of defining the goals, selecting the content, providing organizational and technological support of the specialist’s training process. It is based on special, general and key competencies, which guarantee high level and efficiency of specialist’s professional activity (Maruev 2005). According to this definition, it is possible to state the following functions of competence approach as the main principle of education:

- Competence approach allows thoroughly defining the nomenclature and logic of developing professionally-significant knowledge and skills;
- It is possible to give a more precise definition of the orienteers in the construction of professional education content on the basis of competence approach;
- Defining key, general and special competencies allows developing a more precise and diagnostically valid system of measurements of the prospective specialist’s professional competence level on all stages of his training;
- Competence approach, which reflects the ideas about professionalism and business qualities of a modern specialist, would have a positive influence on the development of innovative processes in the professional education system (Baydenko 2005).

Therefore, competence approach can be viewed not only as a tool for updating the education content, but also as a mechanism of placing it in correspondence with the modern requirements. Competence approach brings major corrections in the organization of the specialist’s training process and gives it practice-oriented nature. Using competence approach in specialists’ training would allow optimizing the educational process, orienting the teachers at the ultimate result, and improving psychological and pedagogical assistance and students’ communicative competence increase. Introducing competence approach in education would allow:
To transit professional education from its orientation on knowledge reproduction to the use and organization of knowledge;
To put the strategy of increasing the flexibility at the basis in order to expand the opportunities of employment and the solved tasks;
To focus on interdisciplinary integrated requirements to the educational process results;
To tighten the links between the goals and the situations of their application (use) in the work universe;
To orient human activity at infinite variability of professional and life situations;
To increase the competitiveness of the trained specialist (Akanov, et. al. 2010).

In order to reach a more complete understanding of reasons of the communicative competence phenomenon occurrence and development, we conducted theoretical analysis of communicative competence studies of international and national researchers. Dell Hymes was one of the first to use the communicative competence concept (Hymes 1992). He introduced the concept of communicative competence, which referred to a person’s ability to use the language flexibly, precisely and quickly in changing social situations.

The idea of D. Hymes was developed in the works of other researchers. For example, in the USA, S. Savington gives the following definition to this concept: “ability to function in a real communicative situation” (Savington 1983). He points out the significance of using mimics and gestures in the communicative competence development.

In the studies of German researchers, the concept of communicative competence is also used in relation to education. The studies of H. Melenk contain a concept of verbal communicative competence, which signifies an ability of one person to influence another with verbal means and to react to other’s role (Melenk, n. d.).

Communicative competence has a rather complicated structure. Researchers that study language in social-cultural aspect note the factor of so-called social variation in the development of communicative competence. American sociolinguist W. Labov thinks that each speaking individual that belongs to a certain linguistic community has various linguistic sub-systems. Variability can be traced on two levels. The author calls the first level stratified, where the language variability is related to the social structure of the linguistic community. The second level – situational – represents differentiated use of language in dependence from the social situation (Labov 1976).

Russian researchers do not have a common opinion regarding the content of the communicative competence concept. There are two vivid tendencies in understanding this concept: “social-linguistic” and “psychological-pedagogical”. The first is related to addressing communicative competence in the field of linguistics and adjacent sciences. It is based on the studies of international scientists, and thus has a lot in common with them. It is necessary to note that in Russian language, this concept is called both “communicative competency” and “communicative competence”. In present article, we use the same terms as the authors of the studies.

Russian psychologists Yu.M. Zhukov, L.A. Petrovskaya and P.V. Rastyannikov define person’s communicative competence as an ability to establish and maintain the necessary contacts with other people. However, essentially, the authors address communicative competence as a synonym of competence in communication, and include within its content a system of knowledge and abilities, which provide successful communicative processes of a person. They propose the following definition of communicative competence: “a system of internal resources that are necessary for creating efficient communicative action in a certain range of situations of interpersonal interaction” (Zhukov, et. al. 1991)

According to E.V. Rudenskiy, communicative competence is an internal resource of a person that is necessary for performing efficient communicative actions in situations of interpersonal interaction. This resource has to be used for correcting person’s affirmations, motivation and axiological orientations (Rudenskiy 1997).

Psychologists that study educational process include competence in the basic intellectual
qualities of a personality (Kholodnaya, n. d.; Tsvetkova 1994). In this case, the competence is defined as a specific type of organizing knowledge that provides an opportunity for efficient decision-making in a certain field of activity.

University stage of professional establishment is the most sensitive period for the development of professionally significant qualities of a prospective specialist, leading new formations of individual style of professional activity. Undergraduate stage is especially significant in professional establishment, because it includes not only the development of basic competencies, but also of possible predispositions for deviations in the professional role (Yasko 2005).

2. Development of communicative competence in the conditions of pedagogical university

The researchers of Research Institute of Psychology of Abay Kazakh National Pedagogic University studied psychological assistance of educational process in the conditions of national educational system modernization. In their opinion, psychological assistance is educational process aimed at developing the personality of a prospective teacher as a subject of pedagogical education and professional activity. They revealed that, during professional establishment, social-cultural context of activity is being corresponded with the context of personal self-definition. Therefore, professors and teaching staff of a university work on overcoming the immanent gap between these contexts. They propose a model of personality development, which contains three blocks – personal, social-psychological and educational-professional. These three blocks mutually complete each other, and the specific methods and technologies within them depend on the specifics of an educational institution (Namazbaeva, et. al. 2012). Therefore, successfuless of a modern integral pedagogic process is defined by scientific validation of its psychological assistance.

O.A. Gulbs highlights the following directions in developing personality-oriented technologies of psychological assistance of master’s students – prospective teachers: diagnostics of cognitive processes and personality characteristics of teachers; personal and professional development trainings; monitoring of social and professional development, etc. (Gulbs, et. al. 2012). Therefore, psychological assistance in college is an integral process of learning, development and correction of professional establishment and personality development of both students and teachers with regard to psychological specifics of professional development.

Yu.V. Mryakina suggests addressing communicative competence of a specialist in humanitarian sciences as a systemic structure that consists of four groups of skills (Mryakina 1998). V.I. Kashnitskiy defined three levels in the structure of teacher’s communicative competence: basic, content and operational (Kashnitskiy 1995). The author addresses communicative competence from two positions – what contains and what provides each of its levels. Basic level includes deep robust personality traits that characterize communicative orientation of teacher’s personality. The other two levels characterize communicative preparation of a teacher through certain knowledge and skills. In particular, content level consists of a set of various communicative knowledge. The author suggests that on the content level pedagogical tasks are transformed into communicative. The third, operational, level, which includes a system of communicative abilities and skills, is called to provide the performance of communicative actions for the successful actualization of a plan (Kashnitskiy 1995). On the initial stage, education implies cooperative learning activity under the supervision of a teacher, and then, independent activity with the focus on the practical aspect of the question.

We would like to point out that the development of communicative competence is a long and complicated process. One especially complicated aspect of teaching is the correspondence between the course and the real communicative skills of students, between the processes of acquiring the knowledge and its practical use. The choice of methods of communicative competence development has to be defined by the goals of education, content of study
3. Development of communicative competence in the conditions of medical university

Undergraduate stage is especially significant in communicative competence development, because it includes not only the development of basic competencies, but also of possible predispositions for deviations in the professional role. On the one hand, doctor’s profession implies high frequency and intensity of interpersonal contacts with patients and their relatives, as well as with colleagues. Communicative competence facilitates reaching the efficiency of doctor’s professional communication. On the other hand, doctor’s activity is characterized by emotional overloads, time deficit, need to make decisions with the limited amount of information; it encounters suffering, pain, dying and death. The adequacy of overcoming these factors is provided by coping styles (strategies) (Yasko 2005).

We studied communicative competence development in the conditions of medical university on the basis on the works by M.A. Asimov, S.A. Nurmaganbetova, Yu.V. Ignatyed, Sh.S. Mardanova, L.N. Vasilyeva, S. Kurz, J. Silverman, J. Draper, J. Banson (Asimov, et. al., n.d.; Mardanova 2011; Vasilyeva 2010; Kurz, et. al. 2009; Banson 2008). The authors note that the graduates of medical universities often experience communicative trouble in their professional activity. This requires special attention to doctors’ training, the development of their communicative knowledge on all stages of their professional establishment. Therefore, in the current conditions, medical university student not only has to be highly-qualified professional, but also has to possess well-developed communicative competencies.

T.V. Raeva highlights three main groups of communicative skills, which the doctors master during the educational process. The first group is basic skills; the second group has a specific nature and concerns only the interaction with certain categories of patients, for example, with suspicious or aggressive patients. The third category of communicative skills has a more general nature and develops on the basis of integration of basic and some specific skills (Raeva 2009). Therefore, it is possible to reveal abilities and skills that are common for the medical practice and that the prospective doctors have to master. They include making complicated ethical decisions in the situation of choice, telling unpleasant information, as well as overcoming conflict situations, urging the patients to follow medical recommendations, correcting their behavior and easing the suffering.

S.M. Dzhakupov notes that communicative competence in doctor’s professional activity provides the efficiency of medical communication (Dzhakupov 2012). Therefore, all context of education in a medical university has to be aimed at providing the development of prospective doctor’s communicative competence.

N.K. Gorshunova and N.V. Medvedev focus on the development of communicative competence in a modern doctor and write that doctor’s profession requires highest mastering of techniques and means of efficient communication with patients and their relatives, as well as with the team of colleagues. Communicative competence is also necessary to reach mutual understanding during the solution of medical diagnostical problems, as well as solve personal, family and other problematic situations, which can have a significant influence on the outcome of a specific disease and quality of life in general (Gorshunova and Medvedev 2010).

By studying the problem of communicative competence development in a modern doctor, M.A. Asimov and Sh.S. Mardanova propose a model of communicative competence development in students – prospective doctors in the conditions of medical university. The model develops the following ways of actualizing new teaching methods: gradually teaching the students communicative competence during the whole educational process in the university; planning
the process of developing content competencies with the consecutive evaluation of their development with establishment of the communicative competence level (Asimov and Mardanova 2014).

The paradigm developed by S.Kh. Madalieva and S.T. Ernazarova is based on the following principles: from the main basic communicative skills to specific specialized communicative skills; continuity of education; gradual nature of education; mutual connection between development of practical skills and communicative skills; correspondence of mastering the skills with the methods of their evaluation; constant monitoring of education efficiency; involvement of specialists of the corresponding profiles in the educational process; correspondence between communicative skills development and the conditions of education. The workers of the Center of Communicative Skills of Asfendiyarov Kazakh National Medical University developed forms and methods of teaching with the degree of difficulty increasing each academic year, and methods of evaluating communicative competence at each stage of education (Madalyieva and Ernasarova 2013; Asimov, et. al. 2012; Asimov and Draper 2012). Therefore, constant monitoring of communicative competence development in prospective doctors is provided.

4. Conclusion

In the conditions of higher education reformation, it is impossible to merely translate the present knowledge; it is necessary to develop social intellect in university students, social competence and professional identity as a type of organizational behavior of a prospective specialist.

By analyzing the current state of the problem of psychological assistance of communicative competence development in the conditions of higher educational institution, it is possible to conclude that communicative competence of prospective specialists develops differently in each university, depending from the chosen profession. It is necessary to point out that, within a medical university, there are conditions for developing communicative competence, because there is an obligatory educational course in “Communicative skills” of 90 hours for the 1st and 2nd academic years of all departments. During the senior years, psychological assistance of communicative competence development also continues in the conditions of educational-industrial practice, trajectory of choosing a narrow specialty, etc. The necessary conditions for psychological assistance for students throughout the whole educational process have been created. Namely, the Center for Communicative Skills (CCS) was created, and it is supplied with training rooms with necessary equipment; personal-growth trainings for developing prospective doctors’ communicative competence are conducted here.

Psychological assistance of communicative competence development in prospective teachers is also conducted during the educational process, which is aimed at developing the personality of a prospective teacher as a subject of pedagogical education and professional activity. The curriculum of pedagogical university includes such courses as “Critical thinking”, “Pedagogical communication”, etc. within the elective courses. Moreover, there is a functioning psychologist’s office at the Research Institute of Psychology of Abay Kazakh National Pedagogic University; experienced practicing psychologists conduct trainings and individual consults. Employees of this institution have successfully introduced methodical practice-oriented system of innovative psychological technologies and educational programs with regard to ethnical-cultural component.

We clearly acknowledge the fact that the competitiveness of educational system in modern Kazakhstan is low, and therefore, we encourage the need in many elements of Western educational system. To this end, we need the integration of the best global and national educational traditions. Currently, the field of education in Kazakhstan has stated a serious goal – to reach the quality of specialist’s training. In order to reach this goal, educational standards of new generation have been developed and introduced; they reflect professional competencies of a specialist of the corresponding profile. And therefore, competence approach implies organizing a clear structure that is oriented at the system of specialist’s training.


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