

Issues of Professional Training for Russian Language Teachers in the Conditions of a Multicultural Environment

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the issues of professional training for future Russian language teachers in the context of global changes taking place in the sphere of education. The paper used data from monitoring studies conducted by the authors in different years in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which made it possible to expand and deepen the system of professional training for teachers of the Russian language in terms of such aspects as content, management and organization. The study reveals the ways of solving the following problems: teaching the Russian language to migrants' children, where the teachers must be willing to address the problems of language and socio-cultural adaptation of migrants' children; it is necessary to prepare teams of authors for the development of the Russian language textbooks for migrants' children who are speakers of other languages; teaching Russian as a second language where methodological preparation of students, who will work in a bilingual environment, should change dramatically based on the theory of intercultural communication, cultural linguistics and the results of comparative-typological studies; language groups at schools need regional Russian language school textbooks which would correspond to the requirements of the Federal State Education Standards (FSES) in the field of inclusive education where the introduction of special FSES for children with disabilities imposes new requirements for the professional competence of teachers; it is necessary to create a special remedial and developing environment for children with disabilities in Russian language lessons.

KEYWORDS

professional training, multicultural learning environment, bilingual children, migrants' children, inclusive education, teaching aids

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Introduction

Today, in the age of networks and global transformations, the structure and content of education have changed dramatically. Every year, there is an increase in the demand of society for professional training of teaching staff, because socio-economic development of the country depends on their expertise. The adoption of the law "On Education in the Russian Federation" has laid the legal basis for the

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establishment of a new educational paradigm, which is based on a system-activity approach, and the federal state educational standard is aimed at practical training. Modernization of the general education system in the Russian Federation and the competence approach in training focus the teachers' attention on the formation of a creative personality, responsible and able to take constructive and informed decisions on diverse life situations. Teachers are required to change their methodological thinking under the influence of migration processes, teaching in the context of bilingualism and inclusive education.

In these conditions, improvements should be made in the content, the form of teaching and upbringing as well as in the training and retraining of teaching staff. Training teachers of the Russian language is of utmost importance, as the Russian language is the fundamental basis of the civil self-identity, an essential component of the world culture and the basis of moral and spiritual development of an individual. A teacher as a subject of the pedagogical process becomes the key participant of the social and cultural changes in society. Analysis of the legislative, regulatory and legal framework, studies on methodology, pedagogy and qualitative assessment of students' knowledge have shown that there are contradictions between the current system of training for teachers of the Russian language and the challenges of the new age. The specific feature of the modern time is that today there is demand for professionals, competitive specialists, for whom lifelong learning becomes the basic principle of self-development. In our view, whatever resources are invested in meaningful, technological, managerial and organizational development, it is the teacher who determines the result and quality of education.

Concept headings

The aim of the study is to determine the best ways to improve the training for teachers of the Russian language and literature taking into consideration the demands of the contemporary society based on multi-factor analysis of the learning environment. The study carries out an analysis of legislation and regulatory documents in the field of linguistic and pedagogical education that define the state policy in the Russian Federation. The study also analyzes the Federal State Education Standards for general and higher education, academic documents including the main educational programs, curricula, the syllabuses of pedagogical practices and subjects as well as teaching aids for the Russian language and the methodology of teaching these subjects. This article uses the methods of generalization and systematization of the factual material, which helps to identify problems and determines new vectors of development for professional training of Russian language teachers, which are integrated into the European educational space.

Results and Discussion

Regulatory framework of language education

The study of the major regulatory documents of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in the field of linguistic and pedagogical education suggests that language policy is an integral part of the government strategy and is aimed at creating conditions for harmonious interaction between languages. The law "On Education in the Russian Federation" stipulates that

the Russian Federation shall guarantee education in the official language of the Russian Federation, as well as the choice of language of education and training within the opportunities offered by the educational system (FL 273-FZ, 2012). The Federal State Educational Standard for general secondary (full) education also takes into account the regional and ethnocultural needs of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is home for 126 nationalities, and the following languages function at the legislative level (Article 46 of the Constitution of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): Russian as a state language in the Russian Federation, Yakut as a state language as well as five official languages of the low-numbered peoples of the North in the places of their residence. The basis for implementing language education in our republic is formed by the law “On Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” (LRS 1170-XII, 1992), the Concept of School Language Education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (Vasilyeva and Bryzgalova, 2001), the State Target Program of Language Construction, implemented in 2005-2007, the sub-program “Preservation, Study and Development of State and Official Languages in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)” of the State Program “Development of Education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2012-2016”. The author of this article is one of the developers of these two government programs for language policy.

Consideration of these regulatory documents confirms the validity of one of the leading didactic principles in the methodology of teaching the Russian language i.e. taking into account the native language. The close connection between teaching the native language and Russian while preserving their autonomy is a fundamental methodological approach to the study of the Russian language in conditions of active multilingualism. In this regard, the article by Nikolaeva A.D., Barahsanova E.A., Golikov A.I. and others is of an undeniable interest as it deals with typology of language education, taking into account regional characteristics (Nikolayeva et al., 2016).

Introduction of the Federal State Educational Standards for general and higher education of the new generation sets new long-term objectives for schools and universities. Standards are new requirements for pupils, school teachers, parents, society, schools, students, university professors and higher educational institutions. Modern schools require another type of professionals with innovative thinking and an exploratory approach to the solution of educational tasks. In the Professional Standard for Teachers (2015), regulating the teachers’ activities, it is specified that the ability to learn becomes the main professional quality that a teacher should constantly demonstrate to their pupils.

The Concept of Teaching the Russian Language and Literature in the Russian Federation (2016) properly emphasizes that in order to improve the quality of work for teachers of the Russian language it is extremely important to improve the system of training and additional professional education for teachers of the Russian language and literature with regard to the formation of the competences necessary for teaching in a multilingual environment.

New vectors in the professional training of Russian language teachers

This issue is the focus of the studies of such scholars as N.A. Belova, I.S. Bessarabov, N.I. Bukovtsov, L.V. Cherepanova, O.V. Gukalenko, R.R. Devletov, E.P. Savitskaya, M.K. Umarov, S.V. Ustinkin, etc. The issues of developing professional teacher training are also the subject of pedagogical



studies of foreign scholars such as N. Bartels (2005), S. Borg (2006), L. Delano, L. Riley and G. Crookes, (1994), D. Hall and A. Hewings, (2001), etc.

In connection with the introduction and implementation of Federal State Educational Standards for general secondary and higher professional education, the strategy for teacher education has changed dramatically. When addressing the issues of language education at schools and higher educational institutions, the quality of teaching the Russian language can undoubtedly be enhanced by relying on research into psychology, modern linguistics, contrastive-typological linguistics and cultural linguistics.

Analysis of the existing state educational standards for “Teacher Education” has shown that they do not specify the requirements of how a future teacher of the Russian language and literature can develop competences that enable them to promptly resolve professional tasks in the sphere of multicultural and inclusive education.

At the present stage of domestic teacher education development, the following problems remain unresolved:

- linguistic, social and cultural adaptation of pupils in general educational institutions against the background of the existing expansion of migration processes in Russia;

- inclusive education. From year to year there is an increase in the number of disabled children, who must have access to education, wherever they live. The realization of the right to education for children with disabilities is an important aspect of a state policy in the sphere of education of any developed nation. According to statistics in our republic, 645 children with disabilities are involved in inclusive education. Schools and universities are faced with the task to ensure equal access to education for all learners, taking into account the diversity of their educational needs as well as the task to implement customized educational programs.

- interconnected teaching of Russian and the native language also demands a special approach, since learning a second language is a complex psycho-physiological process which is accompanied by interaction of the language which is being learned with the native one; in the mind of the learner a language laboratory is formed, where the facts about two or three languages are compared. Therefore, bilingual students’ level of Russian language proficiency is different from that of students for whom Russian is a native language. This factor should be taken into account in teaching as well as in teacher training. The curricula developed in higher educational institutions should take this important aspect into consideration. Thus, special preparation of Russian language teachers is required. In the Professional Standard for Teachers it is stated, “A teacher of the Russian language should show a positive attitude towards the native languages of the students in class and should possess the methods and techniques of teaching Russian as a second language” (Professional standards for teachers).

- it is becoming a distinctive feature of modern open education for students to get individualized learning choosing the content and setting the schedule for learning by themselves.

- the improvement of educational environment, allowing the use of innovative methods as well as information and communication technologies is a requirement for the conditions of learning. No modern infrastructure will lead to the desired result in terms of improving the quality of teaching and training

without a teacher as a key figure. Therefore, the ability to use information and communication technologies is a required component of professional training for future teachers of the Russian language and literature.

Mastering the innovative technologies of reflexive learning, critical thinking, creative self-development pedagogy, interactive teaching methods, project activities and language portfolios contribute to mastering universal educational actions, professional pedagogical competences, and develop intellectual, communicative and creative abilities of students. Another reserve of improving the quality of teaching Russian is the widespread use of the project method, which makes it possible to generate new and exciting ideas and develop research skills.

The viability of introducing distance learning is that in our republic 71% of educational organizations are located in rural areas, and the distance between them sometimes reaches 200-300 kilometers. Therefore, network teaching and bringing children to school by school transport are available only in areas which are located close to the center. Most of these schools are underfilled and 212 of them are located in remote areas which are hard to reach. As a rule, such educational institutions are hard to staff with specialists in all subjects taught there. For this reason, for over 20 years, our department has trained teachers not only in such majors as the Russian language and literature, but also Russian and English languages. Taking into account the requests of municipal institutions, employers and parents, such training can be extended into other related subject areas, for example, the Russian language and literature + the Yakut language and literature; the Russian language and literature + history. The training of teachers in integrated majors is required by employers, and reflects the specific features of our republic.

A teacher and an educator is, first and foremost, a spiritual mentor. A teacher's main duty is to educate a citizen and a personality. It is a teacher's actions that form the consciousness and the civil position of the new generation of our republic and the country. So we have turned to the research of the scholars who have studied the life values of youth, future teachers as active subjects of social reproduction. Studies have shown that they are ready for innovative transformations; they are able not only to quickly adapt to the social reality ("adaptive-functional quality"), but also to actively influence its positive change ("perspective reproduction quality"). The progressiveness and efficiency of the young generation's transformational activity is determined by the properties, which are specifically formed by the society and the state in the process of their development. (Neustroev et al., 2016) This implies that in teacher training a great deal of attention should be paid to the educational aspect.

As practice shows, language teachers resolve the above-mentioned problems independently, relying on their knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, as yet there is no special training for teaching staff, aimed at working in the context of linguistic heterogeneity. Moreover, a methodological framework catering for the needs of migrants' children has not been developed yet. Meanwhile, at the present stage, migration issues are part of the language policy of the Russian Federation.

A great contribution to the training of teachers of the Russian language and literature is made by the Philological Faculty of the Ammosov North-Eastern



Federal University. In this academic year 40 teachers have graduated in the Russian language and literature.

In recent years, systematic work has been done in the field of training teachers in terms of improving the basic educational programs, introducing the competence-based approach, doing research on the functioning of the Russian language in intercultural communication, the heterogeneous environment and broadening the range of study areas for modular and variable master's programs meeting the new challenges of the time (at the Philology Department of North-Eastern Federal University, 12 master's programs are being implemented). The basic educational programs cease to be linear. In our opinion, from the point of view of the subject matter, of particular interest is L.V. Cherepanova's study which focuses on the problem of blending the curricula of the higher education and general school education during the training of bachelors and masters, future teachers of the Russian language and literature (Cherepanova, 2012).

With a view to improving the training of Russian language teachers, it is necessary to develop a system of study modules for the basic subjects for methodological training of bachelors and masters in education (for example, "Pedagogical Rhetoric", "Theory and Methodology of Teaching Russian Language") and optional subjects (in the variable part of the curriculum, for example, "Professional Textual Activities of Language Teachers in a Multi-Ethnic Environment", "An Integrative Approach to the Study of Philological Subjects in School with a Multi-Ethnic Composition of Students", etc.); the presentation of their content in teaching aids, including work programs and methodological recommendations, study guides and textbooks (Belova, 2013). According to the National Rating of Universities on the basis of the results of 2015-2016 academic year, a superior status was given to the master's programs in "Education" of North-Eastern Federal University. The University is searching for new forms of partnerships with educational organizations. As a result of monitoring the activities of universities, which was conducted by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, our university has been found to be effective in working with schools and pupils. A multidiscipline approach to teaching the Russian language and literature is implemented in the teaching practice, and the meta skills acquired by the students contribute to the conscious and meaningful learning of other subjects. We are faced with the task of creating a network of interregional master courses (Russian Language + Literature + History + Psychology + Pedagogy, etc.)

As a positive experience, it should be noted that in our republic all curricula in "Education" are approved by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), where there is an expert board with the participation of scientists, methodologists and employers. Nowadays, of particular relevance is the problem of ensuring the active participation of employers in the formation of the state order, the development of professional standards, the formation of training lists as well as in the evaluation of educational programs.

Practice teaching is a key element in the continuous professional training of future teachers of language and literature. One cannot but agree with M.K. Umarova that during teaching practice the activity of students of the Faculty of Russian Philology should be aimed at the formation of a specific set of skills that underlie the formation of future teachers' professional competence, such as constructive, communicative, educational and leadership competences as well as research skills (Umarova, 2016). The analysis of the curriculum

implemented at the Faculty of Philology of North-Eastern Federal University for bachelors in “Education” majoring in Russian Language and Literature, there are two courses of educational practice teaching in the second and third years of studies (2 weeks each), there is also practice teaching in the fourth year of studies (4 weeks) and pre-graduation practice teaching in the final year (4 weeks). Overall, as many as 164 hours are allocated for all types of practice teaching. The curriculum for the master’s program “Interdisciplinary Links in Teaching Russian Language and Literature” includes three courses of practice teaching: educational practice teaching (2 weeks), practice teaching (4 weeks) and pre-graduation practice teaching (12 weeks), which totals 100 hours. Naturally, these hours are not sufficient in order to ensure that future teachers can effectively develop their professional competences during practice teaching, so it is necessary to constantly improve the contents and forms of practice teaching. Opening basic departments in general educational institutions of the republic, which are aimed at strengthening the practice-orientation of training, will provide an opportunity to improve the quality of organizing the practice teaching. In our view, it is important to resume the concept of mentoring in order to support trainees and young professionals.

The Russian language has an important social function, so a teacher of language and literature, in our view, should take an active part in various projects in order to promote the language of international communication. The Faculty of Philology is the initiator and moderator of holding the Russian nationwide campaign “Total Dictation”, which is gaining in popularity; it involves not only pupils and students but also members of the government, staff of ministries, lovers and connoisseurs of the Russian literature, residents of the republic as well as people wishing to check their literacy. As is well known, out of 146 thousand Russians who took part in this Russian nationwide campaign, only one percent got high marks. In Yakutia this year 3.6% of participants of this event wrote a dictation with excellent marks, last year there were twice as many of them. The results of the total dictation and error analysis reveal the problems of teaching not only in the sphere of the Russian language and literature, but also of the entire education system. A great deal of work is being carried out in order to improve literacy. Thus, educational organizations have resumed the practice of students writing compositions and an oral part of the Russian language examination may be added to the test in the near future. In addition to this, a lot is being done to increase children’s motivation to read.

The project “Trial Composition”, which will be implemented by the teachers and students of the Faculty of Philology, deserves special attention. On the same day in October, students of the republic’s secondary schools, mostly senior students, will write a composition on a voluntary basis. These written works will be checked by teachers and senior university students. Written feedback and error analysis are given for each composition. As a result of this event, individual consultations are planned for students and teachers of the Russian language and literature. Undoubtedly, the project aims to improve the quality of preparing students for the final composition, to broaden their literary horizons and to develop coherent Russian speech.

Creating a multifunctional language center is another promising project which will be implemented this year on the basis of the Department of Methodology of Teaching Russian Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology. It is created in order to promote the state language of the Russian



Federation, the scientific and methodological support of innovative transformations taking place in the field of methodology of Russian language teaching and the dissemination of the best practices. Teachers of the center will conduct professional development courses for teachers of language and literature. On the basis of professional standards, educational programs have been developed and agreed with employers. The center's tasks include holding regional, republican and Russian nationwide scientific-practical conferences, creating online information systems for teachers and students, online and offline contests and competitions, master classes as well as discussion forums. Participation in the organization of courses in preparation for competitions, in the final assessment of students in the Russian language and literature and in the literary and technical editing and translation of texts of different styles and genres will encourage future teachers to develop their professional competences. This project will encourage language students to demonstrate their intellectual and creative abilities.

Conclusion

Thus, in the field of training teaching staff and teachers of the Russian language and literature in particular, new scientific and pedagogical objectives are set. It is required to intensively introduce new information and communication technologies and methodologies. In our view, it is important to pay attention to creating individual educational trajectories when teaching students.

The results of contrastive typological and monitoring studies must become the scientific basis for the extended linguo-didactic description of Russian as a second language. This data will make it possible to develop new courses in the theory and methodology of teaching the Russian language in a multicultural educational environment. It is necessary to strengthen the metadisciplinary approach to teaching the Russian language in universities. It is necessary to restore the practice of creating Russian textbooks for bilingual schools, taking into account the specific features of linguistic groups (Turkic, Abkhazian-Circassian, Finno-Ugric, Mongolian) with their subsequent inclusion in the federal list compiled by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

We consider it appropriate to create a modern informational and educational environment in universities, providing training in specialized bachelor and master programs in "The Russian Language and Literature".

Opening specialized dissertation boards for the major 13.00.02 - theory and methodology of training and education in the leading universities of the country will improve the quality of training for highly qualified teaching staff.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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