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**PEDAGOGICAL EXPERT ASSESSMENT OF CHARACTER
BUILDING PROCESS**

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Abstract

The paper explains the notion of “pedagogical expert assessment” and substantiates the necessity of expert activity in character building. It defines the existing problem concerning lack of tools for quantitative analysis of character building results to satisfy both researchers and practitioners in the sphere of character building. In the meantime, the authors argue the need for pedagogical expert assessment of character building process because the present-day challenges demand the development of conditions for pedagogical influence on students, determine the necessity to shape and develop such personality traits that will enable the individual to adequately respond to the given challenges. The authors analyze methodological approaches to the problem of pedagogical expert assessment, define its theoretical foundations and suggest meaningful ideas for these approaches. The paper offers the authors’ definition of pedagogical expert assessment as a multidimensional and multilevel expert study of character building including problem-evaluative, resource and prognostic analysis in order to obtain expert opinion about the object in question and further develop it for the sake of personality development. The paper has formulated key functions of character building process pedagogical expert assessment. They are problem-evaluative, developmental and prognostic functions. Summarizing the research findings, the authors find a major flaw of traditional character building process expert assessment in its evaluative and inspective character, resulting, in particular, from the requirements of educational standards. The authors formulate the conclusion that pedagogical expert assessment of character building process may become an important mechanism of character building development in the system of education.

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1. Introduction

Government documents regarding character building of Russian Federation citizens accentuate urgent global problems, increased dynamics of social processes and the need to improve the quality of character building process. It is also important to consider the transition to the economy of knowledge where a significant part will be given to the so-called 21st century non-cognitive skills (Assessment for teaching, 2014) formed largely by character building. There is also strong evidence of gradually increasing value of social (attitudinal skills) and creative capital (creative thinking skills). Character building outcomes become even more critical not only in creating a modern labor market for the Russian economy but also in developing social relationships which require transition to a new level. All this explains the need for a high quality expert assessment of character building process.

2. Problem Statement

As any other system, the system of education should be assessed in terms of its development and efficiency. Among many methods of obtaining information about the conditions and realization of various pedagogical processes, an important place is given to the humanitarian expert analysis which enables us to see and understand something that cannot be just measured or calculated. Here subjective opinion and responsible experts' decisions are a crucial way to carry out a competent and independent expert assessment.

High relevance of character building process expert assessment is explained by the fact that present-day challenges demand the creation of conditions to implement character building influence on students in order to shape and develop their personal qualities which will enable students to adequately respond to the existing challenges. Therefore the problems relating to expert assessment of character building process are very important in terms of governmental regulation in the sphere of education. In spite of extensive experience in character building practices both in Russia and abroad, there are currently no tools for qualitative evaluation of character building outcomes to satisfy both researchers and practitioners in the sphere of character building.

It is hard and even theoretically impossible ever to measure final results of character building. The existing practice of character building evaluation is often subjective, not very reliable or trustworthy. Analysis of educational institutions' activity has shown that expert assessment of character building process focuses primarily on the activity of an institution aimed at character building. If we speak about the pedagogical expert assessment of character building process, it involves more functions and includes problem-oriented, resource and prognostic analyses of character building process as well as its compliance with standard guidelines. At present we observe an obvious contradiction between the need for expert assessment of character building process in the new social situation of the younger generation development and crudity of theoretical and methodological approaches to such expert assessment.

3. Research Questions

Consequently, there arises a question which should be answered within the present research:

What is pedagogical expert assessment of character building process and what are its functions?

4. Purpose of the Study

To understand the essence of pedagogical expert assessment and develop guidelines to carry out evaluation of character building process, it is necessary to determine theoretical foundations of pedagogical expert assessment in relation to such a specific object as character building and to explore the key functions and criteria of the given expert assessment.

5. Research Methods

The following methods were used: analysis of philosophic, sociological, psychological and pedagogical sources, state and regulative documents on the subject of research, study of the existing (both Russian and foreign) practice in pedagogical expert assessment of character building process, and pedagogical patterning.

6. Findings

Pedagogical expert assessment is a kind of humanitarian analysis and is defined by us as a special way to study reality by competent and independent experts, which makes it possible to see and understand what cannot be subject to quantitative assessment.

A distinguishing difference of pedagogical expert assessment from other types of evaluation (including legal, psychological, etc.) is its orientation towards the study of educational reality, its subjects and components.

Subjective opinion remains one of the main elements of character building process pedagogical expert assessment. However, it does not mean that there are no methods that may significantly reduce arbitrary and chance nature of expert opinion.

Pedagogical expert assessment of character building process analyzes the organization and realization of character building in an educational institution, purposefully created conditions of personality development as well as the level of the person's achieved social training and the program (trajectory) of individual character building.

The English speaking tradition distinguishes the notion of evaluation and assessment. Evaluation implies judgment on the value of a certain educational program or practice. Assessment, especially in the phrase formative assessment, is a systematic collection and use of empirical data in order to improve the process in question. The Russian equivalent of evaluation is valuation of quality of education.

The authors believe that assessment is more applicable to our definition of pedagogical expert analysis. Pedagogical expert assessment involves regularly organized process of both quantitative and qualitative data collection about the state of educational institution, including data relating to character building. Pedagogical expert assessment is the basis for the development of specific guidelines how to improve character building process according to certain goals. Today it is important to carry out the transition from evaluation as a controlling function to the expert assessment (including problem-oriented and resource assessment) with the primary accent on development rather than evaluation of educators or collectives.

Thus, the authors define pedagogical expert assessment of character building as a multidimensional and multilevel expert study of character building by including problem-evaluative, resource and prognostic analysis in order to obtain expert opinion about the object in question and further develop it for the sake of personality development.

The research agenda is based on theoretical approaches to understand the essence of expert activity and, primarily, to understand humanitarian expert assessment and includes the following:

- its key differences from other types: differences in goals, meaning and ways of expert assessment (Ashmarin & Yudin, 1997; Bakshtanovskiy & Sogomonov, 1992; Belova, 2012; Bratchenko, 2003; Klimova, 2017; Kozyr'kov, 2007; Sagatovskiy, 1992; Tul'chinskiy, 2006);

- specific nature of expert assessment in education, its orientation towards development (Mkrtychyan, 2002), normative foundations of expert assessment organization in the system of education (Umnyashova & Egorov, 2016);

Expert assessment in education also explores the following issues:

- methodological foundation of expert assessment in education (Ivanov, 2008; Krulekht & Tel'nyuk, 2002; Cherepanov, 1989);

- development of a system to assess the quality of knowledge and educational process (Kraevskiy, 1994; Lerner, 1995; Skatkin, 1980);

- creation of a national quality assessment system of education (Bolotov, Kovaleva & Pinskaya, 2012). This process largely depends on international quality assessment systems of education (including, for instance, PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS), and its development is influenced by international practices (Clarke, 2010; Kovaleva & Krasnianskaia, 2008; Human Development Report, 2009; PISA, 2010);

- expert assessment of a school's pedagogical process, development of a wholesome approach and objective methods of its analysis and evaluation (Pliner & Bukhvalov, 2001).

Theoretical research of expert assessment in character building is represented in a smaller extent and involves the following aspects:

- efficiency criteria of expert assessment of character building process (Selivanova, Stepanov & Shakurova, 2014);

- character building outcomes and "mechanisms" in achieving the desirable results (Selivanova, 2012);

- expert assessment of educational environment and the influence of its key characteristics on character building (Baeva & Laktionova, 2013; Slobodchikov, 2000; Yasvin, 2001);

- pedagogical expert assessment of character building in the sphere of supplementary education and organization of youth summer recreation (Alieva, 2011; Anikeeva & Kiselev, 2014; Kiseleva, 2013).

The study of methodological attitudes to the problem of pedagogical expert assessment of character building process and its theoretical foundations showed that pedagogical expert assessment of character building should be based on the ideas of humanization in educational process, its dialogical nature; the concept of character building as management of personality development; theory of character building systems, which offers the structural theoretical analysis of humanistic character building system as a landmark in character building development of an educational organization; theory of pedagogical qualimetry with pedagogical expert assessment as its integral part.

Pedagogical expert assessment of character building process in an educational institution may serve as a significant factor of character building development if there are substantiated functions of pedagogical expert assessment of character building making it possible to carry out complete analysis of the given process, define problems and developmental resources.

In our opinion, these functions include problem-evaluative, developmental and prognostic. The problem-evaluative function enables us to conduct a cross-section analysis of character building process in an educational institution and determine the most relevant problems of its realization. The developmental function actualizes positive sides of this process revealing its potentials. The prognostic function reveals promising potential and ways to develop character building process with the aim to increase its efficiency. The authors believe that the most significant of these functions is the developmental function of pedagogical expert assessment. Implementation of the pedagogical expert assessment developmental function in the present-day character building practice in the system of education requires a number of conditions. The most important of them include the demand of the teaching staff and school administration to conduct expert assessment and the readiness to openly provide necessary information to the expert group.

A number of criteria of pedagogical expert assessment of character building process in an educational institution have been also developed to define content-based characteristics of character building process. They take into account modern tendencies of criterial database development in the system of education (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005; Zachopoulou et al., 2013; Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2010). We may single out the following criteria of character building process pedagogical expert assessment: descriptive criteria and qualitative criteria. Descriptive criteria determine only what can be seen in action, i.e., they may only assess what can be observed, according to the “present/absent” principle. For example, whether the organization has playgrounds, a room for children’s self-government activity, or extracurricular events. Qualitative criteria assess qualitative parameters of character building process: not only if the organization has playgrounds or a room for children’s self-government activity but if these facilities are available to children, if the organization has created conditions for children’s independent and creative use of such facilities, if “talking walls” in school not only exist but are created by children, if character building events carry personality development content, etc.

It is integration of descriptive and qualitative criteria that makes it possible to assess character building process in terms of its developmental potential. Such criteria are applicable to various components of character building process: relationships, the activity sphere, educational environment, and children’s personality-related achievements.

Implementation of pedagogical expert assessment also calls for the formation of the expert community in the character building sphere in order to provide independent expert assessment of efficiency and productivity of character building process. It has been found during the research that the formation of the expert community requires a thorough selection of experts. First of all, we should stress that an expert must have a clear personal and professional viewpoint, which is also defined by the principles and approaches to character building that the expert shares. Obviously, the expert must possess prior work experience in the sphere of character building. The expert should have a wide outlook, logical thinking, analytical mind, ability to correctly assess a situation, be self-possessed, understand the current processes in terms of their further development, possess business etiquette rules, and constantly work on professional

self-improvement. The expert will also need leadership skills in order to carry out their professional activity. The expert must be objective and unbiased, and ensure confidentiality of information obtained during their professional activity (Selivanova, 2012).

The researchers developed a technical procedure of pedagogical expert assessment of character building process in an educational institution. The procedure includes the following components: goal setting of expert assessment, preparation of informational materials for experts, preparation of diagnostic methods and the procedure moderator, selection of experts, problem-related and resource analysis of character building process, analysis of expert opinions, expert prognosis, preparation of report on the results of the expert assessment.

7. Conclusion

On the whole, the authors may conclude that the expert assessment approaches aimed at evaluation of educational process have shown a certain extent of their readiness. The current theoretical concepts and accumulated empirical research data on the problem of expert assessment of character building process may lead to the conclusion that this problem is being studied and attract interest among theorists and practitioners in pedagogy. The obtained research data have significantly increased understanding of expert assessment process in education. However, much of this data had not paid enough attention to pedagogical expert assessment of character building and the influence of such expert assessment on the development of character building. Besides, the problem of methodological foundations for such expert assessment has not found its solution yet.

It should be noted that at the current level of education system, a major flaw of traditional character building expert assessment is its evaluative and inspective character, resulting, in particular, from the requirements of educational standards. This may be explained by the fact that assessment of character building achievements is traditionally carried out by means of finding the extent of disparity to the known standard, which often makes it hard to realize the developmental nature of expert assessment and evaluate either improvement, students' individual progress or the character building process as a whole. Besides, the obtained expert assessment results are not fully used in the attempt to modify the character building process: educational institutions mostly do not adjust this process in accordance with the revealed difficulties, errors or achievements.

From this point of view, a significant attention should be paid to define the role of pedagogical expert assessment in the development and qualitative modification of character building process. It is necessary to actualize the most significant functions of pedagogical expert assessment: problem-evaluative, developmental and prognostic functions. Pedagogical expert assessment may become one of important mechanisms (driving forces) of character building development in the system of education

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