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EMPIRICAL STUDY OF PEDAGOGICAL ORIENTATION LEVELS IN THE PROFESSIONAL FORMATION OF FUTURE TEACHERS

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Abstract: This article examines the empirical results of studying the levels of pedagogical orientation among university students during their professional formation. Through a diagnostic approach, the study evaluates the development of professional identity, motivation, and value systems in future teachers. The findings highlight the critical role of pedagogical orientation in bridging the gap between theoretical training and professional readiness. The article proposes strategies for enhancing the professional formation of students based on observed orientation levels.

Keywords: pedagogical orientation, professional formation, future teachers, student development, educational diagnostics, professional identity, teacher training.

Аннотация: В данной статье представлены эмпирические результаты исследования уровней педагогической направленности у студентов в процессе их профессионального становления. С помощью диагностического подхода в работе оценивается развитие профессиональной идентичности, мотивации и системы ценностей у будущих учителей. Результаты подчеркивают решающую роль педагогической направленности в преодолении разрыва между теоретической подготовкой и профессиональной готовностью. В статье предлагаются стратегии по совершенствованию профессионального формирования студентов на основе выявленных уровней направленности.

Ключевые слова: педагогическая направленность, профессиональное становление, будущие учителя, развитие студентов, образовательная диагностика, профессиональная идентичность, подготовка учителей.

Introduction

The global transformation of modern education systems places new, rigorous demands on higher pedagogical education. Today, the preparation of future teachers entails far more than the simple transmission of theoretical knowledge; it necessitates the systematic cultivation of a stable, internal pedagogical orientation. Pedagogical orientation represents a complex integration of a future teacher's conscious attitude toward their professional activity, a coherent system of professional values, and a dedicated drive for continuous self-development.

The relevance of this study is underscored by the fact that the level of pedagogical orientation in a student's professional formation is a critical determinant of their future pedagogical mastery and their ability to establish effective, constructive interactions with learners. Research indicates that even when students possess high academic achievements, a deficiency in internal motivation toward pedagogical practice can lead to professional dissonance or early disengagement from the teaching profession.

The primary objective of this article is to empirically investigate the levels of pedagogical orientation within the professional formation of students, to identify its structural components, and to analyze its dynamics across various stages of the educational process. The findings of this study serve as a scientific and practical foundation for developing diagnostic tools and targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the professional orientation of pedagogical candidates.

Literature Review

The academic discourse surrounding the professional development of future teachers emphasizes that pedagogical orientation is a multifaceted construct essential for career sustainability. Theoretical

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frameworks consistently describe this orientation as the internal core of professional activity, comprising a hierarchy of motives, values, and professional self-identity. Scholarly consensus suggests that pedagogical orientation is not an innate disposition but a developmental process that evolves through active engagement with the educational environment and professional practice.

Existing research highlights that pedagogical orientation serves as the primary mechanism through which students interpret and integrate professional knowledge. Scholars argue that the transition from a passive academic perspective to an active professional identity requires the alignment of personal pedagogical values with the practical realities of the classroom. Key components identified in pedagogical psychology include professional self-efficacy, emotional empathy, and the ability to engage in critical reflection on teaching practices.

Current literature also underscores the critical function of mentorship within higher education as a catalyst for professional growth. Findings indicate that students who interact with professors in a collaborative, partnership-based environment demonstrate higher levels of internal motivation compared to those exposed to traditional, didactic instruction. Despite this, a prevalent issue in modern teacher training is the theory-practice gap. Studies show that students often struggle when shifting from the abstract academic environment to the unpredictable nature of schools. Consequently, recent educational research advocates for curricula that prioritize immersive, reflexive pedagogical practices to ensure that professional orientation is not merely a theoretical construct but a demonstrated capability. This synthesis of research demonstrates that sustained professional formation is best achieved when pedagogical orientation is systematically nurtured throughout the entire course of university training.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed-method research design to ensure a comprehensive analysis of pedagogical orientation among university students. A quantitative approach was utilized to measure the intensity of professional motivation, while qualitative observations provided insights into the development of pedagogical identity throughout the educational trajectory.

The sample group comprised students across different years of study, allowing for a longitudinal assessment of professional maturation. Standardized psychological diagnostic tools were adapted to fit the local academic context, specifically measuring professional-pedagogical motivation, emotional engagement, and goal-setting capabilities. Participants were categorized into three distinct levels of orientation based on their responses. The high level included students who demonstrated strong professional passion and a clear vision of their career trajectory. The moderate level comprised those whose professional interest remained situational and largely dependent on academic requirements. The low level represented students with a pragmatic or indifferent attitude toward pedagogical work.

Direct observation was conducted during pedagogical internships, where students were evaluated on their ability to handle real-world classroom challenges and their engagement in reflexive practice. The collected data were synthesized using statistical methods to determine the correlation between the length of university training and the evolution of pedagogical orientation. This methodological framework ensures that the findings are both empirically verifiable and theoretically sound, providing a reliable basis for understanding how students transition from passive learners to active, reflective practitioners.

Results and Discussion

The empirical analysis of pedagogical orientation levels among students reveals a distinct correlation between the duration of university education and the stabilization of professional identity. The collected data indicates that students in the initial stages of their training predominantly exhibit a moderate or situational orientation, where professional interest is largely driven by extrinsic factors

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such as academic requirements or the expectation of obtaining a degree. As students progress into the later years of their studies, there is a statistically significant shift toward a high level of pedagogical orientation, characterized by intrinsic motivation and a deeper professional commitment.

A critical observation from the study is the role of pedagogical internships in transforming student perspectives. Those who engage deeply in practical classroom activities demonstrate a more rapid transition from passive, theory-reliant learning to active, reflexive professional behavior. The results suggest that the "Low" orientation group, which initially displays a pragmatic or indifferent attitude, significantly decreases in size as students gain exposure to real-world educational challenges. This transition is further supported by consistent mentorship and the presence of professional role models within the university faculty.

The discussion of these findings highlights that pedagogical orientation is not a static characteristic but a dynamic process susceptible to educational intervention. The disparity between students with high and low orientation levels often stems from the degree of professional reflexivity they are encouraged to cultivate. Students who are prompted to analyze their own teaching experiences, identify their pedagogical strengths, and consciously address their weaknesses show a much higher level of professional readiness. Consequently, the analysis confirms that providing students with opportunities for early classroom immersion and structured reflection is essential for fostering a stable, high-level pedagogical orientation. These findings strongly support the implementation of curriculum reforms that prioritize practical engagement over purely didactic instruction, ensuring that the professional development of future teachers is both comprehensive and sustainable.

Table 1. Criteria and indicators of pedagogical orientation levels in students[1]

Level of Orientation	Motivational-Value Component	Cognitive-Reflexive Component	Activity-Practical Component
High (Active)	Deep interest in pedagogy, strong professional identity, altruistic values.	High critical thinking, reflective self-analysis, pedagogical vision.	Initiative in practice, effective problem-solving, innovative approach.
Moderate (Situational)	Interest exists but is linked to external rewards (grades, graduation).	Partial reflection, limited professional self-awareness.	Conforms to standard methods, requires guidance for new tasks.
Low (Passive)	Lack of clear professional interest, pragmatic or indifferent attitude.	Minimal reflection, focus on basic knowledge, inability to link theory to practice.	Avoids initiative, performs tasks only under strict supervision.

The data presented in Table 1 systematicizes the professional maturation of future teachers into three qualitatively distinct levels. This diagnostic framework highlights that pedagogical orientation is

[1] Developed by the author based on the analysis of professional formation models (2026).

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not merely a quantitative accumulation of knowledge, but a hierarchical evolution of professional identity, values, and practical agency.

At the High (Active) Level, the integration of motivational, cognitive, and activity-based components is complete. Here, the student exhibits "professional maturity," where pedagogical activity is no longer viewed as a requirement, but as a space for self-realization. The distinguishing feature of this level is high reflexivity, which allows the student to analyze their own teaching strategies and adapt them to the unique psychological needs of their learners.

The Moderate (Situational) Level signifies a developmental plateau. Students at this stage possess the necessary academic knowledge but lack the internal drive to innovate. Their pedagogical activity is characterized by a "reproductive" style—they effectively follow existing methods but struggle when faced with unpredictable classroom scenarios. The reliance on external validation (such as academic grades) suggests that their professional identity is still in a state of formation and has not yet been fully internalized.

The Low (Passive) Level serves as an indicator of professional risk. The absence of intrinsic motivation combined with minimal reflexivity suggests a mismatch between the student's personal values and the demands of the teaching profession. The practical agency at this level is purely technical, limited to complying with instructions rather than understanding the pedagogical essence behind them.

In conclusion, this analysis demonstrates that the transition from a passive to an active level of orientation is dependent on shifting the pedagogical focus from simple knowledge transmission to the cultivation of critical reflexivity and professional autonomy. By utilizing these criteria, educational institutions can better identify which students require additional mentorship, specialized coaching, or practice-based interventions to foster a sustainable and effective teaching career.

Figure 1 illustrates the longitudinal shifts in the pedagogical orientation of students throughout their four-year university education. The visualization clearly indicates an inverse relationship between the "low" and "high" levels of professional orientation as students progress through their studies.

In the initial stages of training, a significant portion of the student cohort falls within the "low" or "moderate" orientation categories. This suggests that during the first two years, pedagogical identity is largely superficial, often shaped by external academic demands rather than intrinsic professional commitment. The visual data confirms that professional interest at this stage is situational and highly vulnerable to external pressures.

Figure 1. Correlation between pedagogical practice and professional identity formation.[2]



As the curriculum shifts toward advanced pedagogical practice and collaborative mentorship (from the third year onwards), the data reveals a marked upward trajectory in the "high" orientation category. This transition highlights that students are not merely acquiring technical skills; they are undergoing a fundamental shift in their professional self-perception. The shrinking gap between low and high orientation levels underscores the effectiveness of immersive, practice-oriented pedagogical models in fostering a stable professional identity.

[2] Author's own research data (2026).

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Furthermore, the plateau observed in the moderate orientation category suggests that a subset of students requires more targeted, personalized interventions to fully solidify their professional commitment. The overall trend presented in the figure provides empirical evidence that pedagogical orientation is a developmental outcome, strongly correlated with the quality of faculty-student interaction and the intensity of practical exposure throughout the university trajectory.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The empirical study of pedagogical orientation among university students confirms that professional formation is a transformative process that evolves through a complex interaction of academic training, mentorship, and practical experience. The research demonstrates that pedagogical orientation serves as the core pillar of a teacher's professional identity, determining the efficacy of their future interactions within the educational system. Findings indicate that students who successfully transition to a high level of pedagogical orientation display greater professional autonomy, a strong commitment to self-development, and a high degree of reflexivity, which are essential for managing the dynamic challenges of modern classroom environments.

Based on the research outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the professional formation of future educators:

Educational institutions should institutionalize systematic mentorship programs that connect students with experienced practitioners throughout their entire university career. This continuous engagement ensures that students can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom reality, fostering a more stable professional orientation.

Curricula should be further updated to prioritize early immersion in real-world teaching scenarios. By providing students with opportunities to engage in pedagogical activities from the initial stages of their studies, universities can transform situational interest into sustainable professional passion, significantly reducing the number of students who remain at a low level of pedagogical orientation.

It is recommended to integrate specialized training modules focused on pedagogical reflexivity and facilitation skills for university faculty. Professors who adopt the role of mentors and partners, rather than remaining strictly didactic, create an environment that encourages students to move from passive learning to active professional self-construction.

Universities should develop and implement diagnostic monitoring systems to assess the levels of pedagogical orientation at each stage of a student's progression. Early identification of students with a low or passive orientation allows for timely psychological and professional support, thereby increasing the quality of the incoming teaching workforce.

In summary, the transition of a student into a highly competent pedagogical professional is a strategic task that requires a shift toward a student-centered, practice-oriented educational model. By fostering a supportive academic environment that values critical reflection and hands-on experience, universities can ensure that future teachers possess the necessary internal motivation and professional identity to excel in their careers.

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