

# THE CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVITIES TO THE PROFESSIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PERFORMANCE

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## ABSTRACT

We discussed the notion of “students’ subjectivities” from the current psychological and pedagogical point of view. The author investigates the notion in its historical development. The paper reviews the developing students’ subjectivities, focusing on students’ abilities and personal characteristics, such as students’ setting goals, achievement values, recognizing actual or potential perspectives. The article aims to study the problem of developing students’ subjectivities and to carry out theoretical analysis of students’ subjectivities showing the historical development of this category and reflecting the stages of students’ professional and pedagogical development. The target group of students are students related to pedagogical teaching practice. Relations between students’ subjectivities and the efficiency of their future professional and pedagogical performance are discussed, as well as how to develop students’ subjectivities creating special pedagogical conditions during the academic process in the university. We also focus on stages of students’ professional and pedagogical development, such as the stage of students’ professional training, professional adaptation stage and directly professionalization. In this regard, we present the core conceptual bases of students’ subjectivities development to professional and pedagogical performance. The conceptual bases highlight the idea of students’ gradual change from one stage of students’ professional and pedagogical development to the following ones; the idea of the organization of reflective teaching activities of students’ interaction in the development of students’ subjectivities; and the idea of interpreting the mechanisms of the students’ subjectivities development.

**Keywords:** students’ subjectivities, students’ professional training, personal ability, professional and pedagogical performance

## INTRODUCTION

Subjectivity is a quality of a person that gives an opportunity to be individual and unique. The subjectivity measures are determined by personality self-determination in making alternatives and in performing independently.

Basically, the students’ subjectivities to professional and pedagogical performance provides the students’ abilities to be involved into the active teaching and research context. It means that students have to develop abilities to evaluate their own teaching effectiveness and personal development. In addition, they have to create an individual strategy for achieving life goals and perspective on professional goals.

Recently, the scientists have broadened their consideration concerning the students' subjectivities. The students' subjectivities focus not only on pedagogical vital activities, but also on developing such personal qualities as cognitive independence, self-development, self-efficiency, personal self-actualization in the future professional and pedagogical performance (Derkach, & Sayko, 2010, p. 38). Thus, students' subjectivities require developing the ability to design an individual strategy of their future professional and pedagogical career.

## STUDENTS' SUBJECTIVITIES: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

From the pedagogical point of view the notion "subject" is understood as a special mental condition of the personality that is crucial for performing the subjectivity. Having analyzed the previous experience while studying the problem of distinguishing the concepts of "subject" and "subjectivity" in the psychological and pedagogical science, Galina Sorokovykh (2004) suggested the following periods.

The first period started from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This period is characterized by the preconditions of the subject problems in the context of the developing personality theory. It includes both the philosophical and psychological approaches in investigating this problem. The problem of personality development is considered as a dynamic process concerning personality evolution in life-long education. Hence, the core goal of a person is his/her self-realization: the so-called "I"-development. In other words, it means each person wants to be developed as a single, unique and integral individual.

The second period lasted from the 1930s to 1960s. It is characterized by scientific research reflecting on the subject problems from the point of view of personality development as a subject of activity. This theory was presented by the well-known Russian psychologist Sergey L. Rubinstein (1999) in his work *Basis of the general psychology*. He firstly pointed out the specifics of the human performance, which are carried out by individuals themselves. The scientist theoretically substantiated the conception of dialectic relations between subject and object and tried to connect them with the dialectics of people's practical performance.

The current understanding the notion "subject" is defined as individual's active performance. The individual is able to control his/her activities in accordance with personal values and believes. Essentially, S. L. Rubinstein (1991) was the first to use the concept of "subject" in a psychological anthology. Thus, he developed the crucial characteristics of the notion of "subject", such as the personal ability of self-development, self-determination, self-control and self-reflection. According to S. L. Rubinstein's conception subjectivity strongly influences the developing human personality. During this period the problem of distinguishing "personality and subject" was investigated actively by the Soviet researchers.

The third period lasted from the 1960s to 1990s. It is devoted to developing the theory of subject in the context of human adaptation and personalization. The

key model of developing subjectivity was based on K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya's (1991) theory of the phenomenon "subject of the life-long performance». This theory focused on individual vital activity. Speaking about the notion of "subject", the scientist considered that "... not everyone can be the subject of his/her own life" (Abulkhanova-Slavckaya, 1980, p. 76). She supposed that the notion of personality can be described from another point of view. It means that the subject is able to create a special personal active surrounding for achieving life-goals. It gives the personality an opportunity to perform as a subject of creativity. On the one hand, the individual sets life goals in accordance with the social standards. And on the other, the subject tries to overcome social limits for creating a new self-conception concerning his/her personality and surrounding reality (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1991).

Another famous psychologist, A. Brushlinskiy (1994), focused on the analysis of the individual category. The scientist considered that the notion of subject is a personality, but it is larger than the term "personality". In other words, the subject belongs to the higher level of activity, organization and self-sufficiency. Moreover, the researcher was the first to use the notion of "subjectivity". He determined it as a systemic integration of an individual's character, including mental processes, states and qualities. Accordingly, A. Brushlinskiy (1994) distinguished the terms "subject" and "subjectivity".

The fourth period began in the 1980s and has lasted until today. This period is characterized by an intensive study of the subjectivity problem on the multidisciplinary level. Therefore, there appeared a number of subjectivity concepts related to different sciences: pedagogical psychology, social pedagogy, theory and methodology of teaching and training, as well as others.

The problem of subjectivity is developed further in the research of the following scientists: Sergey Kashlev (2004), Eleni Katsarou, & Vassilis Tsafos (2009), Flera Mukhametzyanova (2002), Tatiana Olkhovaya (2007), Vidim Petrovskiy (1996), Lyudmila Podymova (2010), Sergey Savchenko (2005), Lyudmila Skorych (2011), Vitaliy Slastyonin (2008), Galina Sorokovykh (2004). Hence, in pedagogy the notion subjectivity is studied in two ways: as an activity of the subject, who is able to transform creatively this activity, and as the subject of his/her own being, who is able to set goals, to have critical views on his/her own activity, and to have vital strategies of life-long education.

## THE STAGES OF STUDENT' PROFESSIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

The process of students' subjectivities development stimulates the students' comprehension of the significance of their future pedagogical career and the role of self-determination, self-actualization and self-realization of their own internal potentials. In other words, students ought to use their inner potential possibilities (creative, communicative, cognitive) and aspirations for creating a teaching context. Hence, the educator has to develop students' comprehension of self-develop-

ment and self-efficiency. Moreover, the educator has to initiate students' potential opportunities and abilities for self-reflection.

In the context of our research we are interested in the stages of students' professional and pedagogical development during their education at the university. Tatiana Olkhovaya distinguished the following stages, such as the stage of professional students' training, professional adaptation and teaching professionalization.

Basically, the current university education is considered as the main academic environment. The students have opportunities to develop their subjectivities to future pedagogical performance, because the university education (Olkhovaya, 2007, p. 86):

- focuses on students' personal and professional development that is based on the previous students' achievements, taking into account their opportunities, needs and expectations;
- provides the multilevel academic education, which creates maximum boundaries for students' personal self-development;
- makes it possible to make a choice of students' subjective creativity independently;
- provides for a tendency of valuable integrality of all sides of high professional training.

Consequently, we suggest that the conceptual base concerning the development students' subjectivities to the professional and pedagogical performance concerns the idea of gradual students' evolution from one professional and pedagogical training to another.

On the primary stage the professional students' performance has generally an imitative orientation. During the academic process at the university students' pedagogical performance gradually acquires the features of creativity. The primary stage is characterized by getting students' skills of making self-analysis and doing self-evaluation in their own pedagogical activity. Pedagogical techniques also greatly influence the improvement of students' pedagogical practice. Therefore, during the students' pedagogical practice, they typically pay attention to teacher's style, manner and teaching performance. In addition, students learn how to use the board efficiently. They notice the teacher's ability to communicate and interact with the pupils.

On the professional training stage it is important for a student to be active in the class. The most significant for a student is to achieve the efficiency between independent cognitive students' performance in the classroom and the quality of learning.

Next stage concerns to the students' professional adaptation. It allows students to obtain an ability to assess adequately the teacher's role and place in the academic process. Students try to evaluate a teacher as a person with specific complex qualities that make it possible to design (make a lesson plan, planning) and to construct the academic process effectively.

The stage of the professionalization reflects students' different features to the pedagogical performance in accordance with professional and pedagogical requirements. At this stage students' subjectivities development to the profes-

sional and pedagogical performance take place. The main factor that influences the students' subjectivities development to the professional and pedagogical performance is the relationship between students' personal features and the requirements of the professional and pedagogical performance. In the process of students' subjectivities development the students run into the new challenges, professional situations, non-standard conditions. Therefore, a complication can appear between the students' needs and their personal growths. It promotes the development of students' professional subjectivities.

In the context of students' professional self-development Vitaliy Slastjonin (2008, p. 142) distinguished six types of students' challenges in the accomplishment of the professional and pedagogic performance during the academic process at the university (Podymova, 2010, p. 33):

- 1) the development of self-evaluating ability, self-diagnosing and recognizing the individual characteristics in accordance with the students' needs in the professional and pedagogical performance;
- 2) the development of students' skills of independence and enthusiasm in planning future pedagogical performance, in designing the academic syllabus, in making decisions to use suitable pedagogical approaches and methods related to the academic objectives;
- 3) the development of students' skills to adapt and to correct their individual features according to the pedagogical situations that constantly may change. It means that the students can be ready to change the methods, communication styles in a variety of pedagogical situations, while maintaining individuality;
- 4) the development of students' skills to evaluate their own efforts and the achieved level of success in designing pedagogical situations;
- 5) the development of students' skills which determine the success of the implementation of the pedagogical performance based on personal features and the mobility of pedagogical conditions;
- 6) the development of students' skills to influence interpersonal communication and interaction.

Concerning the academic process at the university, the first-year students typically start their evolution from the object to the subject of the educational performance. At this stage the students begin to set professional goals. It promotes the students' subjectivities development. Obviously, pedagogical students' goal-setting performs as a leading component of the developing pedagogical thinking. The pedagogical performance of the second-year students is typically directed to the intellectual abilities development, such as creativity, personality, activity, self-awareness, self-efficiency and others. All these students' features are the subjective indicators of pedagogical students' thinking. In the third year the students' value orientation provides students' self-development to the professional and pedagogical performance. At this stage, students have to gain skills in teaching reflection. During the fourth year the students' pedagogical reflection begins to transform to the value of the subject of the professional performance.

## REFLECTION MECHANISM IN STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The conceptual base of students' subjectivities development to the professional and pedagogical performance highlights what is necessary for dynamic and responsible students' pedagogical activity. Student's subjectivity is understood as the indicator of the professional and pedagogical performance. The students' self-efficiency cannot exist without a reflection mechanism. Therefore, we consider the self-reflection as one of the conceptual bases of students' subjectivities development to the professional and pedagogical performance at the university.

It is important to realize the nature of the reflection mechanism, because it is not a simple rethinking of the possessed personal features, but also a transformation of students' individual and personal sphere, their capacity for independent pedagogical performance. This brings us to the conclusion that the nature of students' subjectivities is the personal ability that can be enlarged due to life events and can be transformed into students' personal thoughts (Menshikova, 2007, p. 72). In addition, a reflection makes it possible to coordinate the student's individual categorical system of values, which is related to the subjective experiences.

However, the key conclusion that has been made by scientists in developing students' pedagogical reflection is that the educator's impact on students' academic performance is much more due to the reflective processes (Borytko, 2001).

The structure of the reflection in the academic process is suggested by S. Kashlev (2004, p. 94). He believes that the academic process includes the pedagogical interaction among the educator and students. Thus, a reflection consists of the following components:

- the educator's analysis of student's performance;
- the educator's analysis of his/her own pedagogical performance;
- the educator's analysis of the academic interaction;
- the students' evaluation of the educator's performance, of student's own performance and the entire academic interaction.

Obviously, pedagogical reflection constitutes a mutual evaluation of the educational participants based on educator's reflection of his/her inner world and the level of student's development.

From the psychological point of view the notion of "reflection" is recognized as a mechanism of educator's comprehension of students' thinking level. It means that reflection acts as a mechanism of educator's self-analysis and self-control, realizing his/her own pedagogical performance and the responsibility for it.

According to the pedagogical point of view the process of reflection means the educator's analysis of the pedagogical process and the level of his/her responsibility for the pedagogical results regarding educational aims and tasks. As a result, due to self-reflection, an educator is able to find out weak and strong points during the pedagogical process. Thus, an educator is able to design new stages in the pedagogical process. Evidently there is no absolute result in the pedagogical process, because the entire pedagogical process has been built on the subject-subject relationship between the educator and students. That is the reason why an educa-

tor feels dissatisfaction with the results of his/her professional and pedagogical performance and seeks self-improvement and self-development.

In accordance with the new students' subjectivities theory, the future teachers have to perform as the subjects of their own pedagogical activities (Borytko, 2000). First of all, the students have to determine their future profession independently. Then they have to decide the most appropriate ways of the pedagogical profession. Secondly, the students have to be subjects of their future pedagogical performance. It provides students' self-determination in choosing the teaching methods. It promotes a productive educator-students interaction during the academic process. Thirdly, the students' performance has to be focused on developing pedagogical creativity.

## CONCLUSION

Students' subjectivities development to the professional and pedagogical performance is a crucial task during the academic process at the university. Many scientists have researched academic and social aspects of students' performance. As a result, students' self-reflection develops the individual students' style to the professional and pedagogical performance based on students' individuality, self-development and creative activities. Hence, the students' subjectivities seek to develop students' ability of self-realization, self-determination and self-efficiency. In this regard, the conceptual basis of students' subjectivities to the professional and pedagogical performance have been suggested as the following:

the idea of students' gradual change from one stage of students' professional and pedagogical development to others;

the idea of creating unique pedagogical conditions during the academic process for involving the students in their reflective activities. It develops both the students' activities and responsibilities to the professional and pedagogical performance and their personal abilities, such as making comparisons for evaluating the academic processes.

the last idea concerns interpreting the mechanisms of developing students' subjectivities. It can be organized as a special teaching pattern of students' pedagogical performance in accordance with future pedagogical practice.

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