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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

El aspecto histórico de los concursos de excelencia pedagógica* /DOI:10.5281/zenodo.7382683

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Resumen

El artículo aborda el aspecto histórico del desarrollo de los concursos de excelencia pedagógica en Rusia. También examina la importante misión de los profesores en el mundo moderno, debido al estatus ontológico de su profesión y a los cambios en la dinámica "profesor-alumno". Se hace hincapié en la importancia de la motivación y el apoyo a los profesores en el formato de los distintos concursos, donde se combinan la experiencia práctica y las habilidades pedagógicas, y se estimula el desarrollo profesional de los profesores. Basándose en la teoría y en los aspectos prácticos del concurso "Profesor del Año" del país, los autores concluyen que, a lo largo de su desarrollo, el concurso ha seguido el ritmo de los procesos de modernización que tienen lugar en la educación. Ha marcado la tendencia del desarrollo profesional y personal de los profesores. El concurso es importante porque ha creado un sistema eficaz de desarrollo profesional informal de los profesores, así como una rica experiencia de investigación para la comunidad científica.

Palabras clave: excelencia pedagógica, competencias pedagógicas, crecimiento profesional, profesionalidad, concursos docentes.

Abstract

The historical aspect of pedagogical excellence competitions

The article deals with the historical aspect of the development of pedagogical excellence competitions in Russia. It also looks at the important mission of teachers in the modern world, due to the ontological status of their profession and changes in the "teacher-student" dynamic. Emphasis is placed on the importance of teacher motivation and support in the format of various competitions, where practical experience and pedagogical skills are combined, and professional teacher development is stimulated. Based on theory and the practical aspects of the All-Russian "Teacher of the Year" Contest, the authors conclude that throughout its development the contest has stayed in step with the modernization processes taking place in education. It has set the trend for the professional and personal development of teachers. The contest is significant because it created an effective system of informal professional teacher development as well as a rich research experience for the scientific community.

Keywords: pedagogical excellence, pedagogical competencies, professional growth, professionalism, teaching competitions.

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1.- Introduction

Problems of personal formation and development are key and occupy a fundamental position at all stages of social development. At that, a special place in the process of upbringing and education belongs to a teacher as a transmitter of intellectual, socio-cultural and historical experience. The essence of a teacher's work and his mission in modern society are all part of the humanitarian discourse. The trends in social relation and human sciences development testify to the necessity for rethinking the place of human beings in future realities. In our view, in today's contradictory world, the teacher should not only develop their students' abilities, knowledge, skills and competencies, but also learn how to predict and determine the trajectory of their preparation for life in an uncertain future.

Nowadays, because of various challenges, the ontological status of the teacher is being seriously reassessed and the teacher-student relationship is being transformed. Changes in the meaning of education and the understanding of its value lead to the leveling of the traditional system of post-figurative culture, in which a unique set of knowledge and skills is transmitted from the teacher to the student (Mead & Kona, 1988; Kutz, 2002; Kozyreva, 2009; Epishina, 2017). Today, with the development of technology and innovation in the educational process, the role of pre-figurative culture, which requires collaborative learning through dialogue, where children learn from their parents, not only the younger learn from the older, but also vice versa, will increase (Ericsson et al., 2006; Peker & Dolan, 2014; Cucco & Larsen, 2022). Flexible young minds more easily adapt to our dictating digital reality, however, with all transformation processes both in education and other spheres of life, the importance of the teacher as a tutor, a navigator and a guide in a vast information space is obvious.

Russian and foreign academics like E.R. Bagramyan, E.S. Sakharchuk believe true educational excellence is the teacher's highly advanced ability to mutually engage students in learning activities. Moreover, R. Ferrandez-Berruenco and L. Sanchez-Tarazaga (2014), as well as M. Badri (2016), M. Postholm (2018), I. Androshchuk (2021), S.A. Tsyplakova (2015) and A. Kuzminskyy (2013) differentiate between study fields and conventional personality and orientation models for forming an educator in the midst of our modern reality.

In this context the problems of teacher motivation and support in the form of various competitions, which allow coordinating practical experience and pedagogical skills, become more relevant.

2. Materials and methods

Modern pedagogical science has sufficient research devoted to the analysis of educational excellence, which is, in our opinion, a set of professional and personal competencies. The challenges for professional competency development are the subject of the foreign research of Parkinson, Spencer, Buhler, Erickson, Super, Torrance, Hall and Sternberg. In Russian psychology and pedagogy N.P. Ansimov, A.V. Zolotarev, M.M. Kashapov, E.V. Kuzmin, V.D. Shadrikov substantiate the idea of the interdependence between a teacher's competence and motivation to succeed. L.A. Kozinets, E.M. Pakhomova note the opportunities created by pedagogical mastery contests and they highlight the changes occurring in the contestants themselves. In this paper, we used the following approaches known in Russian education, competence based, systematic activity based, interdisciplinary and cultural. The main research methods are content analysis, observation and analysis of activity products.

3. Results

Reflecting on the development of educational excellence competitions in Russia allowed us to give the following overview based on stages, content, geography and other aspects.

Table 1
Teaching competition: milestones and events

No.	Stages of the competition	Content and structure	The post-competition movement	Geographic location
1.	The beginning (1990-1991)	Open lesson Interview and computer-based testing	Publications in "Teacher Gazette" Author's program	Ukrainian SSR Byelorussian SSR Tadzhik SSR Kirghiz SSR Uzbek SSR Chuvash ASSR
2.	Recognition (1991-2010)	Improvisation lessons Masterclasses	Publications in <i>Teacher Gazette</i> Rally for winners of	69 subjects of the Russian Federation

		Public lecture Pedagogical round table	the competition Pedagogical marathons and forums Interregional Club "Teacher of the Year"	
3.	Modernization (2010-2015)	Masterclasses Open discussions	Developing teaching methodologies using IT Pedagogical marathons and forums Interregional Teacher of the Year Club	75 subjects of the Russian Federation
4.	Modernity (2015-till the present time)	Masterclasses Education project	Development of online courses Masterclasses for young teachers Pedagogical marathons and forums	75 subjects of the Russian Federation

Source: Authors development

4. Discussion

In Russian and world educational practice, competitions aimed at stimulating professional teacher development are of great importance. Our aim in this article is to also analyze the historical aspects of educational excellence competition, more specifically. The "Teacher of the Year" competition, which is held annually in the Russian Federation, allows each of its participants to discover new techniques and technologies. It also enables the establishment of new professional connections and the assessment of teachers' professional competence.

The history of the Russian Teacher of the Year competition is linked to G.N. Seleznev, the editor-in-chief of the Teacher Gazette, who invited Mary Bikovaris, the US teacher of the year, to our country in 1989. The main goal of the competition, whose organizers included the Moscow State Pedagogical University and many prominent scholars and practitioners, was to create a platform for cooperation and excellence. The competition was organized because of the urgent need to improve the professional skills of members of the teaching community. Today, the competition serves as a kind of pedagogical laboratory, the value of which lies in the exchange of professional experience between the participants. The winners of the first competitions were awarded crystal pelicans as symbols of intelligence and creativity. In our opinion, the Teacher of the Year competition

is a platform for solving practical education problems and in addition it motivates teachers to use non-traditional teaching formats and innovative methods in their classrooms.

Teaching competitions lead to certain changes in the educational space, and these changes are primarily related to the educator. The new approach to work manifests itself not only in a desire to broaden one's own horizons and respond to current trends, but also in opportunities for both professional and personal growth. The first "Teacher of the Year" contests in our country took place during a crucial historical period, perestroika, which brought about sweeping changes in all spheres of society and separatist sentiments in the national republics. The glasnost policy, unbanning the discussion of various topics, as well as easing censorship of the media, were positive changes. Even though it was a very ambiguous and difficult period, the competition went ahead, because the organizers understood the importance of education and teaching in the formation and development of the younger generation. Eminent Russian scholars like Sh. Amonashvili and I. Lerner as well as the teaching community as a whole discussed the importance of the competition, making constructive comments and raising concerns about its organization and implementation. An active discussion of the weaknesses and strengths of the competition led to the general conclusion that there is a need for pedagogical competitions among teachers to identify unrecognized talents and individuality of each participant. Open lessons, workshops and other forms of interaction between teachers from different regions of the country and the world allow them to develop their pedagogical skills (Varlamova et al., 2016; Brailko et al., 2017; Afanasova et al., 2020; Boicu & Zabihi-Moghaddam, 2021).

The last issue of the Teacher Gazette, which came out on 30 December 1989, can be considered the start of the competition's long journey. It published the Regulation on the Teacher of the Year competition, which defined the main idea and values of the competition. The competition was intended to not only identify and support talented teachers, but also to share their best practices and, even more importantly, to create an image of the teacher of the future, an ideal teacher model that is creative, active, and successful. Thus, at all stages of the development of society the question remains relevant, what should a modern teacher be like, what requirements should be imposed on the teacher of the future.

It is worth noting the serious criteria for assessing the skills of teachers taking part in the Teacher of the Year competition. Primarily, it is competence and professionalism. No matter what subject the teacher teaches, he or she must be a professional in the chosen field of knowledge. Every teacher should have knowledge in the field of student education, psychology and physiology. Teachers have to know their subject's teaching and learning methods, they should be able to use innovation, information and communication technologies (Sheraizina et al., 2016; Muskhanova et al., 2020). In addition to these requirements, personal qualities such as creativity, the ability to communicate, kindness, decency, original thinking and a respectful attitude towards others are also important.

An analysis of the history of the Teacher of the Year competition shows that there were two competitions held back in the crucial years for the whole country, in which representatives from practically all the republics of the USSR took part. In 1990-1991, the final stage featured 19 teachers who gave open classes in the subjects they taught in five Moscow schools. Participants could choose the group (1-11 grades) to which they would give the lesson, but the topic of the lesson was announced by the jury two hours in advance. The winner of the USSR Teacher of the Year 1990 was A. Sutormin, a teacher of Russian language and literature of Popovsky Secondary School of Chernya district in the Tula region. In his memoirs six years later Sutormin called the contest a springboard for realizing one's professional and personal potential. According to him it also makes one believe in oneself. Sutormin wrote,

"Nowadays it seems that I would not have said it like that, I would not have done it like that, but you cannot step into the same river twice. Back then, I received letters all year long. Good, kind letters, with words of gratitude. I still do. Four hundred teachers' confessions and revelations. I can only thank the competition for all this" (Ryabov et al., 2021: 115).

It is encouraging to note that despite the difficult situation after the collapse of the powerful USSR state, the Teacher of the Year competition continued to live on and develop. The competition demonstrated the existence of a unified educational space at that time. Notwithstanding the financial difficulties and the declining prestige of the teaching profession, Russian teachers continued to serve the people, the society and the state, and sustained the high spirit of pedagogical traditions. Teachers from all parts of Russia took part in the 1993 competition. Nadezhda Khasmekova, a teacher of socio-pedagogical disciplines at Grozny's vocational school No. 1 represented Chechnya. Each year the content of the competition was filled with new content, taking into account the opinions of its participants, winners, and the entire teaching community. In 1994, President Yeltsin issued a decree, valid until 2004, according to which the winners of the Teacher of the Year competition became winners of the Presidential Prize.

The year 1995 can be considered a turning point in the history of the Teacher of the Year competition. The jury was chaired by the Chancellor of Lomonosov Moscow State University, V. Sadovnichy. There were noticeable changes in the structure of the competition. Participants could present their own pedagogical concepts and they could conduct and self-analyze an open lesson. Every region of the country runs a competition to select the best participants, who then take part in the final events. The geography of the competition is expanding, reflecting the importance of the event for the teaching community. The Teacher Gazette that initiated the competition continues to inform teachers about innovations and technologies that contribute to the effective teaching of young people and children. It also keeps in touch with the contestants over the years. They become the topic of essays and the authors of articles that reveal the problems of modern teaching. The potential of the competition is unleashed into the teaching corps as a result. The participants' creative methods, innovative technologies and experience infuse the teaching process of many educational institutions. By utilizing the experience of the winners of the 'Teacher of the Year' competition in different formats, like

gatherings and festivals, where the teaching skills of the winners are demonstrated, professional development courses and new forms of cooperation and communication between teachers come into existence.

An overview of the history of the Educational Excellence Competition brings us to the conclusion that a change in format and rules, as well as complex professional assessment and competitive tasks led to the discovery of bright talents and creative teaching personalities, who are able to motivate others and are ready to develop and evolve in today's digital world.

The history of the Teacher of the Year competition is closely connected to the transformations taking place in education nationwide. In the 2000s, the idea of organizing and holding the competition was based on the Program for Modernization of Russian Education. The competition was seen as an innovative movement and received even stronger support and assistance from the state. At this stage in the development of educational excellence competitions in Russia, the Foundation for the Support of Russian Teachers was established, which undertook the organizational and technical support of the competition. In addition, new projects and professional educational competitions "Best Schools of Russia", "Leader in Education", the competition "Pedagogical Debut" appeared. Every year the Teacher Gazette that initiated the competition improves and upgrades the structure and content of the competition in the context of new requirements for teachers. The contest formats are designed to show the teacher not only as a professional in the discipline taught, but also as a teacher with meta-subject competences, a tutor, a psychologist, a communicator and an educator. The competition reform led to other ways of demonstrating educational skills such as master classes, public lectures and educational round tables.

The winners of the Teacher of the Year competition are actively involved in the post-competition movement. For example, the winner of the 2002 Teacher of the Year of Russia competition, Igor Smirnov, is still in contact with young teachers. I. Smirnov, an honored teacher of Russia, candidate of educational sciences, led a school for several years after the competition, held the post of professor at Pushkin Leningrad State University, and afterwards worked as a professor at a university in China. Despite his busy schedule I. Smirnov conducts master classes for young teachers, setting high standards for their educational competence and motivating their professional growth and development. The post-competition movement in the region is also actively developed by R. N. Zhabrailov, a winner of the 2003 Presidential Award and participant in the "Teacher of the Year" contest and a history teacher from a village in Chechnya. He is also the leader of a one-year seminar for social studies teachers, conducting seminars, developing thematic and integrated lesson plans, and enthusiastically promoting the regional competition movement and providing practical help to its participants. It is encouraging to note that, despite difficult periods in the development of Chechen society, the approach to the need to preserve a common educational space with Russia has remained unambiguous. This is eloquently demonstrated by the participation of representatives of the Chechen teaching community in all-Russian contests over the years.

Naturally, the new structure and content model for the competition has led to extensive discussions among participants, experts and jury. Some experts felt that the subject matter of competitions should be retained as a priority, as the subject competence allows for the most convincing assessment of the teacher as a professional. E. Yamburg, Doctor of Education, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Education and a member of the Grand Jury of the competition pointed out that both the lesson and the lecture should be retained in the competition assessment. "The lesson and the lecture are like communicating vessels, they are filled with the thoughts of one person. They show people and personalities. And it is wonderful when new names are discovered in education" (Muskhanova et al., 2020: 3). A teacher who approaches his professional activity with creativity is a master teacher with a high level of professionalism. Along with traditional forms of teaching, a master teacher also uses innovative methods. Various formats of lessons (lesson-lecture, lesson-conference, etc.) promote effective skills and help to identify talented young people who are able to solve problems and issues in an unconventional way (Osadchenko, 2015).

The Teacher of the Year 2018 competition, which was held in St. Petersburg, should be singled out as one of the highlights of its history. Since 2005, the final of the All-Russian competition has been held in the city of the previous year's winner. The competition was held at Academic Gymnasium No. 56 in St. Petersburg. The teaching team of the gymnasium, led by the headmaster, M.B. Pildes, developed an interest in learning new skills based on the pedagogy of success. In 2018, all 85 regions of Russia were represented in the All-Russian Teacher of the Year competition. Creative, talented teachers – in love with the profession – demonstrated a high level of professional excellence. The final competitive assessment, Conversation with the Minister, was held at the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation in Moscow, after which the top five were chosen and the overall winner of the competition was A. Dinaev, a teacher of Social Studies and Law at Mathematics School No. 1 in Grozny, the Chechen Republic. The authors (Ryabov et al., 2021) noted Dinaev's individual professional style. Despite his apparent reticence and introverted communication with children was an inherently free, moderately ironic, witty, affable and friendly teacher. His profound mastery of his subject, his ability to establish a dialogue with his students, his high communicative culture, and his up-to-date views on education won him the unanimous vote of confidence. He is an active participant of the post-competition movement. Dinaev's workshop at the Chechen State Pedagogical University provides opportunities for young teachers and prospective teachers to realize their creative potential through master classes, training sessions, open lectures, and TED conferences. A. Dinaev himself says the following about the importance of the competition:

"In a series of endless open lessons, interactive lectures, and public speeches, the most vivid and enjoyable experience was communicating with children. I was lucky enough to see and hear thousands of children from all regions. This is the greatest gift I have received. A gift that energizes me and fills me with hope for and faith in our happy future. We have wonderful children. I am grateful to the competition for giving me confidence in the future..." (Osadchenko, 2015: 163).

The thirtieth anniversary of the Teacher of the Year competition was held in Grozny, thanks to the victory of A. Dinaev. The winners of the regional competitions from 85 regions, as well as experts, members of the Grand Jury, specialists, methodologists, trade unionists, and all those involved in the competition gathered in Grozny. Gymnasium No. 14 and the Kh. Ibragimov Mathematics School were the venues of the final round of the All-Russian competition. The Lesson and Extracurricular Activity competition tasks were broadcast online. After the second round, five laureates out of 15 were chosen. In 2019 the competition tasks underwent significant changes. For example, the master classes and the Educational Project had a new format and structure. The absolute winner of the Teacher of the Year 2019 competition was. L. Arachashvili, teacher of Russian language and literature at School No. 55 "The Valley of Knowledge", Volgograd (Teacher of Russia, 2021).

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During all stages of its development, the Teacher of the Year contest has taken into account the modernization processes education is undergoing and has set the trend for the professional and personal development of teachers. The following summarizes the significance of the competition; it is an effective system of informal professional development; it provides the scientific community with a rich empirical research; for young teachers it serves as a motivation for development and belief in success, and for the participants themselves it is an opportunity to realize their own potential and exchange teaching experience. Lastly, the post-competition movement in all regions of Russia promotes the dynamics of regional pedagogical forums, meetings and seminars which allow for professional exchange and which develop and support the ideas of the forum. The Teacher of the Year competition should continue to be a platform where modern teachers can realize their full potential and demonstrate their teaching skills. There is no doubt that participating in the competition movement in Russia will make it possible to gather experience and develop a strategy for the training of teaching staff.

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