

The Current State of the Formation of Socio-Ethical Competence in Prospective Elementary School Teachers

El Estado Actual de la Formación de la Competencia Socio-Ética en Maestros de Escuela Primaria

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Content

- [1. Introduction](#)
 - [2. Literature Review](#)
 - [3. Methods and Materials](#)
 - [4. Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

ABSTRACT:

Current cultural, economic, and educational trends necessitate the training of prospective elementary school teachers with good socio-ethical competence. However, the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective teachers is understudied from the theoretical, methodological, and technological perspective. In order to solve this problem, this research analyzed the content of the respective conceptual framework and the constituents of said competence and outlined the respective terminology system. In addition, the research characterized in general the periods of formation of the abovementioned problem. Socio-ethical competence of elementary school teachers is a type of teachers' professional competence that allows for pedagogically expedient educational interaction with junior schoolchildren, with a view to extending their experience of social behavior that complies with the current moral standards and

RESUMEN:

Las tendencias culturales, económicas y educativas actuales requieren la formación de futuros maestros de escuela primaria con buena competencia socio-ética. Sin embargo, el problema de la formación de la competencia socio-ética en los futuros profesores es poco estudiado desde la perspectiva teórica, metodológica y tecnológica. Para resolver este problema, esta investigación analizó el contenido del marco conceptual respectivo y los constituyentes de dicha competencia y esbozó el respectivo sistema terminológico. Además, la investigación caracterizó en general los periodos de formación del problema antes mencionado. La competencia ético-ética de los maestros de escuela primaria es un tipo de competencia profesional docente que permite una interacción educativa pedagógicamente acertada con los escolares menores, con miras a ampliar su experiencia de conducta social que cumpla con los estándares morales

social requirements. By forming socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers, one teaches them to effectively interact with students and other people in various communication situations, with regard to the moral standards and ethical behavior rules accepted in the modern society. In order to form socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers, it is necessary to consistently accumulate positive qualitative and quantitative changes in the content of said competence in an educational process of vocational training in a pedagogical higher educational institution specifically tailored for this purpose. The formation of socio-ethical competence implies not only active participation of the teacher, but also a subjective stance of students, their realization of their ethical position, and admission of professional responsibility.

Keywords: Elementary school teacher; Formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective teachers; Professional competence; Socio-ethical competence of elementary school teachers; Teachers' ethical competence; Teachers' social competence.

y exigencias sociales actuales. Al formar la competencia socio-ética en futuros maestros de primaria, se les enseña a interactuar de manera efectiva con estudiantes y otras personas en diversas situaciones de comunicación, con respecto a los estándares morales y las reglas de conducta ética aceptadas en la sociedad moderna. Para formar la competencia socio-ética en futuros maestros de escuela primaria es necesario acumular consistentemente cambios cualitativos y cuantitativos positivos en el contenido de dicha competencia en un proceso educativo de formación profesional en una institución pedagógica de educación superior específicamente adaptada a este fin. La formación de la competencia socio-ética implica no sólo la participación activa del profesor, sino también una postura subjetiva de los estudiantes, su realización de su posición ética y la aceptación de la responsabilidad profesional.

Palabras clave: maestro de primaria; Formación de competencias socio-éticas en futuros profesores; competencia profesional; La competencia socio-ética de los maestros de escuelas primarias; Competencia ética de los profesores; La competencia social de los profesores.

1. Introduction

In the modern world of globalization and reformation of educational systems, only a professional teacher with a set of competences is capable of giving junior schoolchildren a proper education; socio-ethical competence is a key one, since it allows for correct influence on the personality of a junior schoolchild and a pedagogically expedient development of his/her individuality.

Socio-ethical competence is a complex personal formation that does not emerge randomly during the vocational training of prospective elementary school teachers, but rather requires purposeful pedagogical effort to form. However, no unified groundwork for programs that aim at forming socio-ethical competence in prospective teachers has been offered yet. One of the main reasons behind this is the lack of a universal understanding of socio-ethical competence as a complex phenomenon, the formation whereof requires special measures.

In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to study it as a pedagogical phenomenon. This will enable creating a pedagogical system for forming socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers during vocational training in higher educational institutions and determining the pedagogical conditions for the effective work of teachers. The socio-ethical component inevitably manifests in the educational process of junior schoolchildren, which is why such programs enhance the understanding of the essence and results of pedagogical activity, thus improving the effectiveness of education and preventing occupational burnout in teachers.

2. Literature Review

The first studies that substantiated the place and role of competence in education emerged in the 1970s. The conclusions of McClelland's article from 1973 (McClelland, 1973, pp. 1-14) were well received by the pedagogical community; they laid the groundwork for the competency-based approach to education.

On the international level, the problem of the competency-based approach to education is reflected in UNESCO materials that outline the competencies that are regarded as the sought result of the educational process. For instance, report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education in the Twenty-first Century titled "Learning: the Treasure Within" defined main and global competences and formulated the strategic foundation of education:

learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (UNESCO, 1996). In addition, the introduction and elaboration of the "key competencies" concept answered the challenge of European development and facilitated fruitful discussions for the purpose of improving the quality of modern education (Hutmacher, 1997).

Professional competence implies readiness and ability to act according to the requirements of one's profession, complete tasks and solve problems systematically, independently, and in an organized fashion, and assess the results of one's activity (Vvedensky, 2003, pp. 51-55).

It is appropriate to start the characterization of socio-ethical competence with the determination of its place in the structure of teachers' professional competence. In terms of universalization, professional competences are divided into (Grinvald, 2011, p. 201):

- key competences are defining competences that are the most universal ones in terms of their nature and scope of application, i.e. necessary for professional activity in any field;
- basic competences reflect the specificity of a certain professional activity and the ability of a person to perform said activity effectively;
- special competences reflect the specificity of performance of a certain professional activity and allow completing specific tasks in this or that professional field.

Thus, socio-ethical competence is part of the group of basic competences, which are required to perform pedagogical activity in general.

The educational process includes teaching and upbringing. Elementary school is also characterized by teachers' care and responsibility for pupils, which also raises a number of ethical questions (Vogt, 2002, pp. 251-264). In addition, since the meaning and content of the upbringing process boils down to learning socially appropriate ethical principles, socio-ethical competence is the fundamental one when the teacher educates junior schoolchildren. This is due to the fact that for junior schoolchildren, the upbringing process in and of itself is the foundation of interaction with adults; in other words, children learn to interact by viewing the teacher as an example (Mathur, & Corley, 2014, pp. 136-147). Another important aspect is that the activity of elementary school teachers is associated with the need to develop in junior schoolchildren the motivation to achieve something in their learning activity and familiarize them with effective learning techniques, standards and rules of behavior, their personal traits that help to achieve success, and to develop an adequate self-assessment, social confidence, and skills of constructive behavior in difficult situations (Kalinina, 2006, p. 460). The socio-ethical competence of elementary school teachers is capable of completing all the above tasks.

Thus, socio-ethical competence of elementary school teachers is a super-subject phenomenon, an interiorized set of personal qualities that are required for educational interaction with junior schoolchildren; such qualities extend the schoolchildren's moral-ethical experience of social behavior. However, despite the importance of this professional competence, modern training of elementary school teachers does not pay sufficient attention to its development.

The modeling of the formation of social competence is presented in the form of dialectic links between goals, principles, blocks, and the result (Demchuk, 2010, p. 171). Another modeling logic consists in the unity of developing and forming strategies, which allowed demonstrating the formation of social competence through the characteristic of each stage's content with regard to the social, age-related, and personal factors (Kalinina, 2006, p. 460). The third model type emphasizes such factors as relationships between the teacher and pupils, effective classroom management, and effective implementation of social and emotional education programs, which allows creating an atmosphere in class that facilitates effective learning and a positive result of development for pupils (Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009, pp. 491-525). These models can be used as the groundwork for the concept of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers if they are supplemented with the didactic aspect of the process with regard to the specificity of the ethical constituent of this competence.

3. Methods and Materials

The literature review found that the formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers was understudied. It is also unclear whether universities have the necessary conditions for implementing programs aimed at forming socio-ethical competence even if said programs are organized in accordance with effective models. An empirical study was conducted to answer these questions.

A survey was held among students and teachers of pedagogical higher educational institutions, with a view to determining if it was necessary to study the problem of forming socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers. The survey included 105 students and 38 teachers of the Z. Aldamzhar Kostanay Social Technical University. The purpose of the survey questions was to study two areas: how relevant the task of forming socio-ethical competence in prospective teachers is and how real the development and implementation of a respective program is for students (prospective teachers).

The state of the problem, as well as the possibilities and prospects of its solution in higher pedagogical education was studied using theoretical methods: analysis of regulatory documents, historical, pedagogical, methodological, conceptual, and terminological analysis. These methods were used to create a theoretical framework for the further development of programs aimed at forming socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers.

Is it important to Study the Problem of Formation of Socio-Ethical Competence in Teachers?
Survey Results

According to the survey, most students (99 respondents or 94% of respondents) are aware of the importance of socio-ethical competence for effective educational activity. Only 28 students (less than 27%) managed to partially characterize the content of this type of professional competence, specify its constituent knowledge, skills, and professionally important personal qualities and value orientations, and give examples of learning activities that form said competence. A virtually unanimous opinion was expressed in regards to the level of formation of the respondents' own socio-ethical competence: 98% of respondents admitted that the said level was insufficient. At the same time, most students emphasized the fact that little attention was paid to the formation of this competence in prospective elementary school teachers during higher education. All surveyed persons stressed the need to include assignments aimed at developing special knowledge and skills that constitute socio-ethical competence into the learning process.

The surveyed higher educational institution teachers recognized not only the importance of socio-ethical training of prospective teachers (31 respondents or 81% of respondents), but also the necessity of purposeful work in this direction (33 respondents or 86% of respondents). Another important result is the recognition of sufficient capacities of the educational process in higher educational institutions, whose optimal utilization can develop socio-ethical knowledge, abilities, skills, professionally important personal qualities, and value orientations in students without transforming fundamentally the existing educational system and, thus, without requiring long-term and expensive radical reformation; 92% (35 teachers out of 38) of respondents came to this conclusion. Most surveyed teachers (35 persons out of 38) said they would form socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers more purposefully if they were given a developed and theoretically substantiated pedagogical framework, for instance, a pedagogical system or updated educational program or if they had a clear understanding of the state of this problem.

3.1 The Historiography of Studies on the Formation of Socio-Ethical Competence

The historiography of the problem of formation of professional competence in prospective teachers showed a number of premises, which indicate that the problem is relevant on the one hand and characterize the research capacities for solving said problem on the other hand. The periods of formation of the problem of professional competence formation in prospective elementary school teachers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Generalized characteristics of the formation periods of the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers

First period (early 1970s – early 1990s)	Second period (early 1990s – early 2000s)	Third period (early 2000s – present day)
D. McClelland introduces the term “competency”, beginning of the establishment of the competency-based approach	Spread of competency-based approach ideas, including in post-Soviet countries	Emergence of comprehensive studies on the problem of formation of professional competence in prospective specialists
Single educational space throughout the entire Soviet Union, consistent training of elementary school teachers with higher education, aimed at improving its quality	Independence of countries in Europe and Central Asia, reformation of vocational and higher education systems in said countries	Adoption of Bologna agreements, reorganization of elementary school teacher training according to the competency-based paradigm
Studies mostly dedicated to improving the training of students in pedagogical higher educational institutions	Increasing number of studies dedicated to improving the training of students in higher educational institutions	Emergence of first studies on the formation of professional competences (mostly related to the learning process) in prospective elementary school teachers

The historiographical analysis shows that the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence was mainstreamed during the last period in the wake of studies on the formation of certain professional competences in prospective teachers.

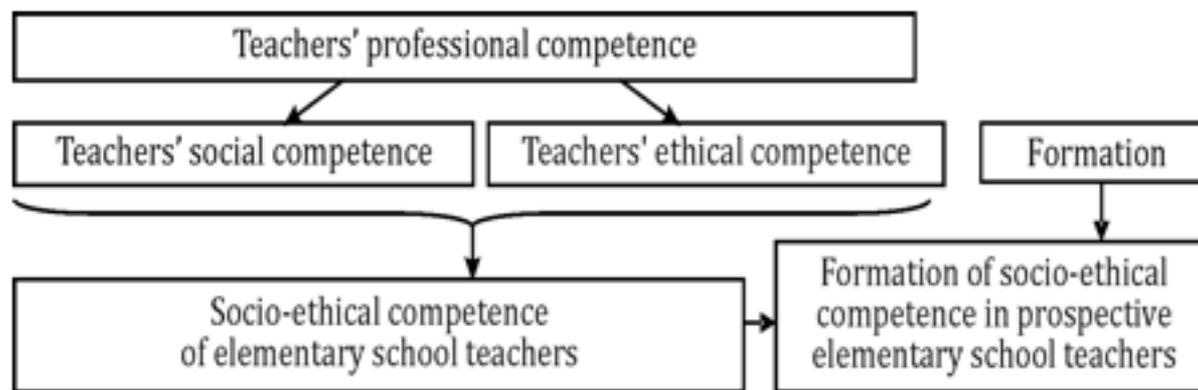
In recent years, focus has shifted more to the methodology and history of studies in pedagogy and education (Lagemann, 2002). In the methodological aspect, each combination of approaches allows viewing phenomena from different perspectives and studying comprehensively such a complex phenomenon as professional competence. However, the most effective approaches to the subject of this study are the ones chosen in accordance with the purpose of the study and with regard to the essential characteristics of the type of professional competence that is formed in prospective elementary school teachers.

3.2 Theoretical Framework of the Problem of Formation of Socio-Ethical Competence in Prospective Elementary School Teachers

In order to present the offered solution to the studied problem properly and conclusively, it is reasonable to first outline the terminological system. In regards to the studied problem, the terminological system includes such terms as “teachers’ professional competence”, “teachers’ social competence”, “teachers’ ethical competence”, “formation”, and “formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers”.

The content of the conceptual framework of the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers and the links between the key terms are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Content of the conceptual framework of the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers



The professional competence phenomenon has the following characteristics (van der Vleuten, 1996, pp. 41-67; Masom, 2008; Hanley, & Brown, 2016, pp. 1-17):

- it is a complex personal formation;
- it is systemic: its constituent elements are in close interrelation and generate a new personal formation upon interaction;
- it forms during the synthesis of theoretical knowledge and practical skills and integrates into the structure of already existing personal characteristics;
- it is conceptually determined by the nature of the professional activity it is required for;
- it creates stereotypes of professional activity that are determined by professionally important personal qualities;
- it is determined by the teacher's solid attitude to his/her professional activity;
- it creatively transforms the professional environment;
- it has potential for development and can manifest in various levels of formation.

Thus, teachers' professional competence includes three main components – cognitive, practical, and personal. When combined, these components allow the teacher to perform effective pedagogical activity.

The cognitive component reflects the system of professional knowledge learned by the prospective teacher, which constitutes the professional worldview aspect of his/her readiness to solve professional problems (Schempp et al., 1998, pp. 9-20). Professional knowledge includes, for instance, professional vocabulary, content, regularities, principles, conditions, and characteristics of pedagogical activity.

The practical component covers the set of practical skills mastered by prospective teachers, which constitute the foundation of pedagogical activity (Thoonen et al., 2011, pp. 345360). Professional skills include the ability to complete pedagogical tasks (diagnose, plan, control, convey information, communicate) and the entire pedagogical activity complex.

The personal component includes a set of professionally important personal qualities and value orientations, which enable teachers to solve pedagogical problems effectively, properly interact with other participants of the educational process, and which regulate the teachers' activity and behavior (Vvedensky, 2003, pp. 51-55). Professionally important qualities include sociability, responsibility, independence, tolerance, activeness, and humanism; value orientations include the personality of the child, morality, freedom, and life.

Thus, teachers' professional competence means an integrative personal formation that includes knowledge, skills, professionally important personal qualities, and value orientations, which allow performing pedagogical activity effectively.

Social competence provides for a conjugation of personal and social interests, appropriate behavior when interacting with the society, communicative correctness, effective socialization, and the ability to communicate with other people effectively (Jennings, & Greenberg, 2009, pp.

491-525; Fox et al., 2003, pp. 48-52). Thus, teachers' social competence implies a type of professional competence that allows organizing effective relationships with schoolchildren in a socially determined context of interaction and conveying to them an adequate understanding of the situation and their own social role in the society. Considering the specificity of teachers' professional activity, the interpretation of social competence should take into account the methodological aspect, since it is important for teacher not only to carry out social interaction, but also to form an adequate attitude to such interaction in schoolchildren.

Teachers' social competence, as a professional competence, has the same structure, i.e. it includes social knowledge, skills, socially important personal qualities, and value orientations. Social knowledge, for instance, includes knowledge of the social reality, of oneself and one's social role, and of rules of behavior (Linde, 2001, pp. 160-171); social skills include skills of communication, teamwork, correct determination of the peculiarities and states of other people, and conflict settlement; socially important qualities include sociability, empathy, powers of observation, and social responsibility; value orientations include the society, personality, and interaction.

The second constituent of the socio-ethical competence of elementary school teachers is ethical competence. Since ethics teaches about morality, this type of competence allows teachers to choose an ethically appropriate way of influencing schoolchildren during their spiritual and moral education and familiarizing them with the standards of morality in the modern society. Given these features, ethical competence is an integral characteristic of a personality that allows performing professional activity in compliance with the standards and requirements of professional ethics (Grinvald, 2011, p. 201).

Thus, teachers' ethical competence is a type of professional competence that allows achieving pedagogical goals in a way that is appropriate for social and professional ethics and forming a value-based and ethical attitude to reality in students.

As any other type of professional competence, ethical competence includes knowledge (of moral standards, public values, and one's own goals and motivation), skills (of analyzing and interpreting the situation from the ethical perspective, of evaluating actions, and motivating decisions), personal qualities (humanism, justice, tolerance), and value orientations (truth, personality, freedom, morality).

Teachers' social and ethical competences are crucial for their professional activity. Furthermore, these competences overlap in certain aspects: for instance, society and social relations always imply moral and ethical standards and vice versa – ethics is impossible without the society and social relations (Barth et al., 2007, pp. 416-430). Nevertheless, using the hyphen spelling to denote the studied type of competence allows integrating and mutually enriching the social and ethical constituents:

- when added to the ethical constituent, the social aspect draws attention to ethical standards, rather than abstract conditions, in particular, in the interaction with members of the pedagogical community;
- when added to the social constituent, the ethical aspect determines the moral content of communication between the subjects of the educational process, which is the filling of educational interaction.

Based on the above, the comprehensive understanding of socio-ethical competence is as follows. Socio-ethical competence of elementary school teaches is a type of teachers' professional competence that allows teachers to organize pedagogically expedient educational interaction with junior schoolchildren, with a view to extending their experience of social behavior, in compliance with the standards and requirements of the society. Thus, socio-ethical competence has the following characteristics:

- a) it creates an intangible product: affects the consciousness of junior schoolchildren during their education (forms attitudes and value orientations that are adequate to public morality);

- b) the result of its manifestation is characterized by variability due to its creative nature;
- c) it is implemented in the context of social interaction to create a situation of cooperation;
- d) it focuses on continuous coordination of the person's social functions with ethical standards and the performance of said functions in society, which supports the development of a person's morals and motivation;
- e) it regulates the communication of the teacher with students with focus on ethical standards.

Based on such a multifaceted meaning of socio-ethical competence, the conclusion is that it is a crucial personal formation for elementary school teachers; at that, it does not emerge randomly, but rather requires purposeful pedagogical effort to form.

Formation implies the establishment and development of a person under the effect of various factors: maturity, which allows performing various roles of an adult member of society effectively and responsibly (Vishnyakova, 1999). However, the formation of a teacher's identity and professionalism is impossible without internal motivation, introspection, and evaluation of one's achievements (Zembylas, 2003, pp. 107-127; Chong, & Low, 2009, p. 59). Hence, formation is an internal process of personal development of an elementary school teacher and a conceptual and integrative change of his/her professional competence. Formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers implies not a direct influence of the teacher on the student's personality, but rather the creation of pedagogically expedient conditions of their interaction with an active stance of the student, which creates such a new personal formation as socio-ethical competence.

To form socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers means to teach them to effectively interact with students and other people in various communication situations, with regard to the moral standards and ethical behavior rules accepted in the modern society.

Thus, the formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers implies a consistent accumulation of positive qualitative and quantitative changes and the achievement of dialectic unity of its constituents in an educational process of vocational training in a pedagogical higher educational institution specifically tailored for this purpose. The formation of socio-ethical competence implies not only active participation of the teacher, but also a subjective stance of students.

When developing programs aimed at forming socio-ethical competence in students, it is impossible to simply transfer existing systems, models, and technologies of professional competence formation and to use them directly due to the specificity of the socio-ethical competence, as well as other regional differences in ethical standards and conditions of pedagogical activity in elementary school, despite the fact that programs of such formation in the modern global and multinational world are universal (Parker, Ninomiya, & Cogan, 1999, pp. 117-146). Therefore, further development in this research area lies in the creation of systems that would provide for a comprehensive formation of socio-ethical competence with regard to the specificity of occupational training and the further activity of elementary school teachers and would create social and cultural conditions for the realization of this type of professional competence.

4. Conclusion

Socio-ethical competence of prospective elementary school teachers is a crucial personal formation that allows teachers to organize pedagogically expedient educational interaction with junior schoolchildren, with a view to extending their experience of social behavior, in compliance with the standards and requirements of the society. The survey showed that most students and teachers of pedagogical higher educational institutions believe that the formation of socio-ethical competence is not paid due attention in the educational process and that this problem should be studied in detail and comprehensively, based on complex programs.

The historiography of the problem of formation of professional competence in prospective

teachers includes three main stages, each one characterized by radical changes in the scientific and pedagogical interest in the formation of professional competences. Emphasizing the need for purposeful formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective teachers during vocational training is a trend of the last decades, which was made relevant by the spread of the competency-based approach and globalization trends.

Sufficient scientific and pedagogical experience has been accumulated to solve the problem of formation of socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers; this problem can be solved in the current conditions of pedagogical higher educational institutions. When developing programs aimed at forming socio-ethical competence in prospective elementary school teachers, it is important to distinguish the methodological aspect of social, ethical, and socio-ethical competence, since teaching practice requires the teacher not only to carry out social interaction, but also to form an adequate attitude to such interaction in schoolchildren. In addition, when developing such programs, it is necessary to take into consideration the internal motivation of prospective teachers, possibilities for their self-education and self-development, and to emphasize the recognition of their ethical position and professional responsibility.

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[Index]

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