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Conflicts of Professional Development in Teaching Activities: Natural and Artificial

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The paper discusses the possibilities of professional development of young teachers in teaching activities in connection with the modern challenges of society, and tasks that should be solved by this development, and also the circumstances, under which this development can occur. In order to do this, a distinction in understanding of professional development in the everyday and scientific views was made, the content, adequate to the study of professional development in teaching was formulated.

The article also contains hypotheses, a description of research strategy and the first data of the research, conducted on the basis of the social project, which is being carried out in Krasnoyarsk Krai – “The Youth professional pedagogical games”. Based on the obtained data, preliminary conclusions on the possibilities of constructing professional development in pedagogical activities were made, and the problems and prospects of the project were described.

Keywords: professional development, conflict, pedagogical activity.

The study of conflicts of professional development in pedagogical activity, to be more exact – at the start of pedagogic work, is carried out as part of an experimental social project – “The Youth professional pedagogical games in Krasnoyarsk territory”. This project was initiated by a group of educators and psychologists, and was commissioned by the Ministry of Education of the Krai, later on the basis of this project the “Association of Young Teachers of Krasnoyarsk territory” was formed, which is now carrying out the project.

This initiative has been carried out in Krasnoyarsk Krai since 2011 and it is systematic

professional competitions among young teachers to provide professional identity, finding their own place among the “others like me”, aimed at development and realization of new professional competences. The project is built on a prototype of sports activities and there are trainings and competitions in three leagues, each of which contains a complex of different meta-competencies: project and critical thinking, conflict construction, leadership, working with age and so on. Development of these and other meta-subject competences can allow, in our opinion, to more effectively respond to the challenges of society to modern education [see 1,2].

Before starting the study of conflicts of professional development, it was important for us to form our own understanding of professional development. And here we are faced with the opposition of development and other types of dynamics. In everyday understanding, development – is the dynamics of accumulating experience. According to this vision, young teachers are inexperienced, inept, “under”, while experienced teachers are experienced, skilled, and so on. It is assumed that the experienced do not need development – they are already developed, they have reached everything, now they only need to realize the potential that they have accumulated. And for the young, development is increase in their experience, its gradual accumulation.

We understand development differently. On the one hand, basing on the model, developed by Larisa Maximovna Mitina – implying a person’s ability to get outside the continuous flow of everyday practice, see their work as a whole and turn it into an object of practical conversion/transformation. Professional development of an individual is determined by different kinds of contradictions. But the main driving force behind the development of a professional is an intrapersonal conflict between one’s actions and one’s self-reflection. The vector of professional development is a creative self of a person [3].

On the other hand, we focus on the matrix of professionalization, developed by a team led by K. G. Mitrofanov. In the matrix, development occurs during transition from level to level as increase in the freedom of action, as a transition to the next level of professional action and greater freedom of action. That is, not just the increase of experience and reduction of anxiety or concern for discipline and other things, but a qualitative change in the vision the profession [4].

Only such understanding of development, in our view, is adequate to the contemporary

mission of the teaching profession. The situation of the modern society and the rhythm of life require individual’s ability to react quickly, to make decisions in situations of uncertainty, to find solutions to increasingly complex challenges... The younger generation must be prepared to all of these life situations at school, by a teacher.

However, traditionally in their early days of work in educational institutions, young teachers are puzzled (by the particular job) and concerned (in terms of their psychological well-being), at best, by the issues of adaptation. Professional development is not available, not actualized and is put off till the time, when adaptation is completed, and, in fact, the development starts by itself.

We, on our part, proceed from the fact that during this period of claims and energy, young professionals are sensitive to the challenges of modernity and issues of child development. So this sensitive period is the best time to involve a young teacher into problems of professional development, which will be much more difficult to do later.

Professional development in the teaching profession is a result of appearing of a new professional quality – the ability to see the activity in its integrity: its objectives, outcomes, individual actions, etc.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. A teacher develops a new professional quality on condition of actualization and resolution of the conflict between the subject and meta-subject content of his activity.

2. Actualization of this conflict can occur in specially organized activities, having the format of professional competitions in the area of meta- professional competences among teachers without the subject and object (students).

3. Conflict resolution is possible through the emergence of new activity-related claims

in connection with a different vision of the profession.

Such changes can occur only when a teacher masters reflection as a special technique.

Description of the research strategy

The experiment is conducted according to the following scheme:

1. At the start of their professional activity, all young teachers of Krasnoyarsk Krai can be divided into three groups according to orientation of their claims: “backward” (that is, oriented at the outdated image of the current situation in educational institutions), “forward” (at the latest trends), “nowhere” (the job is not seen as a place for real self-determination, there is hope that things will sort out themselves). In fact, the “forward” group does not really exist in reality, because they are not informed about the challenges, the challenges do not reach them... they are published somewhere, but they do not consider them relevant for themselves, because they have got into a real school and they need to adapt to it. It is the necessity of adaptation that worries, anxiety and conflicts are connected with.

We believe that, to start with, it is necessary to fixate a certain initial state, both the current and expected ones. Every young teacher has an understanding of the current situation and ideas about him/herself in the future, as well as some intuition about transition from the current state to the next one, and also why it can happen. At this stage, in our opinion, there can be two variants: “natural” and active.

The natural, or predetermined, variant contains a description of some of the natural characteristics of the future (the same things that happen always to everyone will happen to me), and in the description of transition – the metamorphosis (was – is). This is not an active

position in regard to the profession. Activity is seen as actions, which are directed at students and teaching. But not at one’s profession. Such person does not regard the profession as something directed at him/herself. He/she is not a subject but an “agent” of activity.¹ He/she was placed, equipped, and launched and further he/she needs steering, managing, and they will move the way they are told. Consequently, we believe that he/she has no professional reflection, but only professional functions.

The activity scenario is the one in which a professional positioning is present. This position is that a person intends to build oneself. In this case he/she describes the initial situation, prospects and ways of achieving them differently.

Thus, at the first stage of the program, we tried to fixate these initial conditions in order to obtain relevant qualifications.

2. But, according to our hypothesis, there are very few activity-oriented (“forward”) teachers. Consequently, a challenge must be specially organized as a challenge, not just published somewhere: “go read about it someday”. In order the challenges to be read about, they must assume some form of an organized activity. In this case the conflict concerning the “forward” claims can be actualized.

3. We consider “The Youth professional pedagogical games” to be such an activity – they are competitions in the area of meta-subject competences² among young teachers: one’s equals, the likes of one. Due to specially organized problems a teacher must actualize the conflict between the subject and meta-subject content of his/her activities. If there were no latent conflict, it either appears in connection with problem statements or is ignored. That is, the aim is to radically change the position, change orientations and attitudes due to the games: from external – to internal, the turn at themselves and their own position.

At this point we, as organizers, are confronted with the question of how to make the participant see this opposition and try to change their position? After all, there is a risk that if a person is only a participant all the time (there is certain material in the league, there is a league leader, certain rules, etc.), that the same stereotype of usual school practice will appear. We expect that participants should leave the familiar relationship “teacher-student-subject” and get into a “teacher- teacher relationship”, “the same as I”, where the subject appears with meta-subject, where indirect things appear, which determine my skills as my skills : it is not with pupils and on the “blackboard” that teachers reveal themselves, but in competition. Here they become much stronger and more distinct mirrors, which cannot be reached in everyday practice, even if someone comes to your lessons or somewhere else. At the best, a visitor will add a correction to one’s habitual scheme of activity, but here we need completely different schemes. But there is a risk that unless specially organized, this transition will not occur by itself.

And then here is the next question: perhaps this change occurs only during the transition to another position: for example, from participation to judging or coaching? If it is so, if we find these characteristics with referees and coaches, distinguishing them from ordinary participants (and them as ordinary participants) it will mean that games should be arranged as facilitating these transitions, expanding the limits.

4. This should be followed by attempts to resolve the conflict, which create the possibility for appearing of a new professional quality, which is tested in various activities. In our opinion, these tests, as well as search for a different type of knowledge and way of acting, can form the interest for “internship”³. Internship in the Association is opened as a place for reflecting on

games, where in a special discussion it can be seen whether participants have found deficits, where they did not even feel them before. Whether what happened relates to their intentions and goals, whether they have achieved the result, which has been counted on, or have discovered and found much more?

That is, the direction of development in the project must be specially organized, initially as a stop. Our idea is that the games should help to stop and reobjectivize what teachers do at school. But for this to happen one more stop must happen – the stop of the game. And if we are not able stop the game, we will not be able to stop the school process.

But we could not do it right off, because it was necessary to start the process, to make the game desirable, open, to involve some critical mass of people, in order to make them “start to play”, for them not to give up. Once it is done, we can start stopping the game, selecting, for the participants to have something to compete for.

5. Activity-related claims and a different view of the professional positioning are formed.

6. A new activity on a different basis, exploiting new professional quality, is organized.

Obtained data

Below we will give some data that we have managed to obtain. To fixate the initial state, we have asked the participants, who came to qualifying competitions, some questions that allow us to discover how they understand the current state, prospects and the transition, how they describe these phenomena: in the light of professional equipment, professional power or claims, or from the point of view of socio-communal obstacles. These issues have been condensed into 6 questions.

The survey involved 48 respondents, including 45 women and 3 men.

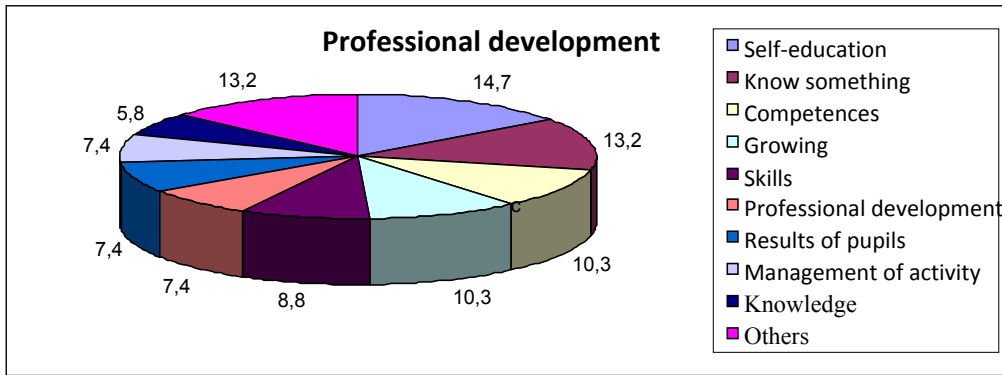


Fig. 1. “What does professional development mean for you?”

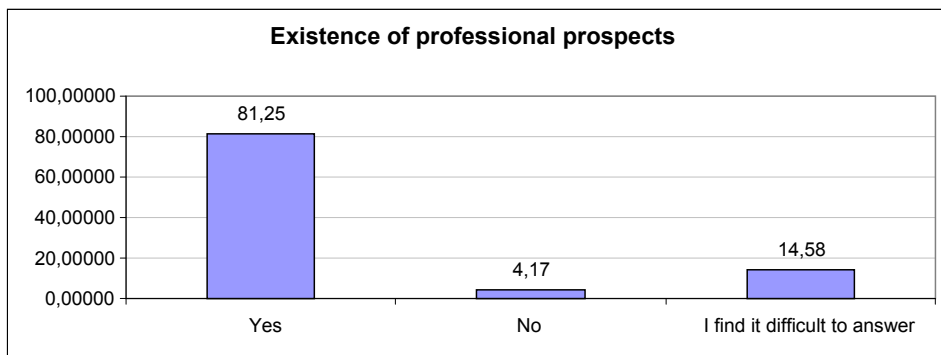


Fig. 2. “Do you think about your professional prospects?”

The first question “What does professional development mean for you?” suggested an independent formulation of a response by the respondents. 43 respondents gave 68 possible answers to the question about professional development. We have distributed these variants of responses into three groups. The ratio of these responses is shown in Fig. 1.

The next question “Do you think about your professional prospects?” suggested a choice of one of the three answers. Quantitative data are presented in Fig. 2.

Then followed a clarification question for those, who answered the previous question in the affirmative: “What are your plans for the next 5 years”. 37 respondents gave 57 possible answers

to this question. These answers were distributed into six groups presented in Fig. 3.

Thus, the idea of development as valuable for young teachers exists, but not in the form of internal, quality or activity-related changes, rather in the traditional form of following generally accepted standards in the form of skills upgrading (further training) and a gradual increase in knowledge.

We can conclude that young teachers’ ideas of professional development are quite naive, superficial, do not reflect the essence of the concept of “development”, not concretized. That is, the natural scenario. The claim – echoes of the activity scenario have been found in a small proportion of respondents, who gave the answer about activities management.

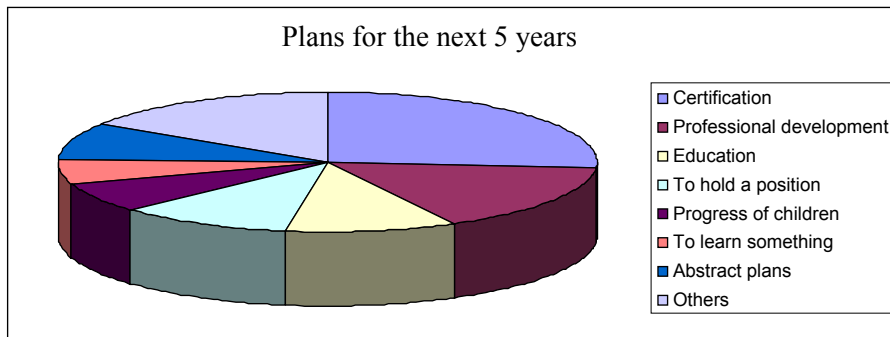


Fig. 3. “What are your plans for the next 5 years?”

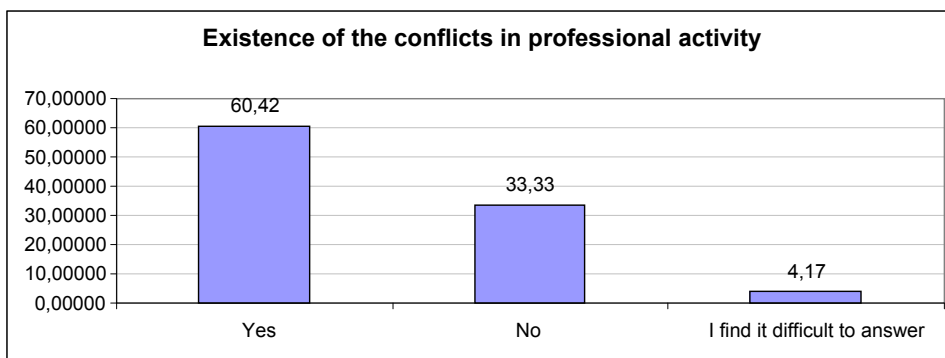


Fig. 4

The next question “Were there conflicts in your professional activity?” suggested that the respondents should choose one of the three alternatives (Yes / No / Do not know). The quantitative distribution of responses is shown in Fig. 4.

This was followed by the specifying question “Specify what kind of conflicts you have encountered”. The participants were asked to choose up to 3 variants. In our opinion, description of conflicts and their detailing is one of the key factors. In what areas and what kinds of conflicts are found?

In total, the respondents made 70 choices, quantitative data on the respondents are shown in Fig. 5.

The options were:

1. Conflicts with students (about discipline, academic performance, etc.)

2. Conflicts with parents

3. Conflicts with the administration, colleagues

4. Lack of resources for professional activity

5. Absence of the horizon for development

6. Difficulties in setting priorities

7. Worries about their own competence

8. Conflicts, related to the status of a teacher

9. Impossibility to realize creative initiatives and ideas

Also, the respondents had the opportunity to offer their own kind of conflict, but none of the respondents did this.

The last question was “What are the *most* difficult things for you in the teaching profession?”

The respondents were also asked to give their own answer. In the responses of 41 respondents there



Fig. 5. “Specify what kind of conflicts you have encountered”

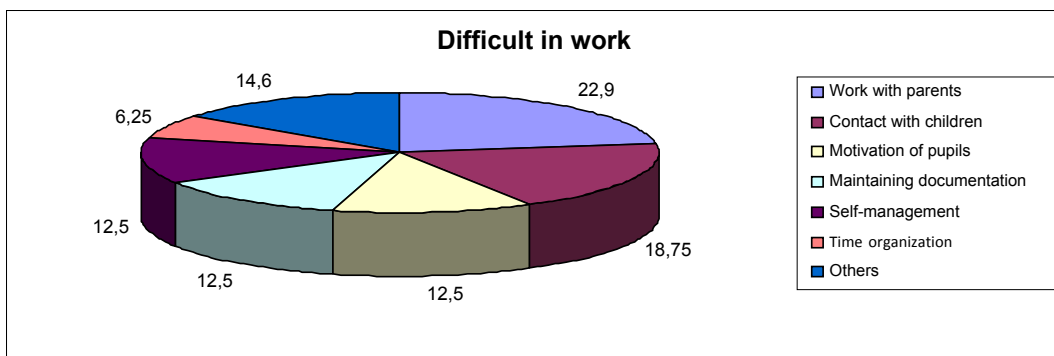


Fig. 6. “What are the most difficult things for you in the teaching profession?”

were given 48 possible answers to the question about the experienced professional difficulties. We have distributed these answers into six groups according to their content. They are presented in Fig. 6.

Thus, based on the data obtained, we now have a cohort of people who, on the one hand, have energy and claims, on the other hand – oriented at adjustment and reproduction in their mind, relations, and stereotypical understanding of development. And this is the key contradiction: adjustment in the perspective – , but the inner professional need is not in that at all! If they start adjusting, they will either be broken and absorbed by the system, or “being kicked out” from it.

And it seems that by participating in the games, the contradiction in these orientations is exposed, a different reality is revealed. Now it

is important to strengthen this line and change it from emotions to activity, in order the games not just stay a recreational area or cease to be interesting. Of course, it can be an interim solution that teachers will somewhat reduce the idea of the games and draw them into school reality through diversity of forms: take samples of behaviors, but not activity, not meta-subject, school life there will be more fun than it is now, more diverse. And our task is to problematize the situation on purpose to get a claim to genuine development, the one that we need.

We were able to see how professional development is seen in a natural way (learning new models, further training, etc.), but according to our hypothesis, development should be understood as problematization of their own modes of action, the ratio of action – result, the

adequacy of resources for development of certain ways: when a person begins to see not the form of action, but its meanings and the fact that it that it transforms when I am free and can already see the way it works, rather than the form it exists in.

Of course, one incomplete season of the games, which began in November last year and so far there were only two competition and training stages, is not sufficient to obtain the intended result, but we have tried to fix some of the contours of movement in March this year at the semi-final competition.

To the question “Why do you participate in the YPPG?” the participants could choose several options from 9 possible or suggest their own. The total number of 201 choices was made by the participants, the percentage of the responses is shown in Fig. 7.

The options were:

1. To have fun, socialize with other young teachers.
2. I am interested to learn something new.
3. To gain strength and energy, to get an “energy boost”.
4. To compare myself with other teachers in the competition, take a high place in the rankings.
5. To get new forms and methods for lessons, work with children.

6. To be aware of what is happening in the region, not to miss something important.

7. Because there are no other specialized activities for young teachers in the krai.

8. In order to increase your professional competence, and use them in your professional activities.

9. In order to develop, not to stagnate.

10. There were given only four independent answers to this question, each of which corresponded to one of the nine options, proposed in the questionnaire, each of which differed only in wording. Therefore these responses will not be analyzed separately.

The next question “Do you associate what is happening at the general meetings of the Association (training, competitions, Rally of leaders, etc.) with your professional activity? If so, how?” also suggested 9 possible responses and their own version.

A total of 120 choices were made, the percentage ratio of the respondents is summarized in Fig. 8.

The options are:

1. Do not connect.
2. Intuitively, it seems that these spaces are related, but do not know how yet.
3. I use exercises and forms, taken in the YPPG at the lessons or class hours.

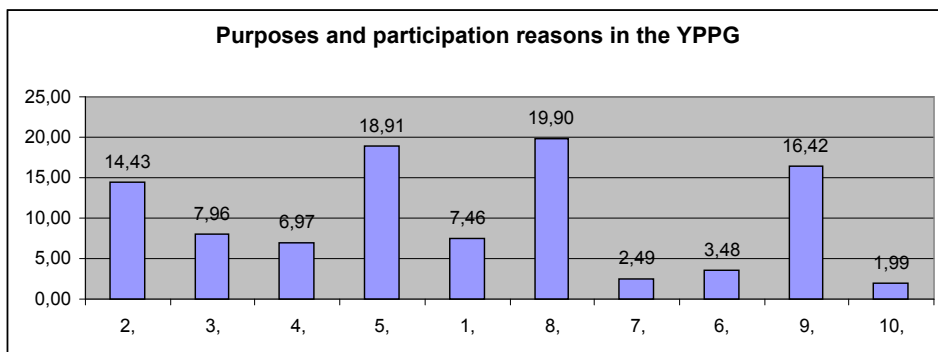


Fig. 7. “Why and do you participate in the YPPG ?”

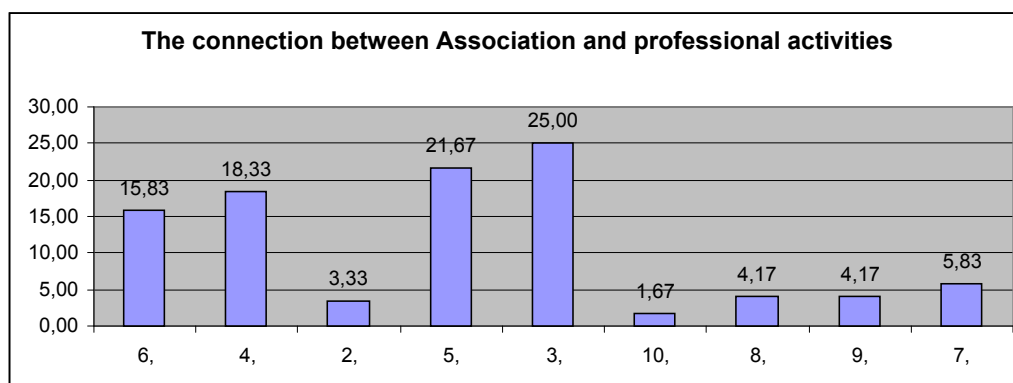


Fig. 8. “Do you associate what is happening at the general meetings of the Association with your professional activity? If so, how?”

4. Meetings of the Association of Young Teachers make me reconsider my professional activities and perceptions of them, open up new horizons for development.

5. In training and competition I increase competences, which I can use later in any of my activities, including professional.

6. I exchange experience with other teachers, to adopt the ways and correct my professional activities.

7. I use the material and the experience from school reality in competitions.

8. Competitions are a model of school life – some things become clearer in them.

9. I am trying to connect these spaces, but do not always succeed.

10. An independent answer.

Preliminary conclusion

Thus, the games are, on the one hand, a mirror of professional (but not only) conformity,

on the other hand – a resource for well-being or opening / closing prospects.

We can see that the YPPG is marked by participants as important and significant, there are attempts at understanding and re-evaluation of the two realities, finding links between them. But the question about the so-called “step” remains open: how many competitions one needs to participate in and how for something to change? Maybe one needs to play 5 consecutive years? How to participate? Perhaps one needs to move from common participation to judging, for example? What should be the dynamics?

Another open question is that our competitions are built as knock-out games. While our aim is to retain participants through various forms of association, the games are so arranged so that they have leave. Therefore, we need to think about how to change the structure of the games in order to really test our hypotheses and implement significant changes.

¹ We distinguish between the traditional subject and the so-called “agent” of activity by the criterion of aim possession: a subject is the author and holder of realized aims of activity, but an agent accepts existing aims.

² In today’s reality with the introduction of requirements of meta-subjectivity of educational outcomes into the Federal State Educational Standard, meta-subject competences, on the one hand, have become very popular, but on the other hand – have begun to lose their content, distinguishing them from all other competencies.

One of the rather concise explanations of the term “meta-subjectivity”, in our opinion, can be the description of A. V. Khutorskiy: “Meta-subjectivity characterizes getting beyond subjects, but not abandoning them. Meta-subject is what stands behind a subject or several subjects, lies in their basis and at the same time connected with them through the root. Meta-subjectivity cannot be detached from the subject” [5].

- ³ A teaching internship is starting to develop as part of the activities of the Association, in addition to the YPPG. The term is borrowed from the medical sphere, and now it has again begun popular in the sphere of education to develop the idea of internship. We mean quite a different content of a familiar word: this is not an internship from “outside”, bringing up an unprepared teacher to the capabilities of a real activity, instead it is the work on the request of an intern: if there has been found an inconsistency between the claims of a teacher and his real activity (resource available after the professional training). In this case, a person finds his/her deficits him/herself.

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Конфликты профессионального развития в педагогической деятельности: естественные и искусственные

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В статье обсуждаются возможности профессионального развития молодых учителей в педагогической деятельности в связи с современными вызовами общества, выяснено, какие задачи должно решать это развитие и при каких условиях оно может происходить. Для этого дифференцировано понимание профессионального развития в обыденном и научном представлениях и сформулировано содержание, адекватное исследованию профессионального развития в педагогической деятельности.

Также представлены гипотезы, описание исследовательской стратегии и первичные данные исследования, проведённого на основе разворачивающегося в Красноярском крае социального проекта «Молодёжные профессиональные педагогические игры». На основании полученных данных сформулированы предварительные выводы относительно возможностей конструирования профессионального развития в педагогической деятельности и описаны проблемы и перспективы проекта.

Ключевые слова: профессиональное развитие, конфликт, педагогическая деятельность.
