

Experience as a predictor of the level of professional responsibility of primary school teachers

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Abstract

Works on responsibility are found in pedagogy, sociology, political science, philosophy, law and, of course, psychology. At the same time, interpretations of this concept are so different in different areas that there is conceptual and methodological inconsistency that complicates understanding of the content of the phenomenon of "responsibility". This can be a quality of personality, a skill, an emotional state, and sometimes all at once. At the same time, responsibility may be an important indicator of the level of professional development of a specialist, or may characterize the degree of personal development. This article considers how the length of service and the level of acceptance of responsibility in primary school teachers are interrelated. Understanding that the level of a child's development, safety and behavior depends largely on your actions will determine how the teacher will interact with his subjects and how he treats them. The aim of this study was to identify a pattern of change in the level of responsibility depending on the length of service and how it manifests itself in professional life. As a hypothesis, it was suggested that the more seniority the teacher has, the higher the level of responsibility and the more control he will have over the pupils' behavior.

Psychodiagnostic methods were used as research tools to identify the level of professional responsibility and strategies for interaction with students in primary schools. In order to determine how the length of service can influence the level of responsibility and its way of working, a comparison of teachers with different work experience (up to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years) was made. The study proved that the level of responsibility does not change linearly, with the highest level of responsibility recorded for teachers who have worked for less than 5 years and the lowest level for teachers who have worked for 5 to 10 years. While teachers do not increase their level of responsibility as their experience increases, they are more likely to adopt an authoritarian style of interaction with learners. On the other hand, teachers with no more than 5 years of experience are more likely to focus on children as independent subjects of the pedagogical process and give them more freedom.

Keywords: professional responsibility, attitude towards children, teacher, primary school, work experience.

Introduction

Understanding the consequences of your actions is an important skill for any person. It guides a person on the right path, helps to anticipate the result and avoid mistakes. There is nothing wrong with mistakes themselves, there is a popular axiom "learning from past mistakes". A mistake is an experience and new knowledge. But there are a number of professions where this learning tool will be considered inadmissible. Of course, inadmissibility of an error is associated first of all with the profession of a doctor.

A mistake in this profession can cost the patient's life. We can name one more profession where a specialist's mistakes can also have a great impact on a person's life, but unfortunately, they cannot be seen immediately. This is the profession of a teacher. Unprofessional behavior of the teacher, incorrect attitude towards students often lead to the formation of non-adaptive behavior in students. This is especially noticeable in primary school, when children are in a sensitive period of development [4].

Nevertheless, the ability to understand the consequences of one's actions should be an important attribute of a primary school teacher's professional performance. As an independent phenomenon, this skill is not considered, but is highlighted as a component of professional responsibility [6]. The study of professional responsibility in modern psychology is a popular direction; it is given an important place in the structure of the study of the subject of labor, but there are still many contradictions to be studied.

One of such contradictions is the study of manifestation of professional responsibility in primary school teachers. The essence of the problem is that professional responsibility is formed gradually, in the process of adaptation to labor activity [12], but the teacher's profession is characterized by a high level of professional burnout, which reduces the level of responsibility. Hence, the question arises: how do changes in the level of responsibility take place depending on the length of service and how does this manifest itself in professional activity? The search for an answer to this question was the aim of our research. As a hypothesis, it was suggested that the more seniority the teacher has, the higher the level of responsibility and the more he will control the pupils' behavior.

Literature Review

"Responsibility" is a complex and multifaceted notion. There is no single understanding of this term in psychological science. It can be considered both as a property of the person and as a process, in some works - as personal belief [22]. One of the first psychologists who began to consider the problem of responsibility was J. Piaget. He focused on the cognitive aspect, observed how children from 7 to 11 years old think about responsibility. As a result, he came to the opinion that responsibility is the ability to experience guilt for certain deviations, violations of actions, acts that do not meet the requirements of others [11]. L. Kolberg and K. Helkam continued to reveal the cognitive aspect of responsibility in their works. They singled out two important characteristics of responsible behavior: the acceptance of the results of their actions and the awareness of the social role for which it is necessary to be accountable [17]. It is worth noting that many authors note the role not only of the cognitive component, but also of the emotional one. The process of accepting responsibility often involves strong emotions and doubts; on the other hand, responsibility gives a sense of control and self-satisfaction [21].

An equally interesting direction in understanding responsibility lies in the plane of freedom. This is an area of existential psychology in which the condition for responsibility formation in a subject is the presence of freedom. Only autonomy and possibility to act independently allow a person to feel responsibility for his or her actions [26]. From the point of view of the humanistic direction, freedom is not enough; one still needs personal maturity. Scientists such as A. Maslow, K. Rogers, A.K. Abulkhanova, M.V. Gamezo argued that responsibility is expressed in the need to be a part of society, to self-fulfillment in society, in the aspiration to conscious freedom of choice and to find the meaning of life [1; 16; 22;]. In modern theories and concepts considering responsibility, the central element is causality, i.e., awareness of oneself as the cause of events, understanding how your actions affect others and what consequences they may bring [18; 24].

In relation of current research, works that considered the manifestation of responsibility in professional activity are interesting. For example, Professor W. Hochwarter argued that assumption of responsibility by employees of organizations increases efficiency and productivity [20]. G. Ball points out that the level of competence of an employee is directly related to his level of responsibility [2].

The most complete and interesting model of responsibility was suggested by V. Schlenker [25]; it describes in sufficient detail how the subject of labor manifests responsibility within the framework of labor functions. Responsibility is the interaction of three elements: the personality of the subject, which is in a situation where the choice of actions adequate to the situation is made; the situation itself, which implies a certain behavior; and the regulations governing the actions in the situation. In this case, responsible behavior is when all three elements are closed, the subject acts according to instructions, thus adequately resolving the situation [5]. The same three elements often act as criteria for the subject's responsibility [8].

An important element in considering accountability is the factors that influence its formation. One of the most popular factors is the presence of an internal locus of control - is the consciousness that the events taking place are largely dependent on the employee. Working badly, ignoring the requirements of management - there will be a small salary and no career progression, and if you are a good specialist and strive to comply with the job duties in full - it will promote professional advancement [19].

Another factor is the anxiety property of the personality. In the study of V.P. Pryadeyin [13], a correlation of anxiety was revealed at different stages of the nascent responsible action. He comes to the conclusion that only substantial characteristics (cognitive, motivational) of responsibility increase in troubled individuals, but the practical realization of this orientation does not occur, but rather an increase in behavioral passivity, negative emotions, and unwillingness to take responsibility. A number of Russian authors (D.A. Leontiev, L.I. Dementius, K. Muzdybaev) point out the value structures of personality as an important attribute of responsibility formation in the process of professional activity. Personal values act both as motivational elements and cognitive elements. They guide and organize human behavior for certain purposes and are quite stable psychic regulators of social behavior of people [3; 7; 9].

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the presence of responsibility directly influences the exercise of professional activity, and factors such as personal values, internal locus of control and low levels of anxiety will determine its presence.

Materials and methods

To confirm the hypothesis, a comparison was made of three groups of subjects (primary school teachers) with different length of service by the level of responsibility. Measurements were made in three groups. The groups were formed on two grounds: length of service (up to 5 years, from 5 to 10 years; from 10 to 20 years) and age (under 30 years; from 31 to 44 years; from 45 to 64 years). This division was based on periodization by the American psychologist D. Super [27]. He singled out the stages of personality development, and we took only those periods directly related to labor activity. There are three of them: the trial stage, during which a person "tries" himself or herself as a full-fledged specialist capable of "competing" with more experienced workers (20-30 years); the stage of stabilization, assertion of himself or herself as a reliable and successful specialist (from 30 to 44 years); the stage of maintaining, preserving the achieved positions (during career efforts). At this stage, a person strives to create a stable professional and social position (from 45 to 64 years).

To reveal the level of professional responsibility in this research, the method "Acceptance of Responsibility" developed by V.P. Prjadein was used [14]. In this technique, the author, using stimulating material from the Rosenzweig test, reveals two factors of responsibility: acceptance of consequences of his actions in a situation of accusation (Factor 1) and the subject's actions in a situation of acceptance of responsibility by another person (Factor 2). In total, these two factors determine the level of responsibility manifestation (Factor A).

To reveal the method of communication between teacher and students, the authors A.Y.Varga and V.V.Stolin used the Method of Diagnostics of Parental Relations [15]. The wording of the questions was corrected in accordance with the research objectives. The method allows to reveal five types of teacher's attitude towards children: acceptance (positive attitude towards the pupil), cooperation (interest in the pupil), symbiosis (minimum level of distance with the pupil), control (requirement of obedience), and small failure (attitude as a nonthinking creature).

The obtained results have been processed using methods of mathematical statistics: descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance [10]. The calculations were performed using SPSS 21 for Windows.

The empirical study was carried out on the basis of secondary educational institutions. It involved 97 primary school teachers. The sample was divided into three groups: work experience up to 5 years and age up to 30 years - 32 people; work experience from 5 to 10 years and age from 31 to 44 years - 36 people; work experience from 10 to 20 years and age from 45 to 64 years - 29 people.

Results

In order to determine whether there are differences in the level of responsibility and attitude towards students among primary school teachers with different backgrounds, the Kruskal-Wallis criterion was applied, the results of which are presented in Table 1. The comparison did not reveal reliable differences in Factor 2, the Acceptance of Responsibility methodology and the Symbiosis and Little Loser scales, and the Parental Diagnostic methodology. This testifies to the fact that the actions of the subject of labor in the situation of acceptance of responsibility by another person and the treatment of students as unintentional and non-dependent objects are not connected with age and experience variables. Accordingly, there is no reason to argue that the more experienced a primary school teacher, the more often or less often he or she treats children as non-self-contained beings, rather than as an autonomous person.

Table 1. Comparison results on the reliability of differences between the three groups in the research

	Acceptance	Cooperation	Control	Factor 1	Factor A
Chi-square	29,757	43,697	9,557	16,688	11,863
Asympt. value	,000	,000	,008	,000	,003
	Average				
Group 1	30,8	5,6	3,3	6,3	15,8
Group 2	26,6	6,4	4,17	6,5	12,6
Group 3	24,3	5,2	4,6	7,3	13,2

On other scales of applied methods, reliable differences were found. In order to determine the direction of change, the average score for each group of study was calculated.

As a result, it was shown that the attitude of a primary school teacher can change depending on experience and seniority. On the "Acceptance" scale, we can see a bright decline in scores from fairly high (30.8) for teachers who have worked for less than 5 years to average (24.3) for teachers who have worked for more than 10 years.

The opposite picture is observed on the "Control" scale (from 6.3 to 7.3). Quite an original picture of changes is presented on the "Cooperation" scale; the most popular is the attitude to students among primary school teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience (6.4), while the least interest from the sample is shown by teachers who have worked more than 10 years (5.2). Professional responsibility is even more confusing. The peak of the level of responsibility is shown during the first five years of work (15.8), while the lowest level is shown by teachers who have worked for 5 to 10 years. After ten years, the level of responsibility starts to increase (13.2).

In order to reveal the regularities and interrelationships between the presented factors and scales, data for each group of subjects were processed by means of factor analysis (method of determining factors: analysis of main components). The results of the first group of investigated are presented in table 2, the second group - in table 3, the third group - in table 4.

The results of the factor analysis of the first group of teachers with up to 5 years of work experience showed two groups of interrelated elements. The group of the first group of factors explains 60% of the variance, the second group - 20%. In total, both groups explain 80% of the sample's dispersion.

Table 2. Factor analysis results of the first group of study
(work experience up to 5 years and age up to 30 years)

Components matrix		
	Factors	
	1	2
Acceptance	,877	
Cooperation	,865	
Symbiosis		-,841
Control	,836	
Failure	,692	
Factor 1	,880	
Factor 2		,628
Factor A	,931	

The first group of factors includes the largest number of variables (acceptance, cooperation, control, failure, factor 1 and factor A), this indicates the relationship of responsibility with the choice of strategy of action. At the same time, the general level of responsibility in this group is conditioned by the desire to understand the situation and choose a suitable strategy of behavior. The group of second factors includes only two elements (symbiosis and factor 2), their interrelation shows that distance between themselves and pupils is not reduced, but teachers understand and accept their desire for distance.

Factor analysis in the second sample (5 to 10 years of work experience) also revealed two groups of factors, but the content is different. The revealed interrelations in total explain 79% of the dispersion, of which the first group of factors accounts for 56% and the second group for 23%.

Table 3: Factor analysis results of the second group of study
(work experience from 5 to 10 years and age from 31 to 44 years)

Components matrix		
	Factors	
	1	2
Acceptance	-,877	
Cooperation	,731	
Control		,867
Failure	,820	
Factor 1		,916
Factor 2	,981	
Factor A	,904	

The picture of the revealed interrelationships in the second group of investigated differs from the first group, though they overlap in many respects. The main feature of teachers who have worked from 5 to 10 years is the inverse correlation between the level of professional responsibility and positive attitude towards students. For this group of teachers, the level of responsibility is related to the interest in and treatment of students as non-supervisory subjects of the educational process, and it is more difficult for teachers to accept students as they are. The second group of factors includes only two variables - the desire to control students' activities and the desire to take responsibility in pedagogical interaction.

For the third group, the results of factor analysis provide a more interesting picture. Firstly, three groups of factors were grouped together, the sum of total dispersion is 89% (1 group - 52%, 2 group - 25%, 3 group - 12%); secondly, each group demonstrates more specific interrelation of variables.

Table 4: Results of the third factor analysis group under study
(length of service from 10 to 20 years and age from 45 to 64 years)

Components matrix			
	Factors		
	1	2	3
Acceptance	-,910		
Cooperation			,619
Symbiosis	,800		
Control		,739	
Failure	,991		
Factor 1	,871		
Factor 2		,902	
Factor A	,678		-,827

The first group of factors (acceptance, symbiosis, failure, factor 1, factor A) shows the interrelation between the desire to take responsibility in the process of pedagogical interaction and the attitude to students as non-thinking beings unable to act autonomously. At the same time, the main antagonists in this group of variables are the positive attitude towards students and the desire to manage the pedagogical process.

The second group of variables shows the relationship between the desire to control students and the assumption of responsibility by other participants in educational interaction. On the one hand, the relationship is difficult to explain, but on the other hand, it shows a desire to give more tasks to students and at the same time to increase control over their performance. The third group of variables demonstrates the inverse relationship between cooperation and responsibility. It turns out those primary school teachers with more than 10 years of experience show their responsibility by controlling students, perceiving them as an object of pedagogical influence rather than a subject.

Summarizing the results of the Kruskal-Wallis method and factor analysis, it can be stated that a higher level of responsibility among teachers who have worked at school for no more than five years is associated with acceptance of children as they are, orientation towards student autonomy, and a desire for dialogue. More experienced primary school teachers are less learner-centered and more control-oriented, thus demonstrating a responsible attitude to their work.

Discussions

Based on a comparison of the validity of the differences, it can be seen that experience, on the one hand, negatively affects the acceptance of responsibility by primary school teachers and, on the other hand, provokes teachers to be more controllable and less accepting of students as they are. It may be due to both external and internal factors. More control from the teacher reduces the risks of error and the level of freedom of learners, which can increase their absorption of material. The strategy saves the teacher's effort, uses less energy and minimizes creativity. Savings can also explain the reduction in responsibility among teachers who have worked for more than five years. Whereas in the first five years primary school teachers rely on empathy for the subject and try to understand students and accept their point of view when dealing with complex situations and making decisions, a clear strategy of responsibility is not evident with experience. In some situations they take responsibility and in others they can delegate it, but a high factor of 1 in teachers who have worked for more than 10 years shows that they try not to blame others for their failures, but to correct the situation. Nevertheless, it can be stated that experience and experience influence both positively and negatively the teacher's activity. On the one hand, experienced teachers are more oriented to control in their activity and try to correct them in case of possible mistakes or problems; on the other hand, they give less autonomy to students ignoring their individual and personal characteristics.

The factor analysis allowed revealing internal regularities of primary school teachers' activity for each group separately. It can be stated that the first group of the study, which has no more than five years of work experience, has non-deterministic professional responsibility for a certain style of activity. This may be due to the fact that, in such a short period of time, a specific style of activity has not yet been formed, and, perhaps, small experience of activity and lack of knowledge is compensated by lability and mobility in choosing strategies for interaction with students.

Two important factors characterizing the interrelation of responsibility and attitude towards students were found in the second group of the study. The first one is that the higher the level of responsibility, the lower the level of acceptance of students and the more often teachers show interest in students, but at the same time perceive children as non-dependent; the second shows the relationship between the desire to take responsibility in pedagogical interaction and authoritarian style of activity. All of this evidence suggests that, after more than five years of service, primary school teachers are more focused on controlling students, thus allowing them to feel responsible in the pedagogical process but still retain an interest in students.

For a third group of primary school teachers with more than 10 years of experience, a relationship was found between levels of responsibility and the desire to control the teaching process. Teachers in this group are less interested in students, but are more concerned with managing the teaching process than with interaction. With experience, teachers try to be more in control of the teaching process, which makes them feel more responsible.

Conclusions

As a result of the conducted research, it can be stated that the level of acceptance of responsibility by primary school teachers is, firstly, related to their attitude towards children in the process of pedagogical interaction; secondly, it is conditioned by experience. This conclusion is fully consistent both with the requirements of the profession and with professional standards. Understanding that a child's level of development, safety and behavior depends largely on your actions will determine how the teacher interacts with learners. At the same time, if at the beginning of your career teachers do not yet have a clear strategy for action, then, having worked five years in school, it manifests itself, but unfortunately transforms into an authoritarian style of management, limiting the freedom of students and depriving them of autonomy.

Most likely, this is due to the "simplicity" of such a strategy, which requires less effort and energy. Only when they start working at school, teachers are still full of energy and can allow them to give freedom to children, and to interact with students they use different strategies, while with experience they can accumulate fatigue and activity strategies begin to transform. Teachers who have worked for more than 5 years are more likely to use control to achieve the same result but spend less effort. The transformation of strategies of interaction with students is conditioned by a high level of responsibility, i.e. the understanding that the teacher is responsible for the pedagogical process is related to the attitude towards students, but it is manifested differently at different stages of professional activity.

Nevertheless, the goal has been achieved. It was shown that the level of responsibility does not change linearly, but by waves, with the highest level of responsibility recorded for teachers who have worked for less than 5 years and the lowest level for teachers who have worked for 5 to 10 years. The hypothesis has been partly proven: as the length of service increases, the level of responsibility does not increase, but in their activities, as they gain experience, they tend to resort more to an authoritarian style of interaction with learners. On the other hand, teachers with no more than 5 years of experience are more likely to focus on children as independent subjects of the pedagogical process.

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