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COMPONENTS OF THE MEDIATION COMPETENCE FORMATION IN FUTURE SOCIAL WORKERS

The article explores the practical principles of mediation as a technology for resolving conflict situations, with particular emphasis on the importance of developing mediation skills in alignment with higher education standards for the training of future social workers.

The aim of the article is a methodical analysis of the development levels of the components of mediator competence of future social workers as the basis of their professional training. Achieving the goal of the article made it possible to use such methods as analysis, generalization, systematization, as well as modeling the levels of formation of the components of mediator competence to illustrate its practical application.

Scientific novelty of the study lies in the fact that the formation of mediatory competence requires the development of a methodology for assessing the levels of its formation, taking into account the specific features of social workers' training.

Findings. It substantiates a model for the levels of formation of the components of mediator competence, presenting this as a foundation for the professional training of social work students. The study reveals that the practical application of alternative conflict resolution tools is gaining increasing relevance in the field of social work. This growing importance highlights the need for new approaches, technologies, and mechanisms to effectively address and prevent conflict situations. The article establishes that the formation of mediator competence in future social workers takes place during professional training, which includes both theoretical instruction and practical exercises. The integration of mediator competence assessment into practical coursework is emphasized as a crucial step in enabling students to systematically develop mediation skills. This approach enhances their ability to analyze real-world cases, provide constructive feedback, and simulate professional scenarios during the educational process. Furthermore, the article highlights the need for training programs to be structured around the gradual development of all components of competence, with a strong emphasis on the practical application of knowledge. It emphasizes that the components of such training programs should focus on cultivating knowledge, skills, and abilities in a cohesive and practice-oriented manner.

Key words: formation of mediation competence, social workers, communication, model of formation levels, components, professional training.

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КОМПОНЕНТИ ФОРМУВАННЯ МЕДІАТОРСЬКОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ У МАЙБУТНІХ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПРАЦІВНИКІВ

У статті проаналізовано практичні засади медіації як технології розв'язання конфліктних ситуацій з акцентом на важливості формування здатності до медіації у контексті дотримання положень стандартів вищої освіти з підготовки майбутніх соціальних працівників.

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Метою статті є методичний аналіз рівнів сформованості компонентів медіаторської компетентності майбутніх соціальних працівників як основи їхньої професійної підготовки. Досягнення мети статті уможливило використання таких методів як аналіз, узагальнення, систематизація, а також моделювання рівнів сформованості компонентів медіаторської компетентності для ілюстрації її практичного застосування.

Наукова новизна роботи полягає в тому, що формування медіаторської компетентності потребує розробки методики оцінки рівнів сформованості цієї компетентності, враховуючи специфіку підготовки соціальних працівників.

Висновки. У статті обґрунтовано модель рівнів сформованості компонентів медіаторської компетентності майбутніх соціальних працівників як основи їх професійної підготовки. З'ясовано, що значної актуальності набирає практичне застосування інструментарію альтернативного вирішення конфліктів та проблем у сфері соціальної роботи, що вимагає нових підходів, технологій та механізмів з метою розв'язання конфліктних ситуацій та пошуку ефективних шляхів їх профілактики. Встановлено, що формування медіаторської компетентності у майбутніх соціальних працівників відбувається в процесі професійної підготовки, яка включає як теоретичне навчання, так і практичні заняття. Включення оцінки формування медіаторської компетентності як важливої складової практичних занять для майбутніх соціальних працівників дозволить здобувачам вищої освіти системно розвивати навички медіації, забезпечить здатність майбутніх фахівців аналізувати практичні кейси, надавати конструктивний зворотний зв'язок, моделювати під час навчального процесу реальні ситуації з професійної практики. програми підготовки мають бути орієнтовані на поступовий розвиток усіх компонентів компетентності, з акцентом на практичне застосування знань. У статті зосереджено увагу на компонентах навчальної програми підготовки майбутніх соціальних працівників, що зорієнтовані на поступовий розвиток усіх компонентів компетентності, з акцентом на практичному застосуванні знань, умінь та навичок.

Ключові слова: формування медіаторської компетентності, соціальні працівники, комунікація, модель рівнів сформованості, компоненти, професійна підготовка.

Introduction. The relevance of the topic is due to the growing need for social workers who are able to apply mediation techniques in their professional activities effectively. Mediation competence encompasses the knowledge, skills and personal qualities necessary for conflict analysis, establishing communication and ensuring understanding between the parties. However, for high-quality training of future specialists, it is not enough to form this competence, it is important to develop tools for its assessment and improvement. That is why the development of a model of levels of formation of mediation competence is an urgent task that will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of professional training.

The aim of the article is a methodical analysis of the development levels of the components of mediator competence of future social workers as the basis of their professional training. To achieve this goal, we set the following **tasks**: to substantiate the criteria and levels of development of mediator competence and to develop a methodology for assessing the levels of development, taking into account the specifics of the training of social workers

Achieving the goal of the article made it possible to use such **methods** as analysis, generalization, systematization, as well as modeling the levels of formation of the components of mediator competence to illustrate its practical application.

The development of such a methodology is important both for teachers involved in the training

of social workers and for the students themselves, as it will allow them to objectively assess their progress and determine areas for further development, and will contribute to improving the quality of social services and strengthening the role of social workers in resolving conflicts at various levels.

Research results. Mediation competence is one of the key components of the professional training of social workers, as it directly affects their ability to interact with clients effectively, resolve conflicts and promote social harmony. For a deeper understanding of this concept, it is necessary to consider its essence, components and meaning in the context of social work.

A significant number of conflicts and deep-seated problems in the field of social work require new approaches, technologies and mechanisms for resolving conflict situations and finding effective methods for their prevention. The full-scale Russian invasion has caused an increase in the level of conflict and stress. Psychological fatigue, nervousness, uncertainty produce increased conflict in various areas, i.e., political, social, economic, etc. Conflict resolution institutions are important in this regard, as they can offer a quick and effective way to resolve conflicts between parties. Such aspects are addressed by "mediation", i.e., the mediation of a neutral third party in conflict resolution.

According to scientists (M. Blikhar, N. Bondarchuk, A. Bugaychuk, O. Kirdan,

M. Piren), mediator competence is an integral part of the professional competence of a social worker, as it contributes to the implementation of the principles of justice, tolerance and respect for human rights (Blikhar et al., 2023; Kirdan, 2023; Kirdan, 2019; Piren, 1997). Thus, the need to form the readiness of future specialists to resolve conflicts is declared by N. Bibik, who notes that education should take into account the principle of globally oriented education (Bibik, 2004). Students should learn to see the internal alternative solutions to any problem, develop an attitude towards cooperation and dialogue, form the ability to organize joint activities, take into account the views, customs of people, carriers of different cultures. The article by S. Omelyanenko substantiates the need to form conflictological competence of future social educators. That is, the need to form the readiness of future social sphere specialists to resolve conflicts is currently on the agenda (Omelyanenko, 2009). In T. Dzyuba's understanding, readiness to resolve professional conflicts is a complex of knowledge, skills, and personal qualities of a specialist that ensures constructive perception and productive resolution of conflicts in professional and managerial interaction (Dzyuba, 2002).

In the professional context of social work, mediator competence is defined as an integrative characteristic of a specialist who must possess the competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the functions of a mediator in conflict situations. In particular, this includes the ability to analyze the causes of conflicts, establish communication between the parties, offer mutually beneficial solutions and maintain neutrality, adhere to the principle of confidentiality, represent the interests of the recipient of social services, etc.

The components of mediator competence include cognitive (knowledge of the theoretical foundations of mediation, legislative aspects, understanding of the psychological and social mechanisms of conflict), communicative (the ability to establish a dialogue, listen to the parties to the conflict, clearly express opinions and avoid bias, create an atmosphere of trust), emotional (the ability to manage emotions, show empathy and help the parties to the conflict control their emotional state), practical (the application of mediation techniques, e.g., organizing negotiations, finding compromises and developing an action plan to resolve the conflict).

The formation of the cognitive component encompasses the completeness and systematicity of knowledge about conflicts in the social sphere and ways of their effective resolution. We proceeded from the considerations that knowledge of the general, special and specific in the structure and content of conflict interaction in the social sphere is a significant prerequisite for the professionalism of social workers. Each of these components is interconnected and plays an important role in the formation of holistic mediator competence. For example, without the appropriate level of knowledge (cognitive component), a social worker will not be able to effectively apply practical skills, and without a developed communicative component, it is impossible to achieve understanding between the parties. A social worker should know the principles of non-violent communication and the basics of conflictology. The importance of mediation competence for social work cannot be overestimated. Social workers are faced with situations requiring mediation every day: family conflicts, disputes between neighbors, problems in communities, etc. Specialists who possess mediation skills demonstrate a higher level of professional effectiveness, as they are able not only to respond to problems, but also to prevent their occurrence (Kalaur, 2017). In the Ukrainian context, this competence is of particular importance due to war, socio-economic instability, and the increase in the number of conflicts associated with forced migration, unemployment, and other challenges. The basic principles of model formation mediator competence in social work are to take into account key principles. Firstly, comprehensiveness (covering all components of mediator competence, namely cognitive (knowledge), communicative (ability to communicate), emotional (emotional management) and practical (mediation skills). This provides a holistic approach to assessment. Secondly, practical orientation. Here we mean the use of tasks that simulate real professional situations that social workers face (family conflicts, disputes in the community, etc.) (Mikhnovsky, 2024). Thirdly, objectivity (this is about combining self-assessment of higher education applicants with the assessment of independent experts (teachers or practitioners), which allows avoiding subjectivity. Fourthly, it is worth paying attention to flexibility, i.e., adaptation of the methodology to different stages of training (for example, junior

courses can be assessed on basic knowledge, and senior ones on practical skills). These principles will guarantee that such a model will be not only a theoretical tool, but also a practical means for improving training specialists.

It will be extremely difficult for future specialists in the social sphere to resolve conflicts constructively without the formed readiness. Thus, in the structure of readiness for professional activity, the readiness to resolve conflicts should occupy a prominent place (Kalaur, 2017: 172). As O. Rasskazova and Yu. Chernetska argue, in the current conditions “the training of specialists capable of providing social assistance to people, developing and applying professional approaches to solving various social problems and conflicts is becoming very relevant” (Rasskazova & Chernetska, 2016: 56). That is why, even during their studies at higher educational institutions, students who are acquiring the profession of social pedagogue, social worker, psychologist and practical psychologist need to form a readiness to resolve professional conflicts.

Discussion of results. The model for the formation of mediator competence includes three main stages: defining assessment tools, forming assessment scales, and describing the procedure. To assess each component of mediation competence, it is proposed to use the following tools: *questionnaires* – for the cognitive component (students are offered test questions, for example: “What principles underlie mediation?” or “How to identify the hidden causes of conflict?”, which will allow checking the level of theoretical knowledge), *practical cases* – for the communicative and practical components (students are given a task, for example, to conduct negotiations between two conditional parties to the conflict (parents in a family dispute), when the task is evaluated according to the effectiveness of the dialogue and the quality of the proposed solutions), *observation* – for the emotional component (when performing cases, the teacher records how the student reacts to the emotional manifestations of the parties: does he remain calm, does he show empathy, or does he avoid bias), *reflection* (an additional tool when students write a short report on their experience in the case, analyzing their own actions and difficulties, which helps to assess their self-perception and understanding of the process).

Ranking of the model for the formation of mediator competence can be based on a five-point scale, where 1–2 points means a low level (lack of knowledge or skills, e.g., the student cannot explain the basic principles of mediation, or interrupts the interlocutors and does not listen); 3–4 points – an average level (availability of basic knowledge and skills, but with limited flexibility, e.g., the student manages to establish a dialogue, but a compromise is not reached, or the student supports the dialogue, but does not always clearly formulate thoughts); 5–6 points – a high level (deep understanding and effective application, e.g., the applicant offers a creative solution to the conflict taking into account the needs of both parties, creates an atmosphere of trust and actively promotes mutual understanding). The overall level of formation is determined as the arithmetic mean of all components, but with the possibility of analyzing each of them separately to identify weaknesses.

To obtain such an assessment, the teacher provides *preparation* for it: prepares questionnaires, cases, observation forms adapted to the level of students (for example, for the 3rd year – simpler conflicts, for the 4th year – more complex ones). Then students *perform tasks* (take a questionnaire (15–20 minutes), and then work with the case in groups or pairs under the supervision of an expert (30–40 minutes). The next stage is *the analysis of the results* (the teacher fills out evaluation sheets, where he records the scores for each component, and the students write a reflection (10–15 minutes). The last stage is *feedback*, when the results are discussed so that students understand their strengths and areas for growth.

We believe that such a model The formation of mediator competence has a number of advantages, as it is easy to apply, does not require complex resources and can be integrated into existing curricula. Thanks to practical cases, students gain real experience, and teachers gain objective data for adjusting classes. Meanwhile, the technique has certain caveats, as it depends on the qualifications of the experts conducting the observations, and may be less effective without regular use in the educational process. The proposed methodology is a basis for assessing mediator competence and can be improved by adding quantitative indicators (e.g., percentage of successfully resolved cases) or using software to analyze the results. Its implementation will contribute to improving the quality of training of social workers.

The readiness of a future social sphere specialist to resolve conflicts is a valuable resource of the individual, acts as a factor of success in the perception and productive resolution of conflicts during professional interaction, and helps in the effective performance of professional functions and roles. Such readiness will allow future social sphere specialists to quickly determine the true causes of conflict confrontation, will allow them to professionally manage conflict situations. We emphasize that readiness begins to form in the process of professional training in higher education institutions and is determined by social attitudes, motives, professional orientation, theoretical and practical training and individual typological characteristics. Thus, the professional qualities of a future social worker who is ready to resolve conflicts are understood as individual characteristics that contribute to the formation of a positive attitude towards his profession and the people he/she works with, the desire for personal growth, professional improvement. In the most general sense, the

personal component is based on such qualities as tolerance and empathy in conflict interaction.

Conclusions. In the process of work, we have established that mediator competence is an integrative characteristic that includes cognitive, communicative, emotional and practical components. These components play a key role in preparing specialists to perform mediation functions in conflict situations, which is an integral part of their professional activities. Theoretical analysis showed that mediator competence is of great importance for social work, as it contributes to effective conflict resolution and improving the quality of social services. Determining the levels of formation made it possible to establish assessment criteria that take into account knowledge, communication skills, emotional maturity and practical skills. Based on these data, we offer a model that combines questionnaires, practical cases, observations and reflection. This model allows you to assess the level of students' training objectively and identify areas for its improvement, track students' progress systematically, see their strengths and growth areas.

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