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ACADEMIC MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS MAJORING IN “SPECIAL EDUCATION”

The article deals with the issue of academic motivation of students of higher educational institutions. The effectiveness of professional training of future special educators largely depends on their academic motivation in the corresponding specialty. The purpose of the article is to analyse the results of the study of academic motivation of students majoring in “Special Education” in the process of mastering the profession, and determine the ways of forming profession-related academic motivation. To study the specifics of academic motivation of future special educators the following methods were used: Academic Motivation Inventory (modified by A. Rean, V. Yakunin), a specially designed author’s questionnaire. According to the results of the first method, the dominant motive is a cognitive one, in particular “becoming a highly skilled specialist” and “acquiring profound knowledge”. Another predominant social academic motive is “obtaining a diploma”. The results of the survey using a specially designed questionnaire have shown that most of students make their choice of the future profession unconsciously, which is reflected in the lack of active attitude to studying. The predominance of cognitive motives has been revealed. In general, students understand the significance of the profession of a special educator. However, the positive attitude to the profession does not contribute to the formation of stable professional motives, beliefs about further work in the specialty, which is due to the reasons for dissatisfaction with the profession. The generalized analysis of the results has shown the need for the formation of profession-related academic motivation, and the ways of its development in students have been presented.

Keywords: *motivation, motive, students majoring in “Special Education”, special educator, profession-related academic motivation.*

Introduction

At the current stage of education development in Ukraine, the state attaches great importance to the education of children with special educational needs, which is caused by the society demands. Deinstitutionalization, the reform of the system of special education and the introduction of inclusive education imply a change in the position regarding the training of future special educators and the formation of modern professional competences of them in order to ensure the effectiveness of education of children with special educational needs, regardless of the type of institution.

The scientific literature review (Myronova, 2007; Akatov, 2003; Pryadko, 2010, etc.) shows that scientists put forward high demands not only for professional activity, but also personal qualities of future special educators. The effectiveness of working with children with special educational needs is largely determined by the combination of professional knowledge, skills, and personal qualities of a pedagogue, which in fact should be formed during the process of professional training. S. Myronova developed a personality-activity model of a special educator, which includes types and directions of work, the description of professional functions (content, knowledge, skills), as well as requirements for the personality of a specialist which determine his/her social and vocational pedagogical orientation (Myronova, 2007). The most important quality of pedagogues is their motiva-

tional orientation to the profession, that is, the desire to be a specialist in the relevant field (Akatov, 2003). The effectiveness of professional training is determined by various factors, in particular, the motivational sphere of students, their focus on mastering the profession and further work with children with special educational needs.

It was experimentally proved, that high positive motivation could act as a compensatory factor in relation to intellectual abilities, knowledge and skills. The reverse mechanism of such compensation does not work, so students with high intellectual abilities, but with a low level of motivation may not succeed in learning (Rean, 2002). Therefore, the formation of positive academic motivation is an important condition for increasing the level of students’ academic achievement and competence.

Aim and tasks

The purpose of the article is to analyze the results of investigating the academic motivation of students majoring in “Special Education” and outline the ways of forming professionally oriented academic motivation.

In the process of the research, the following tasks are set:

1) to carry out a theoretical analysis of conceptual approaches to the issue of academic motivation was carried out;

2) to distinguish peculiarities of academic motivation of students majoring in Special Education;

3) on the basis of the analysis of the results, to outline ways of forming professionally oriented academic motivation of future special educators.

Research Methods

The research was carried out on the basis of Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohienko National University. The study involved 103 students of the faculty of social pedagogy and psychology, specialty 016 “Special Education”.

To study the academic motivation of students we used Academic Motivation Inventory (modified by A. Rean, V. Yakunin). It has two variants, which differ in the procedure of conducting and processing the results. In the first variant, the respondents need to select five most significant motives from the proposed list of 16 academic ones. This provides the opportunity to determine the frequency of naming motives and ranking them. The more times a motive is called, the higher is its rank in the proposed list.

In the second variant of the test, the respondents need to evaluate each of the 16 motives according to a 7-point scale depending on the degree of significance of the motive. It is assumed that 1 point corresponds to the minimum significance, and 7 points – to the maximum one. The processing of the results involves determining the mean value of the motive and the standard deviation, which allows to estimate the value of every motive for the respondents.

For a more profound study of the academic motivation of future special educators, in particular its professional orientation we developed a questionnaire, which comprised nine open questions. The basis of the development was the study of students’ readiness for professional activity (Myronova, 2007). The questions of the questionnaire were aimed at determining the students’ academic motivation and factors influencing its formation:

1. Why have you chosen a profession of a special educator?
2. Do you like to study? Why?
3. What would you change in the educational process of the institution you are studying at?
4. What factors, in your opinion, motivate students to study?
5. What do you like about the profession of a special educator?
6. What do you not like in the profession of a special educator?
7. Has your attitude to the special educator profession changed since your admission (during your studies)? How exactly? What has caused it?
8. Do you plan to work by profession?
9. Would you like to change your profession?

The generalized analysis of the results envisaged determining the motives of choosing the profession; attitude to studying by the chosen profession; motivating factors for students; plans for future employment.

Theoretical Research Results

The scientific literature review has shown various conceptual approaches to the definition of the concept of motivation. F. Guay et al. determine motivation as “the reasons underlying behavior” (Guay et al., 2010). S. Zanyuk considers motivation as a complex of factors that induce an individual to activity and determine the orientation of their activity (Zanyuk, 2002). According to R. J. Wlodkowski, motivation is “a natural human process for directing energy to accomplish a goal” (Wlodkowski, 2008). E. Ilyin distinguishes two directions of determining the essence of motivation: the first – motivation as a set of factors and motives; the second – motivation as a process, a mechanism (Ilyin, 2002). The absence of a unified definition of the concept of motivation determines different approaches to understanding and classifying motives.

The educational activity, like any other, is multi-motivated that is prompted by several reasons, which form a hierarchy. Some motives have a stronger motive power and significance, the other ones – weaker. However, depending on different circumstances, the place of the motive in the hierarchy may change (Zanyuk, 2002). According to A. Markova, the academic motivation is a sphere of behaviour that includes motives, goals, emotions and the ability to study. The scientist distinguishes cognitive and social motives, which are characterized by different levels of formation. Cognitive motives may be focused on mastering knowledge; learning how to obtain knowledge; mastering additional knowledge for further self-improvement. Among social motives we distinguish the understanding of the social value of study, responsibility; the desire to take a certain position, get approval; focus on interaction with other people (Markova, 1990).

An important indicator of academic motivation is its internal or external conditionality. Internal motivation is positive and shows awareness of the value of educational activities. External motivation (social prestige, reward, etc.) is contrasting with the internal one. It can be positive, that is, aimed at achieving success, or negative, aimed at avoiding failure (Rean, 2002). For educational activities, internal motivation is a priority, which depends on individual characteristics and situational factors. The students’ academic motivation is also determined by time characteristics, since its formation determines the reasons for entering the institution of higher education, current educational activities and future plans (Starke, 1982). Accordingly, there are three groups of motives, namely the motives of entering the institution of higher education; actual academic motives; professional motives.

The diversity of motivation indicates the complexity and necessity of its study in order to optimize students’ training. Motivated students are more interested in study, finding ways to improve themselves, creativity, and so on (Wlodkowski, 2008). The fact that motivation contributes to increasing the educational activity and achievement is scientifically proven. Some scientists believe that types of motivation, that is qualitative characteristics, affect the success of study (Guay et al., 2010). The results of other studies indicate that it does not matter what type of motivation students

have, if they its sufficient level. The most important thing is not the quality of motivation, but the level (Vanthournout et al., 2012). The effectiveness of students' studying is provided at least by understanding and realizing the motives which stimulate to activity or opposite.

Empirical Study Results

On the basis of the quantitative analysis of the results of the first variant of Academic Motivation Inventory (modified by A. Rean, V. Yakunin), the frequency of choosing academic motive among the most significant for students and their ranking were determined (Table 1).

Table 1.

Students' Academic Motivation according to the Results of the First Variant of the Test

Name of the motive	Mentioning the motive	Rank of the motive
becoming a highly skilled specialist	80	1
obtaining a diploma	74	2/3
successful studying at the next courses	14	11
academic success, receiving excellent marks	18	9
getting scholarship	49	5
acquiring profound knowledge	74	2/3
being constantly prepared for lessons	5	16
not to lag behind in studying the subjects	7	13/14
keeping up with classmates	6	15
ensuring the success of future professional activity	71	4
fulfilling educational requirements	15	10
obtaining teachers' respect	25	7
being an example for classmates	7	13/14
obtaining parents' and other people's approval	26	8
avoiding condemnation and punishment for academic failure	8	12
getting intellectual pleasure	36	6

According to Table 1, the most important motive for students was "becoming a highly skilled specialist" (rank 1). The motives "obtaining a diploma" and "acquiring profound knowledge" were mentioned for 74 times (rank 2/3). Such motives as "ensuring the success of future professional activity" (rank 4) and "getting scholarship" (rank 5) are also popular with them. The last positions in the ranking of the motives were taken by: "being constantly prepared for lessons" (rank 16), "keeping up with classmates" (rank 15), "not to lag behind in studying the subjects", "being an example for classmates" (rank

13/14), "avoiding condemnation and punishment for academic failure" (rank 12).

The second variant of the methodology provides the opportunity to determine the significance of every motive for the respondent, both individually and together with all the motives presented. In accordance with the procedure of the methodology, the students evaluated every motive of the list using a 7-point scale. In the process of interpreting the results, the mean value of the motive and the standard deviation were determined. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Students' Academic Motivation according to the Results of the Second Variant of the Test

Name of the motive	Mean value of the motive	Standard deviation
becoming a highly skilled specialist	6.45	1.13
obtaining a diploma	6.18	1.17
successful studying at the next courses	4.67	1.71
academic success, receiving excellent marks	4.60	1.99
getting scholarship	5.10	1.96
acquiring profound knowledge	6.39	0.93
being constantly prepared for lessons	4.64	1.49
not to lag behind in studying the subjects	4.90	1.63
keeping up with classmates	4.37	1.72
ensuring the success of future professional activity	6.20	1.23
fulfilling educational requirements	5.08	1.55
obtaining teachers' respect	5.05	1.90
being an example for classmates	4.09	1.89

Name of the motive	Mean value of the motive	Standard deviation
obtaining parents' and other people's approval	4.91	1.73
avoiding condemnation and punishment for academic failure	3.49	1.85
getting intellectual pleasure	5.37	1.50

The results of Table 2 show that such motives as “becoming a highly skilled specialist”, “acquiring profound knowledge”, “ensuring the success of future professional activity”, “obtaining a diploma”, “getting intellectual pleasure” recorded higher mean values (6.45, 6.39, 6.20, 6.18, 5.37, respectively), which indicates their priority for the respondents. The motives “avoiding condemnation and punishment for academic failure”, “being an example for classmates” and “keeping up with classmates” had relatively lower mean values (3.49, 4.09, 4.37, respectively) and therefore were the least significant for the students.

The results of two variants of the methodology indicate the predominance of cognitive academic motives. Among the dominant motives, the students identified “becoming a highly skilled specialist” and “acquiring profound knowledge”. The students also considered a social motive “obtaining a diploma” to be significant, which ranks third among the proposed academic motives.

On the basis of the results of the questionnaire, the motives of choosing the profession of a special educator were determined (Table 3).

Table 3.

Motivation for Choosing the Special Educator Profession

Reasons for choice	Percentage
Desire to work with children	21.36
Recommendations of parents, acquaintances	19.42
Interest in profession of a special educator	18.45
By chance	12.62
Desire to help children with special educational needs	9.71
Getting higher education	8.74
Perspective of further employment	6.79
Desire to help relatives with special educational needs	1.94
Desire to continue dynasty	0.97

The results of the study show that 68.93% of the students have chosen the profession not through professional motivation, but on the recommendations of parents and acquaintances; by chance; for higher education in general; through the perspective of further employment; because of the desire to be a teacher, to work with children, that is, for the adjoining profession to the desired, since they entered the budget. A conscious choice, aimed at mastering the profession of special educator because of interest in profession, the desire to help children with special educational needs or to continue dynasty, made 31.07% of the respondents.

Answering the question “Do you like to study?” 32.04% of the students showed their positive attitude to studying which is preconditioned by interest in study, future profession; 43.69% of the respondents mentioned that they partly enjoyed to study on condition that the lessons and educational materials were interesting, the amount of study work not too large; 24.27% of the students answered “no” that is the evidence of negative attitude which they explained by complexity of study, lack of interest. Answering the question “What would you choose in the educational process of the institution you are studying at?” only 17.48% students pointed out that they were satisfied with everything in the educational process, their attitude to studying was positive, therefore they highly evaluated the process of special educa-

tor training. 82.52% of the students made suggestions as for changes in the educational process for increasing its effectiveness, in particular:

- increase in the amount of practical work with children with special educational needs (internships, seminars, workshops) – 24.27%;
- reduction of study work (number of classes, self-study) – 21.36%;
- reduction in the number of subjects of general training – 13.59%;
- increase in the number of seminars and trainings – 6.8%;
- possibility of free attendance without passing missed classes – 5.83%;
- increase in number of subjects of professional training – 4.85%;
- convenient timetable – 2.91 %;
- enhancement of teaching staff competence – 2.91%.

The percentage index (38.83%) of such suggestions as increase in practical work with children, seminars and trainings, increase in the number of subjects of professional training, improving the quality of teaching subjects is the evidence of orientation at mastering the profession. The index of desirable changes is quite high (43.69%) which refers to the organization of study, in particular reduction of

study work, free attendance of classes, reduction in number of general training subjects. This proves the lack of academic motivation, passive attitude of the students.

One of the aspects of our research involved determining factors that motivate students to study, which they

were suggested to name themselves. By superposing similar factors upon their duplicates, we distinguished and ranked 8, according to the frequency of mentioning the factor by the students in their answers. The results are represented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Factors that Motivate Students to Study

Factors determined by students	Mentioning the factor
Quality of study (quality of content and methods of teaching)	58
Scholarship	36
Self-motivation (desire to study, to master the profession, interest)	35
Desire to receive a diploma	28
Teachers' attitude (encouragement, approval)	18
Marks/grades	12
Students' body (academic group)	7
Parents' demand	5

As can be seen from Table 2, the most important factor that motivates students to study is "quality of study". Self-motivation is not of primary importance. However, mentioning such factors as "quality of study" and "self-motivation", which prevail by frequency of mentioning, affirms cognitive motives aimed at mastering knowledge, professional skills, getting intellectual satisfaction with the studying process. "Scholarship" and "desire to receive a diploma" are of great importance for the students which is indicative of social direction of studying. The following factors were mentioned less frequently: "teachers' attitude", "marks", "students' body", "parents' demand", which are social and aimed at getting approval, interacting with others, regarding study as a duty. The location of the "marks" factor at the end of priority proves that scholarship is necessary not as an index of high level of study but as a financial reward, aspiration for self-sufficiency, independence.

According to the results of the investigation the positive attitude to the special educator profession was expressed by 83.5% of the students. Among factors appreciated in the profession, the students mentioned the following ones:

- possibility to help children with special educational needs – 38.84%;
- work with children, pedagogical activity – 28.16%;
- perspective of the profession – 5.83%;
- interesting profession – 4.85%;
- creativity – 3.88%;
- short duration of a working day – 1.94%.

6.8% of the students did not mention any factors that were attractive in the profession of a special educator; 9.7% of the investigated mentioned that they did not like the profession.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of the students' positive attitude to the special educator profession, 22.33% of the students mentioned that they did not plan to pursue profession in future and would like to change the occupation; 19.42% of the students were undecided concerning the desire to pursue profession or to change it; 7.77% of the respondents expressed the desire to get additional profession for increasing their chances of employment in

future. Such results affirm the lack of priority of the chosen profession in future life.

The analysis of the results has shown that in the process of the study, 32.05% of the students understand that the profession is quite complicated, requires much responsibility, emotional efforts, thus they are not motivated enough for employment; 4.85% of the respondents have changed their attitude from positive into negative; 4.85% of the students have not formed any positive attitude.

The lack of mature motivation to pursue profession is caused by the presence of factors that do not appeal in the special educator profession. In the process of the investigation the following factors were determined by 79.61% of the students:

- difficulty of special educator's work (morally, emotionally) – 40.78%;
- great responsibility – 11.65%;
- big amount of documents that must be filled – 9.7%;
- inconvenient with children contingent – 5.83%;
- lack of understanding problems of children with special educational needs by society – 5.83%;
- needs too much time – 2.91%;
- harmful work – 1.94%;
- low salary – 0.97%.

20.39% of the respondents did not determine any reasons for negative attitude to the profession of a special educator.

Discussion

The obtained results are in line with those ones of other investigations (Myronova, 2007; Pryadko, 2010) in particular concerning the lack of professional academic motivation aimed at the future profession, students' desire to pursue profession. Like in the previous studies by S. Myronova, it has been found that there is a considerable index of dissatisfaction with some aspects of the special educator profession, which has resulted in low professional motivation. However, the prior reason for discontent in the previous studies is "low salary of special educators", and in our investigation such a reason is "difficulty of special educator's work". Thus the results of our study show not

the external factor of dissatisfaction with the profession but internal psychological conditionality, which is connected with the peculiarities of the profession.

The generalized results of the investigation prearrange the necessity of the purposeful influence on academic motivation of students aimed at forming their professional orientation. The students' awareness of the essence and humane attitude to the special educator profession do not stimulate studying and future job placement. We have outlined the ways of forming professionally oriented academic motivation of the future special educators which envisage changes in the process of students' training, beginning from the entrance, in particular:

1. Carrying out more extended career guidance and explanatory work with applicants for conscious choice of the special educator profession.

2. Supplying with professional orienting subjects of professional training as well as general.

3. Forming necessary qualities of the special educator personality when studying all educational disciplines.

4. Involving students in different active forms of interaction with children with special educational needs, in particular volunteering, public activities, etc.

5. Changing the paradigm of conducting lectures, seminars and workshops, employing interactive methods of teaching, innovative technologies.

6. Reorienting the content of students' self-study: from working up academic materials to practical, scientific research activity.

Conclusions

The results of the empirical investigation of academic motivation of the students majoring in "Special Education" affirmed its diversity and multi-motivation, as long as they revealed the effect of several motives. Among the dominant motives there are cognitive, in particular "be-

coming a highly skilled specialist" and "acquiring profound knowledge", aimed at mastering professional knowledge, skills. The dominant social academic motive is "obtaining a diploma".

The majority of students make their choice of the future profession unconsciously. In the process of training it is reflected in the students' passive attitude to mastering the profession, insufficient level of positive and negative attitude to studying. The most motivating factor for students is "quality of study", which confirms the predominance of cognitive motives. Such factors as "desire to receive a diploma" and "scholarship" are considerable.

For most students the professional interest and positive attitude to the profession appear in the process of studying. They become aware of significance and humane direction of the special educator job, which attracts them most of all by its opportunity to help children with special educational needs, to conduct pedagogical activity. However, a considerable number of students do not transform their positive attitude to the profession into a stable professional motive and desire to pursue profession which is caused by dissatisfaction with it.

The analysis of the research results proves the necessity to make a direct impact on forming professional academic motivation, in particular professional interests, awareness of peculiarities of special educator professional activity, positive attitude to children with special educational needs by means of the optimization of special educators training during the entire period of studying, including the period of entering the higher education institution.

A promising area of our study involves the testing of the ways outlined by us for the formation of professionally oriented academic motivation of future special educators in the process of professional training.

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МОТИВАЦІЯ НАВЧАННЯ СТУДЕНТІВ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ «СПЕЦІАЛЬНА ОСВІТА»

У статті розглядається актуальна проблема мотивації навчання студентів закладів вищої освіти. Визначено, що ефективність професійної підготовки майбутніх корекційних педагогів значною мірою зумовлена мотивацією навчання за відповідною спеціальністю. Метою статті є аналіз результатів дослідження мотивації навчання студентів спеціальності «Спеціальна освіта» та визначення шляхів формування професійно спрямованої мотивації навчання. Для дослідження особливостей мотивації навчання майбутніх корекційних педагогів використовувались такі методи: методика «Вивчення мотивів навчальної діяльності студентів», модифікована А. Реаном, В. Якунін; анкетування. За результатами методики виявлено переважання пізнавальних мотивів навчання, зокрема «стати висококваліфікованим фахівцем» та «оволодіти глибокими та міцними знаннями». Домінуючим соціальним мотивом навчання є «отримання диплому». Результати анкетування засвідчили, що більша частина студентів здійснює вибір майбутньої професії несвідомо, що у процесі навчання проявляється у недостатній сформованості позитивного та активного ставлення до навчання. Найбільш мотивуючим фактором для студентів є «якість навчання», що підтверджує переважання пізнавальних мотивів. Проте, власне мотивування до навчання за обраною професією не є пріоритетним спонукаючим фактором. У цілому студенти усвідомлюють гуманність та значущість професії корекційного педагога, але позитивне ставлення до професії не сприяє формуванню стійких професійних мотивів, переконань щодо подальшої роботи за фахом, що обумовлено причинами незадоволеності професією. Узагальнений аналіз результатів засвідчив необхідність формування професійно спрямованої мотивації навчання. У статті окреслено шляхи формування професійно спрямованої мотивації навчання майбутніх корекційних педагогів у процесі підготовки в закладах вищої освіти, апробація яких буде перспективним напрямком дослідження.

Ключові слова: мотивація, мотив, студенти спеціальності «Спеціальна освіта», професійно спрямована мотивація навчання.

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