

Peculiar Features of Teacher Training at Higher Educational Institutions in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

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Abstract

The article deals with the regional approach to teacher education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The performed study aimed to reveal the attitude of students of pedagogical departments of the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University, as well as teachers and schoolchildren in the republic to the teacher education process. The study results suggest that the regional specific features of teacher education need to be taken into account: the psychological readiness to work in ungraded rural and nomadic schools; the distant territory conditions requiring the use of the distance learning technology; and the implementation of inclusive education.

Keywords: attitude towards the teacher profession; nomadic school; ungraded rural school; distance learning technology; inclusive education; professional competence; school placement.

1. Introduction

Training of teachers of the Far North regions has some peculiar features, which depend on the types of schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The republican education system in accordance with the national and cultural identity of the people of the North and the needs of the urban and rural population establishes and maintains a variety of types and kinds of educational institutions (state, municipal, private, experimental, associated, ungraded, nomadic, etc.) and develops subject-oriented education and the lyceum and gymnasium education models (Alekseeva, 2006).

There are 653 schools operating in the republic, including 637 day schools and 16 evening schools. 470 day schools, i.e. 73%, are located in rural areas (Report, 2013).

Table 1. Types of rural schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)

No.	School types	Brief description
I.	Nomadic School varieties:	A special-type secondary school adapted to the local conditions of the Far North: corresponds to the reindeer teams migration route; corresponds to settling for a certain period (during a term or a semester); corresponds to intermediate bases, housing complexes, and industrial sites; is a family-type school; covers preschool and early school age children
1.1.	Generic nomadic school	
1.2.	Seasonal nomadic school	
1.3.	Fixed nomadic school	
1.4.	Nomadic kindergarten school	
II.	Ungraded school consists of three stages:	A special-type secondary school that has typical attributes: – a small number of students; – no parallel forms; – a low number of pupils in a form. provides formation of the personality of a child, integrated development of his abilities, formation of skills and willingness to learn; lays a solid foundation of general education required to a graduate to continue education and integrate into the community life; acquisition of general secondary education providing the proper level of state educational standards
2.1.	elementary school (3-4 years)	
2.2.	junior high school	
2.3.	high school	
III.	School complex:	An integral approach to training and parenting, organization of labor and vocational training, and formation of a working citizen; early education of children (from 5 years of age) in order to develop mental abilities, creativity, and cognitive activity
3.1.	school educational-industrial complex, agricultural school,	
3.2.	kindergarten school	
IV.	Associated schools	Educational institution spreading the ideas of peace, spiritual and moral values within the UNESCO national programs

A modern nomadic school as a type of the new educational system affects all aspects of socioeconomic development of indigenous peoples of the North. It maintains the status of the family, provides an inextricable link between parents and children, establishes an effective learning process that combines theory and practice with the traditions, and parenting with the moral values and cultural heritage.

13 nomadic schools in the republic have a specific educational process—a small number of pupils in each form, the uneven composition of pupils, the school schedule variability due to the singularities of the traditional economy, the watch-based learning, the increased need in using distance learning, etc. In this connection, teachers of nomadic educational institutions are required to meet special requirements: to be able to live in extreme camping conditions, to know the language, culture, and traditional farming of the indigenous peoples, to be proficient to teach several subjects, to know the modern teaching and information training techniques. The idea of Amanda M. Keddie regarding the school education is worth mentioning—the knowledge must come through the community, kinship, family, as the inclusion of the identity, in this case, of the indigenous peoples of the North (Keddie, 2013).

In the circumstances of the informational isolation and the remoteness of nomadic educational institutions from the capital of the republic, ulus centers, and rural settlements, the informatization of the education and active application of the distance learning technology become essential. Web technology not only helps transfer educational information, but also provides interaction between a teacher and a student. In this connection, teachers' proficiency in using distance learning technology is a relevant issue (Makarenko, 2013).

Undoubtedly, a teacher must be able to plan distance learning systems, develop tools for technological transfer of the teaching material, which if necessary could be flexibly reorganized. A modern classroom is no more limited to the space of the school, and even state or nation. Internet helps unite all who want to obtain knowledge, share resources, and cooperate (Khodamoradi & Abedi, 2011).

The "Teachers of the Arctic" project, which is supported by UNESCO and the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), is relevant for the modernization of the educational system of rural and nomadic schools. This project assumes an information and resource support, communication of like-minded people in the single educational field of eight countries in the Arctic Region (Russia, the USA, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, and Norway).

Thus, the present system of ungraded and nomadic schools in remote regions of the North needs improving the teachers education system, creating conditions for training multi-functional and multi-specialty experts.

Currently, the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University offers bachelor degree programs for pedagogues of nomadic educational institutions—elementary education, preschool education, primary education and tutoring in the elementary ungraded (nomadic) schools of the North, etc. It also provides master's degree programs: "Pedagogical support for childhood in the conditions of the North," "The theory and technique of developing a multilingual person in a multicultural society," "Vocational and pedagogical technology," "Management in the system of preschool education," "Technology and management of e-learning," "Family tutoring."

The creation of new federal universities in Russia is focused on a new quality of training of highly qualified specialists through the use of modern educational technologies for integrated socioeconomic development of the region. Opening of the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University in 2010 as a leading scientific, educational, and cultural center in the North-East of Russia with a developed innovative, educational and scientific, social and cultural infrastructure provides qualified higher education according to the world standards, integration of science, education and industry, development of high technology and modernization of the economic and social spheres of the region.

Considering the peculiarities of the socioeconomic development of the North-East of Russia, the federal institution should provide training of highly qualified specialists in accordance with the needs of innovation-oriented economy, its priority sectors in the long term, science, technology, education, culture, and social services. On this basis, the North-Eastern Federal University has identified its mission as "to cultivate competitive professionals by carrying out researches and innovations for the development of a sustainable, socially developed circumpolar region, ensuring high quality of life, preservation and development of the culture of the peoples of the North-East of Russia. Formation of multicultural outlook and personal self-determination in NEFU should become a part of the system of life-long training in the university, aimed at the formation of a person throughout his/her life." (Panina, Zalutskaya, & Grigoryeva, 2014).

2. Method

During the research, teachers and students of secondary schools, parents and students of the "Teacher Education" program of the North-Eastern Federal University were surveyed in order to identify the level of general satisfaction with teacher education, based on which we can determine the possible ways of improving the quality of teacher education. The survey involved 237 students, 170 parents, and 150 students from nine divisions of NEFU providing teacher

education. An analysis of the results of the survey of NEFU students showed a fairly high level of motivation of future teachers: 69% of students were sure that their choice was right and could imagine their future professional activity; 15.4% vaguely imagined their profession; and 10.7% doubted the correctness of the profession choice. To the question "Does the educational process help unveil and fulfill their individual abilities?", 35.4% of the students responded positively, and 20% had a faint idea. But 19.2% of students responded that it was difficult for them to unveil their individual abilities using the existing technique and organization of the educational process. And 7.7% said that the educational process did not make it possible to fulfill their individual abilities, even if they were known. These data evidenced the inconsistency of the teacher training technology with the requirements of the standards and expectations of the students themselves. The positive assessment "The educational process unveils the individual abilities in the field of professional activity, but hinders the development of universal human abilities" (10.7%) shows the sufficient priority of the formation of cultural competences in the course of learning.

We can treat positive the students' assessment of the sufficiency of the obtained knowledge for effective professional activity (59.3%), taking into account the fact that the percentage of students who said "I get insufficient knowledge with regard to both the subjects' list and the structure of their training hours" is rather low (3%).

The students' assessment of their knowledge and competencies obtained in NEFU is as follows:

- theoretical knowledge, thorough and sufficient – 79.2%;
- general knowledge and skills, thorough and sufficient – 80%;
- practical and applied skills, thorough and sufficient – 60.8%;
- additional educational programs, thorough and sufficient – 56.2%.

To the question: "What is most valuable in the teacher's profession to your opinion?", students answered as follows:

1. The opportunity to be useful to people, 61.5%
2. The opportunity to do what I like 45.4%
3. The opportunity to share knowledge with others 55.4%
4. The opportunity to manage people 23.8%
5. The opportunity to demonstrate my abilities 33.8%
6. The opportunity for self-improvement 36.1%
7. Communication with children, young people 57%
8. Communication with a wide range of children 44.6%
9. The creative nature of the pedagogical work 43%
10. The credibility of the profession in the society 19.2%
11. Good wages 35.4%
12. Other (finish) 0.7%

The presented data state that the practical and applied skills and additional educational programs are insufficient, despite the depth of the theoretical and general knowledge. Thereby, they indicate that in the content of the programs, the knowledge-based approach prevails to the detriment of the competence-based one.

In order to study the requirements, ways, and means to improve the quality of teachers training, we surveyed 237 students of 10-11 grades and 170 parents. The questionnaires for students and parents had several identical questions. For example, the question "What else do modern teachers need for a high quality teaching process?", 45.1% of parents and 47% of students indicated the ability to communicate and get on well with students. 33% of parents and 34% of students indicated the medium level of knowledge of the subject taught by the teacher. 16% of parents and 11% of high school students indicated that modern teachers lack high moral qualities. One in ten students (10%) and parents (6%) indicated the importance of the teacher's sense of humor.

To the statement "Are rigor and ultimatumness of the teacher acceptable with regard to students?", 62% of parents and 71% of students answered positively; 22% of parents said it was necessary in some cases; and 8% of students believed that a teacher should be rigorous. 18% of senior students and 10% of parents did not agree with this statement. Herewith, parents preferred teachers to be firmer and stricter with their children in relation to their study.

The majority of the surveyed students (80%) and parents (82%) unanimously agreed to the question "Must a teacher make students to like him?"

In addition, the responders also showed unanimity in answering the question, whether a teacher must be an example to follow. But in this case, there was a noticeable difference: the number of positive responses from students is slightly higher (80%) than from parents (71%), while 22% of parents felt that a teacher must not be an example to follow.

Table 2 The respondents' answers to the question: "What should a modern teacher be like?"

Teacher's qualities	Students' answers in %	Parents' answers in %
Competent and many-sided	72	83
An experienced professional who loves his job	53	67
Conscious and loving children	49	63
Honest, balanced, friendly, fair, responsible	61	71
Rigorous, demanding	39	47
Having a good heart and nerves of steel	42	57

72% of students and 83% of parents believe that "a teacher must be a competent, all-round person"; 61% of senior students and 71% of parents highlighted such qualities as good faith, poise, attentiveness, and responsibility. Teaching experience was mentioned by 53% of senior students and 67% of parents; 49% of students and 63% of parents said that a teacher should be "conscious and loving children." According to 39% of senior students and 47% of parents, a teacher must be rigorous and demanding; while 42% of students and 57% of parents said he should be stress-resistant.

All questions about the quality of school teaching reflected the views and opinions of parents on the following aspects:

- on the position and reputation of the school in the city and in the republic;
- on the status and sufficiency of the resource base of the school;
- on the team of teachers;
- on the level of vocational training;
- on the need to create a favorable emotional atmosphere in the educational institution;
- on the availability and variety of additional education;
- on the contacts and work of the school with parents, interaction with them in joint solution of issues.

In this list of statements, parents usually refer to the medium or low level of students' preparation for the Unified State Examination (USE). There are also negative feedback on the organization of the vocational training, the problems concerning the creation of a comfortable environment for learning (shortage of classrooms, two-shift education, and lack of diversity of additional education for 10-11 grades). Most parents said that teachers did not involve them in the organization of their children's school life, often did not take into account their comments and suggestions, and avoided interacting them.

The following table shows how much parents know about teachers who teach their children:

Table 3. Parents' representations about teachers

No.	Statement	Answer, in %
1.	I know the majority of the teachers who teach my child very well	7
2.	I have a general idea of all teachers and a full knowledge of some teachers	13
3.	I have a rough idea of all teachers	32
4.	I know about a few teachers	41
5.	Difficult to answer	7

Only 7% of parents were well aware of the majority of the teachers who taught their child; 13% of respondents answered that they had only a general idea of the teachers; 32% did not know much about them; 41% of respondents chose "I know about a few teachers"; and 7% of parents were undecided. As for the assessment of the level of teaching of those teachers about whom the parents were aware:

- 8% mentioned that the level of teaching was high and satisfactory for them;
- 21% believed that half of the teaching staff had a high level of teaching and the other half—a medium level.
- 59% indicated that in the educational institution where their child studied, only a few teachers had a high level of teaching,
- 12% of parents were at all undecided.

There were the following answers of students to the question "What is the school for you?":

- 51% responded that it was an "unavoidable necessity" in their lives;
- 42% said that the school was a place to meet and communicate with their peers and friends;
- 27% would refuse to go to school, if their parents did not force them to study;

- 18% believed that the school was a mere loss of their time
- 13% sincerely called school their second home;
- 11% of high school students were undecided.

The image of an ideal teacher for pupils was as follows—calm, patient, accommodating, intelligent, competent, responsive, respecting themselves and others, conscious and loving children, with a sense of humor (57%), giving a strong and reliable knowledge, interestingly and excellently explaining, loving his job (41%), fair and without pets (37%). In addition, the students pointed out such qualities of a teacher as honesty, originality of thought, creativity, and interesting hobbies.

As an antipode, the image of a bad teacher consists of the following characteristics:

- 57% do not like it "when the teacher yells, swears, or is rude";
- 48% do not like it when the teacher gives incomplete and incomprehensible explanations, commits linguistic and grammatical errors in his speech, is biased and prejudiced in giving marks.
- 5% said that there were no bad teachers (Concepts, 2015).

An analysis of the results of the survey of students and their parents and teachers actualizes the problem of the quality of future teachers' training, the need for the implementation of modern educational technology and the use of active learning tools, the enhancement of subject training of teachers, the mastery of the information and communication technology and the psychological and pedagogical principles of communication with students and parents.

3. Results

We adhere to the thesis of the Inter-American Commission on Teacher Education, which believes that a nation's quality depends on the quality of an individual citizen; the quality of his education depends on the quality of teachers' education. Muddasir Hamid Malik and Dr. Taseema Jan noted that education should be open, generally accessible, taking into account the present time, and going ahead of time, helping to avoid an increase in unemployment, inequality, and isolation of people. Researchers propose to develop comprehensive programs for teacher training, which would integrate knowledge from different pedagogical fields and be able to develop logical and critical thinking to solve problems in the sociocultural environment (Malik & Jan, 2012).

The data of the pilot study have stated that practical and applied skills, as well as additional educational programs are under-represented in the teacher training programs. A high percentage of the depth of the theoretical and general knowledge indicates that the knowledge-based approach prevails in the content of programs to the detriment of the competence-based one.

K.D. Ushinsky at his time wrote that the method of teaching can be learned from a book or from the teacher's words, but only long-term practice can help get the hang of this method (Ushinsky, 1990). Therefore, we suggest to pay close attention to the content and order of the production (school) placement organization.

By the time of the internship, the study of psycho-pedagogical and special disciplines, in particular, the teaching technique in the discipline profile, comes to an end. According to the logic of the competence-based approach, the formation of competences should begin gradually on the theoretical courses of subjects and end during the internship. The production (school) placement plays an important system-forming role in the phased formation and development of general cultural and general competences of students, providing the combination of theoretical training with practical activity in an educational institution.

This creates a strong theoretical foundation and provides the opportunity to use, complete, and deepen the acquired knowledge in practice. This not only contributes to its consolidation, but also creates favorable conditions for updating and improving the skills acquired in the course of the previous theoretical and practical training at a higher educational institution. The competence-based approach is the basis for the development of school placement programs, as this approach orients to achieving a new quality of vocational practical training, evaluation of the progress in the students' professional competence building in the circumstances of internship as teachers.

In the data of the research completed by Ospanova, B.A., Redlikh, S.M., Sagdullaev, I.I., Tashbulatova, A.E., Kypshakov, S.A., and Kaliyeva, A.K. (Ospanova, Redlikh, Sagdullaev, Tashbulatova, Kypshakov, & Kaliyeva, 2013), we can see that younger students do not very well see their career advancement, and senior students are interested in improving their practical skills in the specialty, since they have tried their hand at various occupations and are aware of what they need to improve, as well as of the pros and cons of the future profession.

The quality of school placement is largely determined by the methodological and program support. We have developed a list of general vocational competences, indicating the stages of their building in the course of the educational program. For example, such competence as the willingness to realize the social significance of one's future profession

and to have the motivation to carry out professional activities is formed at the level of "knowing." It is achieved by studying the "Theory of parenting" module and fulfilling the "Hello, school! Hello, the teacher's role!" projects. Thus, the principle of gradual formation of competences assumes that students master the implementation of a holistic education process in the circumstances of real professional activities (taking into account the peculiar features of a particular basic educational program) during the school placement. Only such an approach can contribute to solving the problems of building all necessary professional and general cultural competences in a future teacher. We come to understand that the professional competence of a future teacher emerges and develops during the placement in a higher educational institution based on application of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring the readiness and ability of the student to solve professional problems.

4. Discussion

Continuous teacher training in the Russian Federation is an actively developing system that is open, multilevel, multifunctional, and flexible. It includes the following system components: the educational content, forms, and methods, the technology of training and education, and the subjects of the educational process.

Teacher education refers to those sociocultural phenomena that decisively influence the development of all aspects of the society, region, and country. This influence is brought to bear through the person, high quality training, parenting, and development, which are the main purpose and object of activity of graduates of pedagogical universities. E.V. Bondarevskaya rightly notes that it is the teacher who determines what people are populating Russia today and tomorrow, how they will live and work, what they will love and value. Teacher education is what globally affects all spheres of social, industrial, and cultural life, gives grounds to consider it as "meta education," which allows us to treat teacher education as a system of activities that has a significant impact on the transformation and development of all other systems and forms of activity, and thus plays a decisive role in the development of the country, society, region, and the whole world civilization (Bondarevskaya, 2014).

The system of teacher education of the Russian Federation is a set of successive professional educational programs of secondary, higher, and postgraduate teacher education, a network of interacting educational institutions and organizations of secondary, higher, and postgraduate teacher education, a federal and regional system of teacher education management. As experts point out, in recent years, the number of pupils in the preschool and primary schools has been increasing thanks to the improvement of the demographic situation in the country.

Simultaneously, the educational environment differentiation processes are becoming more intensive. Forms in Russian schools become less homogeneous due to:

- the migration processes (including the increasing percentage of students for whom the Russian language is not native);
- the inclusive education development;
- the increased number of students with various forms of social exclusion.

V.A. Bolotov identified some necessary reform directions of the national teacher education. At the same time, he noted that it was necessary to reform not only pedagogical higher educational institutions, but also all current teacher training programs of all higher educational institutions. He proposed the following:

- to revive psychological and educational competitions for schoolchildren and to enroll winners in higher educational institutions without exams;
- to introduce an additional entrance exam (interview) at matriculation to pedagogical specialties;
- to adopt federal requirements for the organization and content of school placement of students studying pedagogy;
- to introduce pedagogical master's degree programs for graduates of any bachelor degree course;
- to include the regional education management authorities in the process of adjustment of the existing programs and development of new ones;
- to regulate the transition to the social and human specialties (including pedagogical) after two years of education in the higher professional education programs;
- to introduce professional examination for admission to the teacher work;
- to create a system of teacher career advancement;
- to introduce a system of young teachers support;
- to modernize teacher education, which should be focused on the integration of the philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical knowledge, the development of which contributes to the understanding of the essence of teaching profession by the future teachers;

- to intensify the efforts of the professional community involved in teacher education (Bolotov, 2014).

Kawito, M., Gounko, T., and Nungy, M. while analyzing the practice of higher education in the world (Kawito, Gounko, & Nungy, 2014) described the development of teacher education through the implementation of two opposing trends:

- unification—the creation of unified systems of teacher education, the isolation of the block of compulsory subjects, the introduction of new subjects;
- diversification—the development of different channels of the higher education in pedagogy.

In different countries, the education reform has peculiar features, but at the same time, there are common lines of teacher education reorganization:

- the increasing scope of the psycho-pedagogical training of future teachers;
- the search for new models of teacher education;
- the improvement of the system of teachers' qualification upgrade (Kapranova, 2004).

In today's world, training of teachers who are able to work with disabled children becomes increasingly important. Ermekova, Zh.K., Stukalenko, N.M., Tasbulatova, Zh.S., Kalymova, A.K., Kainikenova, G.K., and Kulmakhanova, D.U. (Ermekova, Stukalenko, Tasbulatova, Kalymova, Kainikenova, & Kulmakhanova, 2013) noted that in spite of the intensive research of building the professional qualities of teachers to work with this category of children, yet there is no unity in the approach to the definition of "preparedness of teachers to work in the system of inclusive education." The authors note that unfortunately the majority of teachers are not prepared to educate disabled children.

In this regard, we believe that the preparedness of teachers for inclusive education is one of the most important tasks of the national teacher training program. For example, as noted by T.S. Archakova, S.V. Alyokhina, M.N. Alekseeva, E.L. Agafonova, S.I. Sabelnikova, and T.L. Chepel (Archakova, Alyokhina, Alekseeva, Agafonova, Sabelnikova, & Chepel, 2009-2011), preparing teachers for inclusive education of disabled children in the conditions of a regular school will require comprehensive support by experts in the field of correctional pedagogy, special, and educational psychology for general education teachers who enter into the inclusive process. In this regard, in the context of socio-pedagogical activities, R.I. Egorov and O.P. Osipova considered social partnership as the interaction of educators, family, and a social pedagogue, the use of the society's capacity to integrate disabled children, to develop their social needs and abilities (Egorova & Osipova, 2014). As the social partnership is aimed at both the active adaptation of children with disabilities to the conditions of life in the society, and the creation of a favorable environment for this, and it is carried out at four levels: educational work in the society, in the micro-society (parents engagement), teachers' social and educational activity with regard of children, independent self-education of the educated persons, self-management of social relations within the children's society. Thus, the future teachers in the context of inclusive education must be proficient in special psychology, correctional pedagogy, pathological neuropsychology, and methods of education in an open society. In this regard, training of future teachers assumes building professional competencies capable of solving problems of socialization, social partnership, personality formation, self-fulfillment, professional and personal self-determination of these categories of schoolchildren.

In order to provide training of future teachers, NEFU included the "Inclusive Education" subject. Within this subject, the lecturer describes such topics as: "The concept of inclusive education," "The causes and conditions of abnormal development," "The history of the education of children with disabilities at school," "The legal aspects of the education reforms," "Foreign experience in inclusive education," "The model of transition to inclusive education," "Preparedness of the school for inclusive education," "Inclusive Education in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)," etc. Workshops involve active learning methods (discussions, project work, case studies). This can be exemplified by the following case studies: "The reality of inclusive education in mainstream schools in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)," "The issues of parents' attitude to integration," "the psychological problems of teachers at implementation of the idea of inclusion," "School—a barrier-free environment." Students attend special correctional schools to familiarize themselves with the organization of educational and parenting work at school, develop the interest in educational activities and parent empathy and compassion for children who have abnormalities of physical and mental health. As a result, competences are built, such as the awareness of the social importance of their future profession, the motivation to carry out professional activities, the ability to implement educational support for the processes of socialization and professional self-determination of students, their preparation for a conscious choice of the profession.

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