Chapter 16
Professional Designing as
One of Key Competencies
of Modern Teacher:
An Ability Which Every
Teacher Needs to Have

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ABSTRACT

Questions such as “How to determine the professionalism of a teacher?”, and “What forms of a teacher professional development are the most efficient?” have been a subject of many publications. In this chapter, the author focuses on the approach based on a professional designing as a central tool for improvement of professionalism of a teacher. The discussion involves analysis of factors helping teachers to achieve his or her professional goals, such as an ability to model their own practice, analyze students’ motives, describe professional goals and challenges, as well as description of various events helping to strengthen those factors.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers a description of a professional designing: what it is, why it is an important competency every educator should have, forms of events which can be organized to help educators with advancing this particular competency. The main goal of the author is to show how a professional designing helps to ignite and maintain a process of transformative development of an individual or an institutional educational practice.

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Background

This chapter is based on the practical and research work conducted in Russia (Perm Region) by the author (as a member of a research and consulting team) and represents a shortened version of the PhD dissertation of the author. The theoretical foundation of the research can be found in publications of a prominent member of a so-called Moscow Methodological Circle (or, depending on an interpreter, Moscow Metatheoretical Circle) G.P. Shchedrovitsky (1964, 1966, 1971, 1975, 1979, 1981), and his colleagues, such as N.G. Alekseev (1992) and followers such as A.P. Zinchenko (2014). Applying ideas of the author of zone of proximal development Lev Vygotsky (1926) about knowledge development to social systems Shchedrovitsky et al. (1983) developed one of the strands of the activity theory, with its further application to transformative development of educational systems. One of the centers of active study of how the activity theory can be used to ignite and manage innovations in education was Moscow Institute for Pedagogic Innovations lead by V.I. Slobodchikov (1994), who was the PhD adviser of the author. Many of the faculty of the Institute, including N.G. Alekseev, V.K. Zaretskij, S.I. Krasnov, R.G. Kamenskij, V.R. Imakaev, and others had been actively involved in organizing and supporting various innovations in schools and districts of Perm Region (Russia).

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER


Questions such as “How to determine the professionalism of a teacher?”, and “What forms of a teacher professional development are the most efficient?” have been a subject of many publications. In this chapter, the author focuses on the approach based on a professional designing as a central tool for improvement of professionalism of a teacher.

Here, following Alekseev et al. (1987), a “professional designing” means an intellectual activity resulting in:

1. Constructing an image of the ideal/perfect professional situation (whatever it might mean for a given person), and
2. Planning activities aimed to transform the present professional situation by making it closer to the ideal one.

In order to transform his or her professional situation, teachers must be willing to change their own practices, and must be able to make the change. This means that professional skills, abilities, competencies of a teacher should include not only specific subject-related skills or teaching-related personal qualities, but also “meta-skills”, allowing to manage processes of idealization (i.e. drawing mental images), reflection, goal-setting, action scheduling, and so on, which are required for transforming a human practice. A combination of such skills forms the ability for designing the own teaching practice. Accordingly, the professionalism of a teacher is to be determined by two integral parameters: the level of his/her specific qualifications (subject-teaching skills and personal qualities), and the level of professional designing skills. Using these parameters, one can draw a simple classification showing a set of possible professional positions of a teacher (Table 1), offered by the author in his dissertation:

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