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THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE MODERN TEACHER: THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN PEDAGOGICAL MASTERY AND PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

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Abstract. The article provides a theoretical and methodological analysis of the professional requirements placed on the teacher in the modern education system, the essence of the concept of "pedagogical mastery", and its structural components. Pedagogical mastery and professional reflection are considered as two complementary pillars of teacher professionalism. The types and levels of reflection and the stages of the reflective cycle are systematised in tables, and the interrelation between mastery and reflection is substantiated. The findings demonstrate the decisive role of systematic reflective practice in ensuring the sustainable professional growth of the teacher.

Keywords: pedagogical mastery, professional reflection, professional growth, reflective practice, teacher competence, quality of education, professional image.

Аннотация. В статье теоретически и методически проанализированы профессиональные требования к личности педагога в современной системе образования, сущность понятия «педагогическое мастерство» и его структурные компоненты. Педагогическое мастерство и профессиональная рефлексия рассматриваются как две взаимодополняющие опоры профессионализма учителя. Виды, уровни рефлексии и этапы рефлексивного цикла систематизированы в таблицах, обоснована взаимосвязь мастерства и рефлексии. Результаты показывают решающую роль системной рефлексивной практики в обеспечении устойчивого профессионального роста педагога.

Ключевые слова: педагогическое мастерство, профессиональная рефлексия, профессиональный рост, рефлексивная практика, компетентность учителя, качество образования.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada zamonaviy ta'lim tizimida o'qituvchi shaxsiga qo'yilayotgan kasbiy talablar, "pedagogik mahorat" tushunchasining mohiyati va uning tarkibiy komponentlari nazariy-metodik jihatdan tahlil qilingan. Pedagogik mahorat va kasbiy refleksiya o'qituvchi professionalizmining bir-birini to'ldiruvchi ikki ustuni sifatida ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqolada refleksiyaning turlari, darajalari va refleksiv siklning bosqichlari jadvallar yordamida tizimlashtirilgan hamda mahorat bilan refleksiyaning o'zaro mutanosibligi asoslangan.

Kalit so'zlar: pedagogik mahorat, kasbiy refleksiya, professional o'sish, refleksiv amaliyot, o'qituvchi kompetensiyasi, ta'lim sifati, kasbiy qiyofa.

Introduction

In today's era of rapid socio-economic and technological change, the quality of education depends directly on the teacher's professional preparation, inner culture, and level of mastery. Under conditions of open and widely available information, the role of the teacher has changed fundamentally: the teacher is no longer the sole source of knowledge, but rather a facilitator who guides the process of searching for, analysing, and applying knowledge and who develops the learner's capacity for independent thinking.

The modern teacher simultaneously combines several roles: a methodologist who designs the learning process, an organiser who activates students, a diagnostician who assesses learning outcomes, and — most importantly — a researcher who systematically analyses his or her own practice. It is precisely this last role — the ability to analyse oneself — that transforms a teacher from a mere "subject instructor" into a true professional. For this reason, pedagogical mastery and professional reflection are regarded as two inseparable pillars of teacher professionalism.

The aim of this article is to reveal the essence of the concepts of pedagogical mastery and professional reflection, to systematise their structural composition, and to substantiate, from a theoretical and methodological standpoint, the interrelation between these two phenomena.

The Essence of Pedagogical Mastery and Its Structural Components

Pedagogical mastery is not merely a body of dry knowledge, nor solely an innate talent. It is a harmonious combination of the teacher's theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and personal-professional qualities that makes it possible to organise the educational process with high effectiveness. In other words, mastery is the art of transforming pedagogical theory into the most appropriate practical solution in a specific situation.

The scientific foundations of the concept of pedagogical mastery were laid in classical studies. I.A. Zyazyun defines it as the unity of the teacher's humanistic orientation, professional knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and pedagogical technique, while N.V. Kuzmina identifies the gnostic, design, constructive, communicative, and organisational components of pedagogical activity. Although these approaches substantiate that mastery is a multi-component phenomenon, the changes in the educational paradigm and the technological environment over the past three decades call for supplementing them with modern, empirically grounded conceptions.

In contemporary international research, pedagogical mastery is described through specific competence models. L. Shulman singles out "pedagogical content knowledge" (PCK) — the ability to transform subject content into a form that is comprehensible and teachable for the learner — as the core of teacher knowledge. P. Mishra and M. Koehler extend this model to the demands of the digital age, proposing the concept of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK). C. Danielson's "Framework for Teaching" divides the teacher's activity into four domains — planning and preparation, the classroom environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities — and twenty-two components. Notably, in this model, reflecting on one's own teaching, that is, reflection, is defined as a central component of the professional responsibilities domain. This confirms that reflection is not opposed to mastery but is an integral part of it.

J. Hattie's "Visible Learning" meta-analytic research shows that an important characteristic of the effective teacher is reliance on the systematic evaluation of one's own impact and on feedback; F. Korthagen, in turn, interprets mastery not merely as a set of external skills but as a holistic phenomenon linked to the teacher's personal beliefs and self-awareness. Synthesising the classical and modern approaches, this article distinguishes the structural components of pedagogical mastery presented below.

Genuine pedagogical mastery is manifested in the following principal criteria:

- a deep and thorough command of the subject and the ability to link theoretical material with real-life, professional examples;
- the ability to plan a lesson clearly, comprehensibly, and coherently on the basis of specific objectives;
- appropriate and productive use of modern, interactive, and active learning methods;

- establishing trusting communication with the audience and assessing learners impartially and fairly;
- a high culture of speech, pedagogical tact, and psychological sensitivity;
- the ability to make prompt and correct decisions in non-standard situations.

The structural components of pedagogical mastery can be viewed systematically in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1

Structural Components of Pedagogical Mastery

Component	Content	Indicator of manifestation
Gnostic (knowledge-related)	Deep, systematic knowledge of the subject field, pedagogy, and psychology	Fluent and confident presentation of material; well-grounded answers to questions
Design-constructive	Advance planning of the lesson's aim, content, and stages	A clear technological map, logical coherence, time management
Communicative	Establishing effective communication and cooperation with students	A trusting atmosphere, active listening, timely feedback
Organisational	Managing the learning process and students' activity	Stimulating engagement, discipline, organising group work
Pedagogical technique	The art of controlling speech, facial expression, tone, and emotions	Expressive speech, emotional stability, pedagogical tact
Personal-ethical	The teacher's humanistic orientation and professional values	Fairness, responsibility, empathy, respect for the student

Professional Reflection — A Mechanism of Development

No matter how knowledgeable and experienced a teacher may be, if he or she is unable to observe his or her own activity from the outside, with a critical eye, professional growth comes to a halt at a certain stage. It is precisely here that professional reflection acquires decisive importance.

Professional reflection is the process whereby a teacher consciously, deeply, and purposefully analyses his or her own pedagogical activity, the methods applied, and his or her achievements and shortcomings. The concept of "reflection" was introduced into scientific discourse by J. Dewey, who interprets reflective thinking as the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the conclusions to which it leads. D. Schön, in turn, distinguishes two forms of professional reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

Reflection enables the teacher to find well-grounded answers to important questions: "How did I teach the lesson?", "What did the students actually learn?", "Which method produced the expected result, and which did not?", "What should I change in the next lesson?". The significance of professional reflection lies in the fact that it improves the quality of the lesson, identifies methodological errors in good time, and forms in the teacher a critical yet constructive attitude towards his or her own work.

Professional reflection is classified according to various criteria. Its principal types and levels are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Types and Levels of Professional Reflection

Classification criterion	Type	Brief description
By time	Prospective (before the activity)	Analysing the lesson plan in advance and anticipating possible situations
By time	In the course of the activity	Making prompt decisions during the lesson and adapting the method to the situation
By time	Retrospective (after the activity)	Analysing the lesson taught and identifying cause-and-effect relationships
By orientation	Self-directed (introspective)	Evaluating one's own actions, feelings, and decisions
By orientation	Activity-directed	Analysing the effectiveness of the methods and tools applied
By depth	Descriptive level	Describing what happened ("what?")
By depth	Analytical level	Searching for and explaining the causes ("why?")
By depth	Critical level	Reconsidering values and principles ("how can this be improved?")

To transform reflection from a random thought into a systematic practice, it is advisable to carry it out in a clear sequence of stages. The stages presented below are adapted from G. Gibbs's reflective cycle (Table 3).

Table 3

Stages of the Reflective Cycle (based on G. Gibbs)

No.	Stage and content	Guiding question for the teacher
1	Description — describing the situation	What exactly happened?
2	Feelings — identifying the emotional state	How did I and the students feel?
3	Evaluation — distinguishing positive and negative aspects	What went well, and what did not?
4	Analysis — understanding the causes	Why did it happen this way?
5	Conclusion — drawing lessons	What else could I have done differently?
6	Action plan — the next steps	What will I change in the next lesson?

The Interrelation Between Pedagogical Mastery and Professional Reflection

Pedagogical mastery and professional reflection are inseparable phenomena bound by a dialectical relationship. If mastery supplies reflection with rich material — living pedagogical experience — then reflection transforms this experience into refined, consciously comprehended mastery. This relationship can be depicted as a closed "experience — analysis — improvement" cycle.

Mastery without reflection carries the risk of turning into a simple repetitive habit (a stereotype): a teacher may teach in the same manner for years, believing in his or her "experience", while in fact failing to develop. Conversely, reflection that is not based on mastery turns into abstract reasoning devoid of practical results. Only the harmony of the two ensures the teacher's sustainable professional growth. The distinction between, and the interaction of, these two concepts are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparative Analysis of Pedagogical Mastery and Professional Reflection

Criterion	Pedagogical mastery	Professional reflection
Principal function	Effectively carrying out the educational process	Analysing and improving the activity
Orientation	Towards practice (the external result)	Towards oneself (inner growth)
Main result	A high-quality lesson and high achievement	Professional growth, fewer errors
Source of development	Knowledge, skills, practical	Critical self-assessment

Criterion	Pedagogical mastery	Professional reflection
	experience	
Mutual influence	Provides experience for reflection	Consciously improves mastery

Thus, mastery and reflection perform the function of the two wings of teacher professionalism: one carries out the activity, the other renews and enriches it. The more this closed cycle is repeated, the more mature and stable the teacher's professional image becomes.

Conclusion and Practical Recommendations

The theoretical and methodological analysis carried out has shown that pedagogical mastery and professional reflection are two mutually conditioning pillars of teacher professionalism, bound in a dialectical unity. Mastery is not a final point that ceases once it is attained, but a process in continuous motion and constant renewal; the principal mechanism that activates and sustains it is systematic professional reflection. Through the regular, critical, and constructive analysis of his or her own activity, the teacher attains not an unattainable "perfection", but real and conscious — that is, sustainable — professional growth.

On the basis of the research findings, the following theoretical conclusions were reached:

1. Pedagogical mastery is a holistic yet multi-component system that is described in a complementary manner by both classical (I.A. Zyazyun, N.V. Kuzmina) and modern (L. Shulman, P. Mishra and M. Koehler, C. Danielson, J. Hattie) approaches.
2. Professional reflection is not a concept opposed to mastery but an integral part of it; this is also confirmed by the fact that reflection is singled out as a distinct component in Danielson's "Framework for Teaching".
3. Mastery and reflection are linked through a closed "experience — analysis — improvement" cycle: mastery without reflection turns into a stereotype, while reflection not grounded in mastery turns into abstract reasoning without practical results. Only their harmony ensures sustainable professional growth.

Proceeding from these conclusions, the following practical recommendations were developed for teachers and methodologists:

1) keeping a reflective journal — conducting a brief but regular written analysis after each significant lesson; this transforms a random impression into systematic professional information;
2) introducing the practice of mutual classroom visits (peer observation) and constructive exchange of feedback (peer review), which enables the teacher to view his or her own activity from the outside;
3) regularly gathering feedback from students and taking the results obtained into account when designing subsequent lessons;
4) where possible, recording the lesson on video and analysing it impartially from the position of an external observer;
5) consistently applying the six stages of G. Gibbs's reflective cycle, thereby transforming reflection from a random act into a stable professional habit;

6) creating, at the level of the educational institution, an environment that supports reflective practice — methodological seminars, a mentoring system, and professional learning communities.

The practical significance of the research lies in the fact that the proposed recommendations and the reflective-cycle model can be applied directly in teacher in-service training courses, methodological seminars, and programmes for the teacher's individual professional development.

In conclusion, the professional image of the modern teacher is formed in the organic unity of pedagogical mastery and professional reflection. Only when these two pillars are firmly established are the quality of education, the personal and professional development of the teacher, and, ultimately, the sustainable development of the education system ensured. A promising direction for future research is the empirical (experimental) substantiation of the effectiveness of the proposed model of reflective practice.

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