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## **PECULIARITIES OF THE SPEECH THERAPIST'S TRAINING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY IN THE RURAL AREAS**

**Anna Mytsyk, PhD-Student,**

*Zaporizhzhya National University, Ukraine*

***Abstract:** The author of the article analyzes the problems associated with provision of educational institutions in the countryside by such specialists as speech therapists. Factors that do not contribute to an effective rural educational staffing policy are identified. Using different groups of respondents, the level of readership readiness for professional activity in the rural areas, as well as its dependence on the learning outcomes (competence) that the applicant of the corresponding degree of higher education should acquire has been investigated. Author made conclusions on the necessity of making changes in the content of vocational training of speech therapists, its maximum approximation to the conditions of practical professional activity.*

***Keywords:** speech therapist, vocational training, readiness, learning outcomes, professional activity, children with speech impairments, Ukrainian rural area*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Quality education is one of the main factors of success in the development of the information and knowledge society; thus, the pedagogue is an object and a leader of positive changes as well. Analyzing the state of pedagogical training in Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in the draft of the Concept of the pedagogical education development (offered for public discussion in 2017) has noted a very low professional level of the students of pedagogical education, therefore, their attention a priori is not focused on further education and they are not interested in gaining professional competencies. It testifies that non-motivated entrants or those who could not realize themselves in other specialties mainly choose the teacher profession. Therefore, it is necessary to reform the system of pedagogical staff training, viz. their structure, content, organization and methodology (technology) of training, to increase the specific gravity of the practical training in the educational programs. It is recognized that special attention should be paid to the teachers training for the work with people with special needs that includes awareness of the peculiarities of the psychophysical development of such people and the special techniques possession.

A current increasing tendency the number of children with speech disorders among preschoolers determines the importance for the society profession of a teacher-speech therapist. The timely detection of such children contributes to the earlier correction, preventing future difficulties their study at secondary schools. Nevertheless, being on the list most in demand, the profession of the teacher-speech therapist does not meet the needs of the modern society. This problem is especially felt in the Ukrainian villages. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, system of encouragement of young teachers to work and live in rural areas proved to be ineffective. Secondly, material,

technical, educational, methodological and informational support of the preschool educational institutions requires improvement, i.e. resource support of the professional activity of pedagogues. All abovementioned negatively affects the speech therapist's work quality. It is necessary to rise the computer literacy of the speech therapists and to develop innovate abilities (implementation of new pedagogical technologies into the correctional process, usage of non-traditional, new forms and methods of pedagogical training, etc.). This requires appropriate changes in the content of their professional training, adapting their psychological and methodical preparation to the real practical conditions, generalizing the experience of providing speech therapy in the countryside and developing a model for the training of speech therapists for the countryside based on current circumstances.

It must be admitted that not only Ukraine is facing such a problem. By the living standards and territorial location of countryside Ukraine considerably inferior most republics of the former USSR. This is reflected in the educational quality provided by children living in rural areas. Other question is different approaches to the improvements made in the education of children with special needs.

By nature, professional activity of the speech therapist goes beyond the traditional activities of the teacher. It is based on the inherent properties of educational, diagnostic, corrective, advisory and informational activities. For us, it is important to find out the actual opinion of those, who associates their work with the work of the speech therapist in the near future or work already in the countryside. How they consider their education in the higher school sufficient to work in specified conditions? The obtained results we will analyze in the following part of our research. It will allow improving the situation.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The readiness level of speech therapists for pedagogical activity in the countryside was defined using the questionnaire based on the written answers of respondents and the mathematical method their summarizing. Two groups of respondents were: (1) students, future speech therapists, studying at the latest courses in the field 6.010105 "Correctional education (according to nosology)"; (2) specialists with 1-2 years' experience of work as speech therapists in preschool institutions in rural areas.

The questionnaire pursued two goals: (1) to find out how many respondents consider their training in a higher educational institution sufficient to successful professional activities in rural areas; (2) how far it is advisable to speak about the peculiarities of the organization of speech-work in the villages based on the opinion of the experience of teachers-speech therapists of preschool institutions in rural areas.

The questionnaire covered 315 students of the following higher education institutions: *Berdiansk State Pedagogical University* (Faculty of Preschool, Special and Social Education), *Kamianets-Podilskiy National Ivan Ohienko University* (Faculty of Correctional and Social Pedagogy and Psychology), *Khortytsia National Academy* (Faculty of Rehabilitation Pedagogy and Social Work) and 20 specialists-speech therapists working in preschool educational institutions of villages of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhya, Transcarpathia and Donetsk regions.

## RESULTS

At the beginning of our research, we found out that only 14% (44) out of 315 respondents expressed the desire to complete their study in specialty to work in preschool educational institutions in rural areas. 78% (246) do not consider this specialty is perspective to start their pedagogical activity under specified conditions. 8% (25) students hesitated to answer. 76% (239) of the respondents admitted that professionally they are not ready for such activity in the countryside. Only 14% (44) respondents confirmed their wish to graduate the education. 10% (32) students noted difficulties to determine this issue. We can conclude:

(1) A fragmentation of representations on the life specifics in the rural areas, as well as the low awareness level of future specialists with the actual organization of speech therapist work in rural areas. 2% (6) of the respondents confirmed their awareness with the actual state of things in this matter, 4% (12) of the respondents are quite aware, 52% (164) of the respondents have common imagination, 22% (70) of the respondents do not have information, 20% (63) of the respondents do not see this at all;

(2) A lack of competencies necessary for future specialists-speech therapists working with children with special educational needs in the conditions of inclusive education in rural areas and the limited practical training in these conditions. Focusing on the socio-economic problems of the village, 56% (176) students noted the absence of necessary skills for the work in rural preschool educational institutions. On the contrary, 36% (82) of the respondents have evaluated their possibilities as affirmative. 18% (56) of the respondents had difficulties with the answer. Such disproportion in percentage was predictable, since educational curricula for the training of future speech therapists does not include educational disciplines that would provide students with systematic knowledge on the peculiarities of the organization of correctional work with children with speech impairments at the level of rural educational institutions. It is proved by 100% of respondents' answers. At the same time, 59% (185) of the respondents have acknowledged that in the future the program of speech therapists training should provide the acquisition of competences that will suit for the conditions of inclusive education in rural areas, to determine the orientation future speech therapists to use new educational technologies in their pedagogical activities. They do not see this necessity and hesitate to answer, 11% (35) and 30% (95) of those polled respectively.

Therefore, based on the opinion of the majority, we believe that a key component of improving the educational content of speech therapists' training should be modernization of the content of educational programs, implementing training courses (individual modules) aimed at forming students' readiness for the professional work in rural areas. 68% (214) of surveyed students have supported this thesis, 12% (38) could not answer this question and 20% (63) were convinced that proposed means would not solve the problem, as rural education issues should overcome the negative processes in the social sphere of Ukrainian villages in common. On the other hand, the respondents noted that those willing to work in rural areas would be graduates who lived in the rural areas before studying, i.e. 56% (176). In their opinion, they are better acquainted with the problems of rural education and they are specifically

motivated to receive higher education in the chosen specialty to change the situation for the better. 44% (139) of the respondents disagree with this point of the view. We believe that the future of the Ukrainian village depends exclusively on the younger generation. Therefore, it is necessary to orient future students for a conscious selection of profession for further work in rural areas.

The peculiarity of the phenomenon of personality readiness for teaching activity is that the level of its development can be confirmed only after a certain period of time, when the specialist will become independent in the activity after graduation. According to some scientists, the educational process is not able to ensure the formation of necessary competencies for the professional readiness. All depends on the organization of work of young specialists at the beginning of their independent activities (Dyachenko et al, 2006). In the context of our study, we were interested in the opinion of practicing speech therapists. Viz. how far their readiness corresponds to the needs of rural area? When forming this group of respondents, the complexity was rare presence of speech therapists in Ukrainian villages. Of the 20 respondents, those who work as a speech therapist for 1 year is 30% (6), from 1 to 3 years 45% (9), over 5 years 25% (5). As only 30% (6) of them with higher education live in rural areas, only 40% (8) has confirmed their awareness on the actual status of speech therapy in rural areas. 60% (12) of respondents did not expect to face similar problems. Assessing the level of organization of speech therapy providing in the rural areas, only 5% (1) recognized it high and 20% (4) sufficient, while 60% (12) the average and 15% (3) low. Having some experience in practical training at the time of study, 60% (12) of respondents indicated differences in the speech therapy provision at the level of preschool educational institutions in the countryside and cities. 25% (5) did not reveal such differences taking into account the same experience of practical training. 15% (3) were not able to answer the question at all.

Positive moments during acquaintance with their permanent workplace in the speech service providing, speech therapists attribute to the fact that: (a) educators of preschool establishments have skills to identify children with speech disorders – 50% (10); (b) lists of children with speech disorders are conducted – 40% (8); (c) there is a close connection of the preschool institution with the speech therapist (speech therapy department) – 30% (6); (d) visiting counseling is provided by the speech therapist of the speech therapy department – 20% (4); (e) parents of children with special speech needs have a rather high level of logopedic awareness – 10% (2). On the contrary, the cons are: (a) the weak material and technical support of preschool educational institutions – 60% (12), the absence of the necessary specialists – 40% (8), the lack of diagnostic and corrective skills – 30% (6), the lack of parenting skills in the formation of a child speech culture – 20% (4), poor methodological support of the correctional speech process – 10% (2), poor quality of transport communications that limit communication with the teacher, speech therapist of speech therapy department – 10% (2).

As a result of a short-time work as a teacher-speech therapist, 30% (6) of respondents assured that they were satisfied with the quality of their training at the higher education institution, it was enough to start pedagogical career in the

countryside successfully. 20% (4) of respondents had difficulties to answer this question. This group consisted of those, who worked as a teacher-speech therapist no more than 1 year. 50% (10) of respondents noted certain gaps in their training, which at the beginning of their pedagogical activities did not contribute to a more qualitative work with children with speech disorders. Therefore, in the context of the modernization of teacher's training programs, in the Concept of pedagogical education development (2018) it was right accent to the need to promote innovations as a key instrument perceiving the globalization of educational processes and its competitiveness. The respondents also recognized that their skills in knowledge of information and communication technologies are quite low. Mostly, it was explained by low material and technical base of state educational institutions, where they studied. Nevertheless, all 100% (20) of respondents have recognized the need to change the training system of future speech therapists taking into account the interests of the rural areas.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, respondents' view has allowed identifying three levels of readiness specialist speech therapists to professional activity in rural areas. Results of our research indicate that most of them and 80% of those polled, at the present stage determine its condition as average. 20% of respondents are prone to the fact that it is low. There is no confirmation in favor of a high level of their readiness. It confirms our assumptions on the need to initiate changes in the training future professionals, speech therapists, directing it to the needs of society in these specialists in general and in particular rural society.

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