



Scientific and Practical Bases of Preparing Pedagogical University Students for Participation in Professional Olympiads

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the scientific and practical bases of preparing students for participation in professional olympiads. The scientific component of the subject-specific olympiads has been theoretically underpinned, the main forms and directions of preparation of students for such contests have been outlined, the experience of students who participated in the All-Russian Professional Olympiad "I am a Professional" has been analyzed and discussed. Such events help to reveal personal readiness of a participating student to the major tasks presented by their future profession and their ability to comprehensively analyze a problem situation related to the lifestyle of individuals with disabilities.

1. Introduction

The society of today needs highly qualified professionals capable to deliver socially valuable activities of high quality. Therefore, a need arises to create conditions conducive to the development of professional competencies by a future teacher: research, cognitive, design, communicative and other, which are essential for a strong motivation to acquire professional competence. Among such conditions is the holding of professional olympiads, which according to the multiple underlying regulations tackle the tasks of improving the quality of basic training of students, deepening and improving the knowledge and skills acquired by students under the basic educational program in the area of study concerned, stimulating their creative growth and higher interest in the chosen professional field; building a pool of human resources for research, administrative, production, entrepreneurial and other activities with the support from professional community, corporations, enterprises, organizations, employers' associations; improving the quality of higher education for the benefit of personal growth, development of creative abilities and talents, facilitating academic mobility of students; developing their creative thinking, higher interest in future professional activities driven by realization of their social value and strong personal motivation of students; assessing the ability of students to take actions consistent with the faced professional tasks, to analyze and to design, promoting higher responsibility of students for the work they perform, developing their ability to address problems on their own in an efficient way; refining the skills of self-reliant efforts, driving innovation. These tasks dictate the need to define and describe the scientific and practical basis of preparing pedagogical university students for participation in professional olympiads. The context of



the research requires that the scientific component of the subject-specific olympiads be theoretically underpinned, the forms of preparation of students for participation in such olympiads be defined and the experience of such participation be presented.

2. Literature Review

The Olympic movement has a long history and is related to demonstration of the level of skills in certain area. The Olympiad is viewed as a contest of certain kind intended to identify the most outstanding of its participants and establish their excellence. As concerns higher education, subject-specific Olympiads have always been considered as a major event for developing professional competence. Their intent is to improve the skills and knowledge of the graduates. As many researchers note, Yu.V. Vardanyan [1], A.I. Popov, E.A. Rakitina [2], S.P. Shamets [3], the Olympiads in the university are organized as extra-curricular activities representing creative contest and offering an opportunity to demonstrate professional skills in a non-standard situation.

T. I. Shukshina and T. V. Tatyana [4, 5] consider the pedagogical olympiad at the university as a humanitarian technology for raising professional competence. As the authors point out, the content of the contest assignments allows not only to identify the level of professional readiness of a future teacher in line with the established guidelines (educational standards, professional programs, curricula), but also creates conditions for the development of basic and subject-specific competences of participants, which undoubtedly contributes to the professional development of students and makes professional training more efficient.

The content of students' research activities is inextricably linked to the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills. In our research of particular interest is the development of readiness and ability to deal with students with special educational needs in the course of educational and socialization process using an individual approach, to help them with their self-determination and self-realization in further professional and social life, to help them develop emotional and value attitude to reality, which are the key competences to be gained through professional training of teachers, psychologists and speech therapists. Modern research on the study, upbringing and education of children with disabilities is linked to the implementation of ideas of inclusive education. When providing a general overview of main trends in the global research, it should be noted that the theory and practice of inclusive education in foreign countries has a longer history compared to Russia. It should be highlighted that the theoretical concepts of inclusive education were built by such Western researchers as Abbott L. [6], Forlin C. [7], Hall J. [8], Janson U. [9], Lynch S. and A. Irvine [10], Lynn R.K. [11], Mitchell D. [12], Hartley J. [13], Rogers C. [14], Werfhorst H.G. [15].

When speaking about the Russian researchers developing conceptual foundations of inclusive education, such names should be mentioned as C.V. Alekhina [16], N.N. Malofeeva, N.D. Shmatko [17], etc. The most important tool of inclusive education is tutoring. Tutoring not only helps to enable individualized learning, but also has developmental value as the tutor contributes to the best possible self-exploration of the student, gives impetus to the student's motives and values. The need for tutoring in educational organizations implementing inclusive practices keeps growing and by far exceeds the available staff capacity. In this regard, the development of tutoring competences among teachers dealing with students with special educational needs is a highly urgent task [18].

In addition, the future speech therapist should be ready to provide logopedic support to children with disabilities, which will allow to achieve the main goal of inclusive education - the creation of optimal conditions for the educational and social adaptation of such children in the educational institution.

Taking into account the main strategies of modernization of the Russian education system, the main task of the university is to create the conditions that allow to identify and develop the scientific interests of students. In this

connection, students' research activities can be arranged in the following formats: students' participation in scientific competitions, olympiads, grants; students training to solve scientific problems independently and developing the skills of work in research teams; utilization of their scientific potential to the efficiency of the educational process. These formats are successfully implemented during preparation for and holding of professional olympiads.

The All-Russian Student Olympiad "I am a Professional" is a new-format olympiad for students of various specialties, which is held to discover talented students with deep knowledge, skills and abilities in a chosen professional field, to spur creative growth, activity and professional mobility among talented students. It is important to note that one of the goal components is to increase the prestige of higher education and to identify the necessity to update the educational curricula to reflect changes introduced in professional standards. In connection therewith, a natural need appears to analyze the experience of students who participated in professional olympiads, to determining the most effective forms of preparation for participation in such events, to assess the prospects of future employment and professional evolvement of students participating in such olympiads.

3. Research Methodological Framework

The purpose of the presented research is to consolidate and systematize the scientific and practical bases of preparing the pedagogical university students for participation in professional olympiads. The research tasks consist in the following: a theoretical substantiation of the importance of subject-specific olympiads for improving the quality of professional training and strengthening the role of research activities in the preparation of students for participation in such competitions, the analysis and consolidation of experience of students who participated in the All-Russia Student Olympiad "I am a Professional". The following research methods were employed to address the research purpose: theoretical (analysis of pedagogical phenomena, documents, literary sources); empirical (observation, survey, consolidation of pedagogical experience); statistical processing of results.

The methodological framework of this research was constituted by the fundamental provisions of the systematic, personal and activity approaches formulated in their works by A.N. Leontyev [19], V.V. Kraevsky, A.V. Khutorskoy [20], V.A. Slastenin [21]. Special attention was given to methodological approaches to the understanding of pedagogical activities developed by I.A. Kolesnikova [22], designing of pedagogical activities of a defectologist proposed in the work of A.N. Gamayunova, N.V. Ryabova [23].

Undoubtedly, an important role in preparing students for participation in professional olympiads is played by the design of educational process at the university and specifically within a specific basic educational program. Therefore, the study embraced the main approaches to modernization of professional training of defectologists, in particular, training of bachelors and masters in Special Education (Defectology), as described in the works of E.V. Zolotkova, M.A. Lavrentyeva [24], A.N. Gamajunova [25, 26].

The material for the analytical research included the content and results of the contest assignments offered at the Second All-Russian Student Olympiad "I am a Professional" and completed by third- and forth-year students (76 persons) of the Mordovia State Pedagogical Institute named after M.E. Evseviev, Department of Psychology and Defectology, trained under the program Special Education (Defectology), Speech Therapy and Psychological and Pedagogical Education specialty, and Psychology and Pedagogy of Inclusive Education specialty, which was held from November 2018 to February 2019.

4. Findings and Discussion

We would like to describe the students' experience of participation in the events of such kind. Students of the Mordovia State Pedagogical Institute named after M.E. Evseviev studying at the Department of Psychology and



Defectology, Speech Therapy specialty, annually participate in the All-Russian Student Olympiads on Speech Therapy, thus accumulating a positive experience of participation in such events. As noted by S.V. Arkhipova and N.G. Minaeva [27], the contest assignments included in the content of the olympiads, were diverse, but the key tasks remained the same: theoretical contest (testing), solution of educational and professional problems, project defense. The authors also note that such events allow to highlight a wide range of problems of modern speech therapy science and practice, and to share innovative experience in training future speech therapy specialists [25, 28].

Students has to successfully pass the qualification stage to participate in the final stage of the Olympiad. They were offered to complete test tasks on the basic concepts of special pedagogy and special psychology, scientific foundations of special education, methods and didactics of teaching the persons with disabilities, pedagogical systems of special education, relevant issues of developing educational practices to teach persons with disabilities.

The test consisted of 4 sections and included 24 tasks of various complexity including questions of a closed type where one or more correct answers had to be chosen, tasks for matching, sequencing, adding or giving a brief answer. The tasks were categorized by complexity and as such helped to assess the level of preparedness of the olympiad participant (basic, advanced, high):

The content of the test tasks on the basic concepts of special pedagogy and special psychology required knowledge of the basic concepts, goals and objectives of special pedagogy and special psychology; holistic view of special pedagogy as an integral part of pedagogical scientific knowledge, its object and subject, purpose and objectives, principles; history of emergence and evolvement. Besides, the scientific bases of special pedagogy included the knowledge of regulatory, philosophical, sociological, psychological, clinical, sociocultural fundamentals of special education and the ability of a student to apply the knowledge of scientific bases of special pedagogy for the analysis of sociocultural and pedagogical situations. The content of the section on special education of persons with special educational needs implies that students are familiar with the principles of special education, forms of educational process for persons with health impairment and disabilities, special educational needs of each category of students with health impairment and disabilities, the students' readiness and ability to apply knowledge about the special educational needs of students in simulated pedagogical situations, as well as demonstration of the ability to analyze and synthesize defectological knowledge to identify and solve research problems in professional activities. The level of preparedness of the olympiad participants on pedagogical systems of special education was estimated by using the tasks checking the knowledge of characteristics of the basic pedagogical systems by levels of education, proper understanding of the modern pedagogical systems for persons with health impairment and disabilities, their basic characteristics, ability to apply knowledge of special pedagogy and special psychology to model and design solutions to pedagogical problems consistent with the main categories of health impairment and limited capacities (teaching the persons with hearing impairment, vision impairment, disorders of the musculoskeletal system, cognitive, speech, emotional and volitional disorders), revealing the relationship between the interdisciplinary knowledge from the scientific fields studied by special pedagogy and psychology to solve pedagogical problems, ability to make evaluative judgments on theoretical and practical phenomena in education of persons with health impairments and disabilities.

According to the qualification stage results, 45 (60%) out of 76 (100%) participants received an invitation to participate in the final stage of the All-Russian Student Olympiad "I am a Professional". The minimum testing score of the final stage participant was 69, the maximum score was 91. Approximately 73% of participants had scores ranging from 69 to 80, while the scores of 27% were quite high ranging from 80 to 91%. Such indicators of theoretical preparedness allow us to draw conclusions regarding the quality of professional training of students in a specific field of study and their ability to apply the acquired knowledge to solve the encountered tasks.



The final stage of the olympiad included two types of tasks: viewing a media case and writing an answer in the format "standpoint - justification - examples - conclusion"; and individual assignments (dealing with certain pedagogical situations). According to the results of the olympiad's final stage, 6 students of our university became winners and awardees in the nomination Bachelor's Degree Course under the program Special Education (Defectology), of which two students became silver medalists (who scored 89 and 91 points respectively), and one became a bronze medalist (85 points).

The closing stage of the "I am a Professional" Olympiad was participation of students in "3D-Pedagogy" Winter School. The Winter School is a unique opportunity for future teachers from all over the country not only to become aware of the most advanced methods and practices of work, but also to get immersed in the atmosphere of their future profession, to meet the colleagues and to decide on the career path. The main formats of work were lectures and practical classes from leading experts and teachers of the country, round tables with methodologists and employers representing large educational organizations. Also, students attended training sessions intended to develop soft skills, which are presently highly valued in the labor market. The mentioned Winter School activities were focused on development of pedagogical competencies.

The conducted analysis shows that the effective participation of students in the subject-specific olympiads should be supported with high-quality training. The main directions of such training are represented by the directions of professional activity, while its possible formats include contests, master classes, supervision, work in research teams, research and practice centers and research laboratories. When working in a research team, students under the guidance of a teacher learn to perform their first educational and research tasks, to write scientific papers (essays, library-research papers, course works and graduate qualification works, projects). Upon completion of research, students publish theses, articles, make presentations and reports at scientific events of various levels. Involvement of students in the activities of research and practice centers and research laboratories allows to carry out practice-oriented preparation of students for further participation in the olympiads. Thus, students get involved in the development and implementation of programs intended to support and provide psychological and pedagogical assistance to children with disabilities and their parents. By implementing this type of activity on the basis of educational organizations, students have an opportunity to consult with or get professional advice from their tutor (supervisor). Supervision is a modern highly effective technology that yields educational results of new quality in the process of implementation of such a model of practice-oriented education of a student seeking the Bachelor's degree in Special Education (Defectology), which main benefit will be the ability of a student to build their professional activities in accordance with the requirements of professional standards. Therefore, such forms allow not only to improve the level of professional training of students, thus preparing them for participation in the subject-specific olympiads, but also to develop their ability to professional self-education, which is an important quality of a modern teacher.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the explored publications in the field of the problem under research allows to draw a conclusion on its urgency. The analytical research helped to establish that professional olympiads represent a key format for raising professional competence. Innovative character of the olympiads, non-standard pedagogical situations requiring original solutions dictate a need to keep improving a scientific component of the subject-specific olympiads, to define the forms of students' preparation for such contests and to consolidate the positive experience of students' participation in the All-Russian Professional Olympiads, which was undertaken by the authors of this paper.

It may be asserted that the creative potential of a teacher grows from the accumulated social experience,



psychological, pedagogical and subject-specific knowledge, new ideas, skills and abilities that help to find and apply original solutions, innovative forms and methods and thus improve the performance by a teacher of their professional functions. Such opportunities for pedagogical creativity are provided by the All-Russian Professional Olympiads.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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