



## Professional training of psychologists in the field of special education

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### Abstract:

The article deals with foundations of modern research in the context of special education psychologists. The problem of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education is firstly comprehensively studied on the basis of humanistic, axiological, epistemological, acmeological, systemic, contextual, integrative, activity, reflexive-activity, and personality-oriented approaches. The methodological aspects of this professional training have been developed and the training itself has been presented as a holistic systemic phenomenon in the educational space of higher pedagogical education. The essence of the

training has been examined in various ways and on the basis of this training its classification characteristics, levels and systemic and structural components have been determined. This article also defines the content, organizational and pedagogical conditions and criteria for assessing the levels of formation of these components. What the article aims at is to highlight and characterize the key parts of the system of the phenomenon under investigation and to describe their interactions in the functions and forms of the investigated activity. It also develops and scientifically substantiates the methodology of research of the state of formation of the components of psychologist professional training. The essence of the modern technologies in higher educational institutions is also determined. Theoretical paradigm has been scientifically substantiated, the structural and functional, organizational and didactic model of the system of psychologist professional training in the field of special education has been developed and tested and the dynamics of the formation of its components according to the results of the implementation of this system have been highlighted. Particular attention has been paid to finding and developing the optimal set of methods of providing it, developing programs and defining the efficiency of a developed program. Finally, the article outlines prospects for further research in the context of improving professional training of psychologists in the field of special education.

## 1. Introduction

Bearing in mind difficult conditions of Ukraine's entry into the international community of modernization of the international order in the context of determined priorities of the future world order, theoretical and methodological analysis and experimental solution of the problem that refers to professional training of psychologists in the field of special education require from higher education to implement gradually the components of the existing megasystem of holistic educational space where an indicative trait of its content is developed on a competency-based grounds only then the study of the professional training in question acquires proper relevance. Consequently, the study has made it possible to formulate conclusions in accordance to the tasks set.

In the circumstances of a system of social changes and spiritual values, and the economic crisis in the country, the quality of psychologist training becomes particularly important, because psychological doctrine, which provides stability and prudence, becomes imperative in time of modern scientific technology in all aspects of civilized society.



The new concept of teaching requires new orientation to purposes, principles, content, methods, evaluation of obtained knowledge according to defined educational qualification characteristics to become a specialist, and skills to solve typical problems and their application in practice. Thus, the interpenetration of knowledge of methods and theories and their practical application becomes so important. A person-oriented paradigm of education incorporated in real life context proposes new requirements for training at higher education institutions. There is, therefore, a necessity for forming a new generation of psychologists in the field of special education that can provide expert help for individuals with disorders in psychophysical development to create the conditions for successful socialization and self-realization (Syniov 1997, Suprun 2005).

Thus, the problem of scientific and theoretical substantiation and development of functional system components of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education that takes into account practical needs of modern society and integration of the national education system into the international educational space is not completely solved, and this, in turn, is negatively reflected in the level of professional training and does not contribute to competitiveness of the domestic and international labor markets.

A systematic theoretical and methodological, historical and empirical analysis of the problem in the psychological and pedagogical domain has been conducted and the evolution of trends in the development of principles of theory and practice in professional training of psychologists in the field of special education has been monitored and this made it possible to determine the relevance of the study of the identified problem and allow to certify the following:

- theoretical questions of pedagogical defectologists' staff training of different profiles have been significantly developed, however, the work of national experts in the field of special psychology contains only a few scientific studies in relation to specific issues of professional training of specialists of this profile;
- despite the fact that the system of training defectological personnel has had a long history, the training of specialists in the field of special psychology began only in the modern period of national history;
- the coverage of the foreign experience in psychologist professional training in the field of special education shows that the modern system of training specialists of the psychological profile in different countries has significant developments in the theoretical and practical field of study, which must be fully used for national higher education. This should be provided by means of a rational combination of foreign advanced pedagogical experience in the field of psychological education along with the innovative pedagogical work of Ukrainian scholars.

The outlined evidence of the theoretical and socio-practical importance of preparation of special psychologists and insufficient theoretical and practical development has given us the grounds for conducting our own scientific research.

## 2. Methodology of the study

It has been established that the leading idea of the concept of professional training of psychologists consists in the introduction of a pedagogical system whose functioning would consistently, methodologically and educationally, and legally ensure the quality and effectiveness of the educational process in higher education. Therefore, based on the scientific substantiation of the concept of psychologist professional training in the field of special education, methodological, theoretical and practical concepts are represented by the integral interaction of methodological approaches (humanistic, axiological, epistemological, acmeological, systemic, contextual, integrative, activity, reflexive-activity, and person-oriented).

The *methodological concept* covers a set of starting points of such approaches as a humanistic, axiological, epistemological, acmeological, systemic, and context-based approach. What is meant by considering the same *practical concept* is the consolidation of activity, system-activity, person-activity, reflective-activity and person-oriented approaches. Having analyzed the scientific work, we argue that the absence of the *theoretical concept* makes it impossible to become practical, and vice versa. It is advisable to follow the methodological principles discussed above, in particular, a systemic approach that reflects the relationship between the three concepts and is an indissoluble mechanism for training psychologists.

The *system of principles* includes the following: scientific, systemic, and integrative knowledge and modularity of integrative courses, professional-pedagogical orientation, humanization and humanitarization, the unity of the rational and emotional, the unity of subject-oriented and person-oriented study of psychology,



the unity of empirical and theoretical knowledge, accessibility, visibility, activity, purposefulness and motivation, autonomy, creativity and professional-pedagogical orientation, connection between studying psychology and the real life context, practice and diagnostic-analytical approach, professional-pedagogical significance of knowledge and professional competence, orientation to individual's self-knowledge and self-development, and organization of constant professional interaction. The principles listed above are organically interconnected. Their complementarity and joint implementation increase the quality of the process of training psychologists, ensure the integrity of various processes in professional training of psychologists in the field of special education. At the same time, each principle has its own area of the most complete realization.

Based on the analysis of the conceptual foundations of the content, methodological and organizational components of psychologist professional training in the field of special education, the following components of training in the field of special education are defined: professional-motivational, cognitive-competence, operational-activity, and result-reflexive.

Criteria and indicators of their levels of formation have been established according to each structural component. In order to diagnose the basic levels of formation of these components and to assess the effectiveness of the experimental model of the system of psychologist professional training in the field of special education, the set of criteria and indicators have been developed which should be considered as a criterion model.

On the basis of the defined criteria and indicators and with the help of selected organizational forms and diagnostic methods, four levels of formation of these components have been distinguished: high (innovative), sufficient (productive), middle (reconstructive), and low (reproductive).

### **3. The analysis of the results of theoretical and empirical research**

The state and components of psychologist professional training in the system of higher education of Ukraine have been identified. It has been proved that a proper diagnostic provides a scientific approach to the organization of work with students, their professional development and self-development.

The analysis of the results at the preliminary stage of the research determined an objective condition to form the components which made it possible to conclude the general hypothesis of the study on the tactics of the molding experiment, taking into account the peculiarities and potentialities of its participants. Consequently, the theoretical and methodological principles of content, methodological and organizational components of psychologist professional training in the field of special education have been confirmed and proved the basis for the development of the system of this process.

It is necessary to mention the theoretical and practical essence of modern technologies in professional training of psychologists in higher education institutions which has been revealed in the course of this research.

The application of modern and innovative technologies in psychologist training in the field of special education has been thoroughly analyzed and it has revealed the following trends:

- universal interaction of various pedagogical systems and teaching technologies and the introduction of new forms of practice and integrated pedagogical systems into practice which provides the effectiveness of the pedagogical process;
- significant growth of the role of communication-oriented learning. The ability to speak a foreign language is a professional and cultural base for specialists in any field of study which gives them an opportunity to be equal partners in the international co-operation;
- active use of technical means;
- increasing role of a student, and his mobility, as a participant in the learning process in the context of internationalization

Thus, the effective means of forming the key competences of a psychologist are pedagogical technologies that are viewed as a combination of teaching methods through the prism of relevant features of educational results and their effectiveness in determining the quality of higher education.

It has been established that the present stage of the development of pedagogy and psychology is characterized by the active use of modular trans- and interdisciplinary technologies, which was caused by changes in education reform, the influence of new pedagogical concepts, and the search for analogues of modern educational interdisciplinary integration processes. Consequently, the search for modern pedagogical technologies has led to the revision and update of the existing system of professional training, supplemented with a new non-traditional content and attracting new approaches in the introduction of educational material. Modern pedagogical teaching technologies at this stage of development require such mechanisms as a set of tools,



approaches, actions through which the process of mastering the information space is possible, provided that the target installation is reinforced with innovative approaches. The issue of modular trans- and interdisciplinary training is aimed at the introduction of new innovative techniques that are intensively developing in the field of special education. These approaches to the organization of educational process in higher schools, embodied in various didactic forms, make it possible to fulfill the requirements of the third generation science, formulated in terms of competences. It is the interdisciplinary connection that is responsible for the integrity of the modern educational process. (Suprun 2017).

Hence, an essential component of psychologist training is the introduction of special education courses such as “New trends in psychologist training in the field of special education” and “Management – a part of psychologist professional training” in which trans- and interdisciplinary connections can be implemented.

Based on the results of the research and the studies on this problem, methodical complex training sessions have been developed and applied in practice – “Formation components of professional and personal growth of psychologists in the field of special education” and “Development of motivation in psychologist professional self-realization in the field of special education” – an experimental technique which has been oriented towards psychologists in the field of special education (Suprun 2016).

It has been proved that the introduction of a new approach to education involves the use of modern methods in professional training of psychologists. Practically speaking, a pedagogical mechanism based on a competency approach should include teaching programs and guidance with professional workshops, trainings and special courses for students and practicing psychologists. The feedback that would take into account points of view of the students who took part in this course and their ideas for innovation should be an important resource to diagnose the use of psychological and sociological research methods, by means of taking into consideration the innovative development of technologies and labor market requirements for the practical use of specific modern programs that are used in the work of the studied specialty. The practical component of the training should be in line with the modern needs of the information society in order to create educational and professional competences that are really needed and demanded among psychologists in the field of special education.

The functional system of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education has been scientifically substantiated, developed and experimentally checked, the organizational and pedagogical conditions of its implementation have been revealed and its effectiveness has been determined.

Guided by the conceptual and methodological principles defining the system of psychologists’ training in the field of special education as a complex system of targeted educational influence on the process of acquiring professional knowledge and skills, the formation of professional competence and professional development is noticed in the ability of an individual to playback the system of psychological and pedagogical knowledge and self-development, self-realization in his professional activity. This definition of a comprehensive, conceptual, theoretical and methodological substantiation of the organization of psychologists’ training in the field of special education enables to understand the place and the role of psychologist training in special education as a system in general educational process of higher education. But any psychological and pedagogical process, activity or influence does not make any sense without identifying manners of practical implementation as well as realization of real professional training. Understanding the professional training of psychologists in the field of special education in higher educational institutions in projection on the practical implementation of level definitions has been defined as an optimal intensive use of traditional and innovative forms, methods and means of training aimed at effective and efficient assimilation of psychological and pedagogical knowledge and methods of obtaining it at the level of professional psychological-pedagogical, professional-subject, methodological, general-cultural and managerial aspects.

This is the understanding of systemic psychologist training in the field of special education which has facilitated practical implementation of certain measures within the modeled system to influence the development of professional knowledge and skills, their understanding, improvement and practical implementation as a prerequisite for professional self-realization. It took into account the specificity and trans- and interdisciplinary training in the aforementioned field. A holistic view of the organization of such a system was the content of professional training. Thus, the system of training psychologists in the field of special education, which resulted in shaping future professionals and willingness to work through the system of trans- and

interdisciplinary knowledge, is created as well as mastering innovative psychological and pedagogical and correction technologies and the understanding of its individual essence, on the basis of which a personality concept is developed and the professional potential of a competitive specialist is realized.

Therefore, taking into account scientific representations of professional training, system, systematic, and model, the model of the system of psychologists' professional training in the field of special education is proposed. It is understood as a representation of all psycho-pedagogical structural components and measures that ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of this process. In accordance with the aforementioned theoretical positions and principles, the model of the system has been developed. It has been revealed through a set of structural blocks (perspective-target, conceptual, organizational-diagnostic, content-realization, control-analytical) that represents a clear mechanism that allows a coherent functioning in the close relationship of all its components and which contributes to obtaining results in respect of the established goal of the research.

#### 4. The results of the study with the theoretical element of the discussion

In order to determine the effectiveness of the system of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education at the control and analytical stage, a comparison as well as its analysis have been performed to illustrate the indicators of the level of formation of components of professional training of the participants of the experimental and control samples prior to the formation stage and at its final phase. Also, the statistical hypothesis of the study has been verified.

According to the relevant criterion of future psychologists in the experimental (E1 and E2) and control groups (C), the dynamics of changes in the indicators of the level of formation of the professional-motivational component are: High (Innovation) level: + 27.1%, + 27.5%, +17.1%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 13.1%, + 12.6%, + 2.8%; Middle (Reconstructive): -31.7%, -28.5%, -6.2%; Low (Reproductive): -8.5%, -11.6%, -3.7%. The group of psychologists is: High (Innovative) level: + 1.4%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 30.0%; Middle (Reconstructive): -22.4%; Low (Reproductive): -19.0%.

According to the cognitive-competence criterion, the dynamics of changes in the indicators of the level of formation of this component are respectively: High (Innovation) level: + 30.2%, + 28.5%, + 7.3%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 13.1%, + 15.0%, + 4.4%; Middle (Reconstructive): -29.7%, -27.8%, -6.9%; Low (Reproductive): -13.6%, -15.7%, -4.8%. The group of psychologists is: High (Innovative) level: + 5.3%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 25.7%; Middle (Reconstructive): -9.6%; Low (Reproductive): -21.4%.

According to the relevant criterion, the dynamics of shifts in the indicators of the level of formation of the operational-activity component are: High (Innovation) level: +19,6%, +20,4%, +1,2%; Sufficient (Productive) level: +41.2%, +40.8%, +18.7%; Middle (Reconstructive): -4,5%, -7,8%, +3,6%; Low (Reproductive): -56.3%, -53.4%, -23.5%. The group of psychologists is: High (Innovative) level: + 8.1%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 7.6%; Middle (Reconstructive): -5.7%; Low (Reproductive): -10.0%.

According to the relevant criterion, the changes in the level of formation of the productively-reflexive component are: High (Innovation) level: + 17.6%, + 17.7%, + 0.9%; Sufficient (Productive) level: + 41.2%, + 38.1%, + 16.3%; Middle (Reconstructive): -15.1%, -10.9%, -3.7%; Low (Reproductive): -43.7%, -44.9%, -13.5%. The group of psychologists is: High (Innovative) level: + 8.1%; Sufficient (productive) level: + 20.0%; Middle (Reconstructive): -9.5%; Low (Reproductive): -18.6%.

In experimental groups there has been a significant decrease in the number of students (psychologists) who showed the low and average level of formation of components of psychologist training in the field of special education and at the same time the growth of a number of students with sufficient and high levels.

In control groups, no significant changes have been recorded despite learning according to the traditional program, which did not allow for the specially organized formation of components of psychologist training in the field of special education and psychological and professional pedagogical knowledge and skills in their use in corrective activities. A certain percentage of students went to higher levels of formation of certain components (for example, 42 persons switched to a high level according to the professional-motivational criterion; the number of participants at an adequate level increased by 7; at the middle and low level the number of participants decreased accordingly by 40 and 9 persons).

Also, the positive changes in cognitive-competence, operational-activity, and result-reflexive criteria have been insignificant in comparison with experimental groups. Recent data has made it possible to assume that



the traditional content of medical and biological, psychological and pedagogical domains and other disciplines of a professionally oriented cycle in the structure of psychologist training in professional activity of special education does not contribute to ensuring a sufficient level of formation of components of psychologist professional training in the field of special education. This, as our study revealed, has been enabled by a present experimental model.

According to all criteria of the formation of components of psychologists' professional training in the field of special education in the group of working psychologists, positive changes in comparison with experimental groups have allowed to assume that the distance form of training and independent mastery of training do not contribute to a significant shift, which indicates the need for adjustments and more systematic training.

## 5. Conclusions

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the experiment results and the statistical material which has been obtained on their basis made it possible to conclude that the introduction of the system of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education in the pedagogical process of higher education institutions and in the context of postgraduate education has provided positive results. The students (psychologists) – participants of the experimental group, compared with those who followed the traditional teaching system (control group members), have demonstrated a higher level of formation of the components of the specified training.

It has been established that the effectiveness of the system of professional training of psychologists in the field of special education depends on the methodical foundations of its implementation, the sequence and integrity in the formation of the aforementioned components, their ability to evaluate and practical use in diagnostics, rehabilitation, and correctional and pedagogical work.

In addition, using correlation analysis of the research data, the main correlative relations between the criterion characteristics of components formation of psychologists' professional training in the field of special education have been established. The results have shown that the motivational-professional factor of the formation of the components in vocational training as well as the educational environment forms and methods of educational activity at the higher education institution are essential during the formation of these components. The system of acquired psychological and pedagogical knowledge, development of professionally important qualities, and intellectual, perceptual and communicative abilities of an individual play an important role in the process of professional training. During the pilot study pedagogical conditions have been distinguished; they determine the success of the system training described in this paper. What is more, they facilitate perfect mastery of professional knowledge, latest methods and means of correction of psychopedagogical, efficient use of remedial teaching techniques, methods and technologies in practical activities and promote professional self-realization in the future.

In the course of the experiment the polyfunctionality of the components of the psychologist professional training in the field of special education has been fully confirmed. It has been discovered that the processed organizational and didactic system that refers to a flexible, adequate, natural and humanistic technology is an integrated system of multi-leveled, interrelated components. The analysis of the organization process of training psychologists in the field of special education has led to the conclusion that it should be based on individually-oriented educational paradigm in education. The increase of the above-mentioned components among students of experimental groups and practicing psychologists has shown the effectiveness of the organizational-pedagogical model. Checking the significance of the detected differences for the multifunctional criterion  $\varphi^*$  Fisher and the bilateral t-criterion of the Student confirmed their validity significance at the level of 0.01 and 0.05.

The results of the experimental research have confirmed that the introduction of a developed system in the professional training of university students and psychologists in the context of postgraduate education ensures the effectiveness of psychologist training in the field of special education. Thus, these are serious prospects in terms of a search for effective ways and methods of implementation and further improvement in the area of training psychologists by means of various specializations in special education.

It must also be clearly stated that the study does not cover all aspects of the theory and practice in training psychologists in the field of high school special education and does not purport to deal with the entire

coverage of the researched issue. The further areas of study on this issue refer to comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon in various fields of knowledge, justification for a modern concept of competency among modern personality psychologists in the field of special education, development of teaching systems, models and technology in training psychologists of special education domain with the peculiarities of their functioning in the system of psychological and pedagogical education.

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