



Professional Skill Contests as a Means of Professional Development and Self-Realization of Higher School Teachers

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Abstract

Introduction: the article is devoted to the theoretical analysis of legal acts regulating the conduct of professional skill contests of higher school teachers, as well as specific managerial and pedagogical competitive practices. Professional skill contests are classified according to the content, method of conducting, coverage by territory and category of participants. Significance of the competitive movement for the teacher and for the higher education system as a whole is studied, the importance of participation in contests is determined to confirm the expertise of the teacher, as well as to include the participant in a personnel reserve to a higher position. The author, having successful experience of participating in professional skill contests of various levels, as well as being an expert in competition commissions, proposes recommendations on organization of competitive events and participation of teachers in order to increase motivation for further professional growth. *Purpose:* based on the theoretical and empirical research conducted, to determine participation of a higher school teacher in professional skill contests as an informal way of professional development. *Methods:* generalization, analysis, including comparative; systematization, forecasting and modeling. *Conclusion:* the advantages of professional competitions are revealed in terms of teachers' understanding of their own experience, which is necessary for subsequent self-realization. It is determined that taking part in professional skill competitions helps a higher school teacher meet a mandatory requirement for advanced training, build an individual trajectory of professional development, taking into account the experience gained in project activities and acquire soft skills. Modern professional skill contests give a person an opportunity to gain practical experience, usually in a team and in conditions of limited resources and time.

Keywords: professional development; professional contests; higher school; teacher; pedagogical skills; professional competence.

5.8.1. General pedagogy, history of pedagogy and education.

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Introduction

In modern conditions, the role of a higher school teacher is changing, who should not only have the appropriate level of pedagogical qualifications: "have a high level of proficiency, use of effective technologies, teaching tools, monitoring and diagnostics" [1, p. 222], but also be a professional in the appropriate field of training (specialty). The teacher's adaptability resource determines his/her willingness to transform and update the pool of his/her own socio-professional competencies [2, p. 208].

In the modern system of higher education, the emphasis is on the development of students as individuals, the transfer of knowledge is carried out as an accompanying element [3, p. 51]. A mandatory requirement for university graduates is the availability of a wide range of skills, analytical thinking, creative abilities, and most importantly, flexibility in a rapidly changing world.

A wide range of competencies required by a graduate upon graduation can only be formed by a teaching staff with personal qualities and professional competencies [4].

Key provisions

In accordance with the requirements of the federal state educational standards of higher education, the professional activity of a university teacher, regardless of the specifics of a higher educational institution, includes the following components: educational and pedagogical, educational and methodological, scientific, educational and organizational and managerial.

Today, the role of the teacher is changing, which is directly related to the reform and modernization of the educational process, the use of digital technologies in teaching, he/she turns into a mentor, consultant, and methodologist [5, p.124].

Participating in professional skill contests, high school teachers solve a number of important tasks:

1) to adapt quickly and effectively to changing conditions of the educational process [6, p. 29];

2) to exchange experience between motivated members of the professional community;

3) to develop the capacity for constant changes in professional activity throughout life in order to train competitively capable personnel for the labor market;

4) to ensure the desire for self-education, improvement, and formation of an active life position [7, p.7].

Participation of the teaching staff in professional tests is primarily aimed at building flexible or soft skills:

1. communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking;

2. leadership qualities;

3. emotional intelligence;

4. stress resistance;

5. strategic thinking;

6. adaptability and flexibility of thinking, etc.

The experience of participating in professional skill contests allows university teachers, including departmental ones, to apply a practice-oriented approach to training, which not only contributes to high-quality training and formation of universal, professional and special competencies, but also subsequently optimizes professional adaptation of young employees to service in the penitentiary system [8, p. 581].

All professional skill contests aimed at improving qualifications of a higher school teacher can be classified into two large groups according to their content:

1. best in profession award;

2. professional contests of pedagogical skills.

Contests can also be classified on a territorial basis into municipal, regional, all-Russian, international; face-to-face, distance, using online technologies, as well as mixed, according to the method of conducting.

Contests can be differentiated according to individual categories of participants. For example, the VILE of the FPS of Russia holds "The best university teacher" contest, where estimation of the teacher's activity includes:

1) a competitive classroom lesson;

2) an educational and methodical complex;

3) public assessment of the professional and personal qualities of the teacher.

Thus, this contest is complex, as it contains competitive tests to determine the level of professional skill, as well as an assessment of educational methodological programs.

The winner of the "Teacher of the Year" competition is determined by the sum of the points received for three indicators, taking into account their weight coefficients. In accordance with the stated evaluation criteria, winners

are determined in the nominations: “The best classroom lesson”, “The best educational and methodological complex” and “The best teacher through the eyes of cadets”.

Similar contests are held in other departmental universities of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia. For example, at the Academy of the FPS of Russia, the assessment of the contestant also consists of three blocks, two of which coincide with the VILE of the FPS of Russia (a competitive (classroom) lesson and social assessment of professional and personal qualities), and the third criterion is the assessment of the teacher’s activity over the past academic year [9, p. 112].

A professional skill contest for university teachers of higher education institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia is held annually, the participants of which, as a rule, are formed on the basis of intra-university competitions.

From the position of the employer, professional skill contests allow to identify the most qualified personnel, demonstrate their potential to the wider professional community, use the information obtained within the framework of competitions to evaluate professional achievements of others, as well as to make a forecast of professional and personal growth [10, p. 228].

It should be noted that the very concept “contest”(from the Latin “concursum”) means a competition aimed at identifying the best among the participants [11]. Winners are determined by “qualitative assessment” (expertise) and (or) “quantitative assessment” (voting) [12, p. 296]. Professional skill contests are the most demanded and relevant form of improving professional training and increasing effectiveness of their activities, and also act as an effective method of assessing the level of professional competencies.

We will consider the specifics of organizing and participating in professional competitions using the example of a law teacher.

To date, there are few professional skill contests with a high confidence index for a law teacher. Key indicators determining the level of a competitive event are the following:

- professional composition of the jury members;
- participant coverage;
- assessment transparency;

- creative, innovative and logical mechanics of the competition.

The above requirements are fully met by the All-Russian professional contest “Legal Russia”, organized by the non-commercial organization Russian Association of Legal Information GARANT [13]. In 2024, the contest is held for the 19th time, traditionally the start is announced on the Constitution Day – December 12.

The mechanics of the event include two stages: qualifying and main. At the first stage, participants answer 15 questions in all areas of Russian legislation. Participants who score 80% (12 or more correct answers) advance to the next stage. The most interesting thing in this contest is the main stage, when participants have to solve two practical situations according to the selected nomination.

So, in 2021, the tasks in the nomination “Constitutional Law” were devoted to the 2020 amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Participation in this contest helps assess teachers’ strengths as professional lawyers, while the experience of solving practical situations can subsequently be used in the preparation of assessment tools within the framework of federal educational standards of higher education 40.03.01 Jurisprudence, 40.04.01 Jurisprudence, 40.05.02 Law enforcement.

A.A. Malyutin proposes to classify pedagogical competitions by methods of organization and types of pedagogical activity into:

- 1) contests of the subject-developing environment;
- 2) contests of methodological, educational and methodical materials;
- 3) contests of pedagogical skills [14].

To consider All-Russian pedagogical skill contests, which take into account such a category of participants as a high school teacher, we will use a new resource – the “Educational Calendar” [15]. The unified calendar of educational events was created in 2023, which was declared by the President of the Russian Federation as the “Year of the Teacher and Mentor” [19]. The Unified Teacher’s Calendar is formed quarterly by the Academy of the Ministry of Education of Russia and designed to inform about educational events held in the Russian Federation at various levels: international; all-Russian; interregional; and municipal.

In 2023, a large number of professional pedagogical contests of the All-Russian level were held. Among them, a special place is occupied by “Flagships of Education”, organized by the ANO “Russia – the Land of Opportunities” [16].

The main goal of the contest was to form a personnel reserve for the education system of the Russian Federation. Competitive tests are developed for two target audiences: teachers and managers in the field of education and students. There were three stages of competitive tests for the first category, such as a distance stage, a full-time regional semi-final competition and a full-time final competition, while there was no semi-final competition for students, so the winners of the distance stage immediately advanced to the final competition.

Electronic registration on the Russia – the Land of Opportunities platform started in March 2023 and lasted until August. At first, participants of the competition passed an entrance comprehensive assessment of the level of formation of supra-professional and special (professional) knowledge. A final report in decrypted form was provided to each participant in his/her personal account; taking into account this information, contestants built a personal trajectory during the educational marathon.

For example, during a webinar on the topic “Recipes for the development of functional literacy”, M.V. Byvshaya, Vice-Rector for Scientific and Methodological Work and Academic Interaction of the Ural State Pedagogical University highlighted not only tasks that allow measuring functional literacy, but also the opportunity to get free access to an educational platform for completing tasks of various directions to improve functional literacy [17].

At the end of the educational marathon, the special (professional) knowledge formed was assessed, and in September the Competition Commission approved the results of distance assessment of the 2023 professional contest “Flagships of Education”. The distance stage included 14,195 educational managers, 57,635 teachers and 34,385 students, while only 2,183 teachers and educational managers who scored the most points at the distance stage advanced to the intramural regional semifinals. Among the pedagogical community that

passed the first stage, there was a small percentage of teachers of higher educational institutions.

Semi-final competitions in each region were held in person and consisted of three competitive tests:

1. Personal performance of the contestant with a self-presentation on the topic “I am the flagship of education”, aimed at demonstrating pedagogical (managerial) experience, key professional achievements, as well as unique author’s ideas, technologies, and techniques. The most difficult thing in this competitive test was to meet the allotted time – no more than 3 minutes.

2. “Management solution championship” – team solution of management tasks in the field of education;

3. A strategic session during which participants in small groups worked out and presented projects for the education system development, as a rule, using the example of a specific region with specified parameters.

After passing through all stages, participants definitely acquire opportunities for professional growth, such as:

- 1) managerial experience working in an unfamiliar team in solving various strategic and practical tasks in a limited amount of time;

- 2) new knowledge in the field of the education system development, educational activities, etc.;

- 3) new approaches in the implementation of project activities;

- 4) opportunities to get out of the comfort zone to solve atypical cases;

- 5) public protection of the team decision and acquisition of communication skills with the expert community.

Speaking about drawbacks in the mechanics of the All-Russian contest “Flagships of Education”, we would like to note that the contest is designed for everyone who carries out teaching activities (for those who teach) or works in the field of management of an educational organization, but the tasks at the distance stage and in full-time semi-final competitions were focused more than 80% on the general education system, about 20% on the vocational (only secondary) and additional education systems, and there were practically no questions and tasks in the evaluation materials that would relate to the

higher education system provided for in Article 10 of the Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 "On Education in the Russian Federation".

There are pedagogical skill contests of the All-Russian level aimed exclusively at the teaching staff of higher educational institutions, with the All-Russian contest "Golden Names of Higher Education" being the most significant and large-scale. This contest in 2023 was conducted by the League of Higher School Teachers for the sixth time with the support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation and the Presidential Grants Fund.

Contestants submit an expanded portfolio and essays in accordance with the selected nomination in electronic form on the platform according to the Regulation [18].

An essay on a practice-oriented approach in higher education (one of the most popular nominations) should disclose the technologies used in the training process. For these purposes, the author presented the experience of practical classes on the topic "Electoral law and the electoral system" of the academic discipline "Constitutional Law of Russia", where cadets and students work with digital services of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation and learn the following skills:

- search for a polling station at the address of your place of residence;
- receiving information about inclusion in the list at the polling station, the referendum site;
- using the procedure for submitting an application for inclusion in the list of voters at the location, etc.

Participating in such large-scale events, teachers solve tasks of personal development, such as:

- the opportunity to demonstrate advantages of innovative technologies in solving practical educational problems;
- disclosure of creative and professional potential through professional assessment of achievements;
- informal professional development;
- increasing motivation for professional growth;
- the opportunity to become part of the expert community of teachers of educational in-

stitutions of higher education of the Russian Federation.

There are professional contests for university teachers of methodological orientation, such as the competition within the framework of the federal project "Personnel for the Digital Economy".

In 2021, a large-scale professional development program "Digital Technologies in Teaching Specialized Disciplines" for teachers of higher school and secondary vocational education was held at the premises of the Innopolis University within the framework of the federal project "Personnel for the Digital Economy" of the national program "Digital Economy of the Russian Federation". The end result of the training program was the preparation and protection of an updated work program for the discipline taught.

In 2022, a contest was announced and held for all teachers who were trained in advanced training programs at the Innopolis University in order to fulfill certain indicators of the federal project "Personnel for the Digital Economy" to identify the best practices for implementing updated work programs of disciplines or basic professional educational programs of higher education aimed at forming competencies relevant to the digital economy in graduates.

It was necessary to submit a whole set of educational and methodological materials, in particular:

- applications for participation in the contest;
- an updated work program of the discipline in electronic form in accordance with the chosen economic sector;
- a motivational essay;
- a video clip demonstrating the fact of conducting a practical lesson on the updated work program of the discipline.

A large number of practices in various economic sectors were offered for the contest. A practical lesson on the topic "Public authorities of the Russian Federation" with the use of the "case-study" method was presented as an author's methodology in the field of "Urban Economy". The purpose of the case was to form ideas about elements of the digital state in Russia and information openness of the activities of public authorities and local self-government. The task was performed in small groups, each

team had to evaluate openness of websites of public authorities according to the specified criteria in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Law No.8-FZ of February 9, 2009 “On Ensuring Access to Information on the Activities of State Bodies and Local Governments” (a specific public authority was determined by lot). At the end of the practical lesson, the results of the conducted assessment were publicly assessed.

The victory in this contest provided higher school teachers with the opportunity to improve their skills in the training “Practice-oriented approaches to digitalization of the educational process” at the premises of one of the leading universities in the country in accordance with the chosen profile.

Conclusion

Participation and victories in competitive events prove teachers’ expertise. Today the state has a great demand and need for such

professional personnel who are ready to share their knowledge and experience in evaluating children’s and youth project initiatives and grant competitions.

Professional skill contests are not so much a competition, as the opportunity to engage in active innovative activities, networking, the opportunity to demonstrate their results and achievements in professional activities. As a rule, participation in contests gives an impetus to subsequent professional development.

Modern competitive events are arranged in such a way that, checking their competencies and knowledge for relevance, teachers raise their professional competencies, starting from the preparation stage.

We believe that winning professional skill contests should be the basis for including a motivated high school teacher in the personnel reserve of an educational organization to higher positions.

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