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Developing Self-Efficacy of Future EFL Teachers

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to experimentally prove that a set of forms and methods could provide self-efficacy of prospective EFL teachers. Bandura's theory of social learning demonstrates the central role of self-efficacy. The author opts for teaching through observation, underlining the role of social experience and mutual determinism in personality development. However, in the course of our research, there were not found enough scientific papers on the development of self-efficacy as a component of professional identity and as a factor of teachers' professional formation. The experiment was conducted with 80 final year students of KFU- prospective EFL teachers. The ascertaining stage of the experiment was to determine the initial values of self-efficacy: the level of formation of selfefficacy in learning; professional self-efficacy, communication self-efficacy. For this purpose, we employed 'Questionnaire about teaching experiences during the final school teaching practice' by Kaldi and 'Self-efficacy Scale' by Sherer et al. Statistical analysis of empirical research was done by means of standardized testing assessment in mathematical statistics (Wilcoxon T test). The results obtained at the ascertaining stage allowed to design a program for developing self-efficacy of prospective EFL teachers. Kaldi's questionnaire enabled to determine that majority of participants were certain to possess the qualities and skills necessary for pedagogical activity. This means that future EFL teachers adequately assessed their skills and knowledge and were convinced that the school teaching practices, and the final one specifically, would equip them with a wealth of experience and would permit to perform in the profession properly. Self-efficacy Scale revealed that 80 % of the participants in both the experimental and control groups had an average level of professional self-efficacy. This indicates future EFL teachers believe in possessing the qualities, skills and capabilities they have acquired from previous practices and in employing them successfully in their future professional activity. However, the experimental group showed low level of communication self-efficacy. These results indicate an unsuccessful past experience that has affected the self-efficacy of some students. This led to a lack of confidence and belief in solving communicative problems and realizing successful communication by future EFL teachers. A high level of communication self-efficacy, on the contrary, means that future EFL teachers are assured to communicate successfully, establish rapport with schoolchildren and eliminate communication problems. Based on the analysis of psychological and pedagogical papers, we considered training to be the most effective means of developing self-efficacy of future EFL teachers. A number of training theories and our personal experience served the basis to design a program for developing self-efficacy of prospective EFL teachers. The formative stage of the experiment resulted in noticeable improvement of self-efficacy level in the experimental group.

 $\textit{Keywords}: self-efficacy, professional\ identity, professional\ communication, motivation, teaching\ practice,\ active\ learning\ methods.$

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Introduction

Contemporary society mostly demands highly effective people, those who are able to evaluate their own capabilities as well as the results of their professional activity. A person realizes subjective attitude to the performed activity through the appeal to the one's internal resources, development potentials, the possibilities to choose the means of further actions, strategies of activity, behavior or even life in general. Thus, there, ultimately arises the need to solve the educational problem that makes self-efficacy to be one of the personally significant qualities of the subject of professional activity and one of the factors in the development of professional self-awareness of prospective teachers, in particular EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher.

An analysis of various approaches to determine the self-efficacy shows that in modern psychology the construct of self-efficacy has not yet been definitively determined. Researchers attribute this phenomenon to different classes of psychological phenomena, but most often their understanding appears as convictions: the subject's faith in his/her ability to carry out activities, as well as, his/her own development while achieving one's goals and objectives (Bandura, 1977; Gordeeva, 2006; Hjelle & Ziegler, 1992; Krichevsky, 1998). A common thing in the existing definitions is the emphasis on optimistic self-belief of a person regarding his/ her own ability to control events when achieving goals, as well as the attribution of self-efficacy to the upcoming activity, and not to a past one.

In his study, Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as a set of person's ideas about one's abilities and opportunities to be as practical as possible when implementing further actions like behavior, communication, perseverance and his/her confidence that one will be able to realize oneself in them and achieve the intended objective and subjective effect.

It is apparent that in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the modern education system, much attention needs to be paid to the development of professional identity of the prospective teachers, which characterizes the latter, first of all, as a competent person: who takes on the colossal responsibility of an intermediary between culture and personality; allows the teacher to accept the solution of the main tasks of the school or other educational institution as a criterion of professional self-realization, as direction towards the initiation of the student axis to values, self-improvement, assistance in life self-determination and self-development.

An analysis of the scientific papers on the topic of the study showed that Bandura's theory of social learning demonstrates the central role of self-efficacy. The author opts for teaching through observation, underlining the role of social experience and mutual determinism in personality development. However, in the course of our research, there were not found enough scientific papers on the development of self-efficacy as a component of professional identity and as a factor of teachers' professional formation.

Purpose and objectives of the study

Purpose of the study is to experimentally prove that a set of forms and methods could provide self-efficacy of prospective EFL teachers.

Literature review

Today, the society needs technologically professional, highly-qualified prospective EFL teachers, who are ready for creative work that implies clear vision and positive assessment of personal professional opportunities and prospects. Russian and international scholars studied the phenomenon of self-efficacy and its processes form various prospective in their psychological and pedagogical papers. Nevertheless, the leading presupposition of the theory is to determine the expectation of effectiveness as a decisive beginning and the sustainable implementation of any activity. Many researchers agree that a person's assessment of one's own effectiveness determines the expansion or limitation of the choice of activity and career.

Recently, the interest of teachers and psychologists in the problems of professional identity of a teacher, EFL particularly, based on a set of ideas about oneself as a professional, about one's professional abilities and about emotional attitude towards oneself as a subject of professional activity has increased (Sobkin & Fomichenko, 2017).

Thus, a large number of contemporary papers are devoted to the study of the cognitive and emotionalevaluative components of teacher's professional identity. At the same time, according to scholars, the success of pedagogical activity determines self-efficacy, which indicates the degree of perseverance in mastering, and further on in performing certain professional actions.

From an acmeological point of view, self-efficacy is an integral feature of a professional's personality and occupies a special place in professional development. Derkach (1981, p. 88) notes that "self-efficacy is an important property of a true professional, and its role is especially great not only in ensuring high efficiency and reliability of professional activity, but also in the formation of achievement motivation, the choice of personal and professional standards and career paths".

Since the introduction of the concept of self-efficacy in psychological and pedagogical papers, the interest in the influence of the teacher's beliefs on one's own effectiveness in the professional sphere has been gaining strength. Thus, many scientists claim that the effectiveness of a teacher's activities depends on confidence in their influence on the results of student achievement (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017; Podell & Soodak, 1993; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Moreover, teacher's beliefs about effectiveness become a strong predictor of teacher's behavior. If a teacher thinks that he or she is able to manage his or her class and have good lessons, then it is likely that he or she will do it successfully (Gavora, 2010).

In the educational environment, self-efficacy is usually defined as the teacher's faith in one's own ability to organize and perform the actions necessary to achieve the desired results. We can draw attention to the fact that this means what teachers can do in a specific situation, rather than what they have already achieved, or the reasons that determine their past achievements.

Numerous studies show that the decisive influence on the emergence and development of self-efficacy was exerted by the work of foreign psychologists White (1959) and DeCharms (1968), who were the first to include this phenomenon in a wider context of behavior motivational factors. According to them, a special expression in the human mind, sensations of one's effectiveness and experience of 'identity' strongly affect intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation cannot compete with intrinsic one.

Bandura (1989) introduced the concept of self-efficacy into psychological practice within the framework of social-cognitive theory. The core of the self-efficacy concept was the idea that belief in one's ability to cope with a certain type of activity is a necessary motivational condition. Bandura believes that the attractiveness of the result and the expectation of success are not enough to trigger the subject's motivation. The key determinant is self-efficacy, which he defines as the judgment of people about their abilities to organize and carry out the chain of actions required to achieve pre-established types of results of activities.

Gordeeva (2006) assumes that the presence of high self-efficacy, that is, awareness of one's own competence, confidence or faith in one's ability to successfully complete a task, expectations of success leads to the fact that a person puts more effort into the task than the one who is in serious doubt in one's abilities. As a result, such ideas about their own effectiveness make it possible to achieve a better result, promote self-esteem. According to Gordeeva and Shepeleva (2006), people who believe in their ability to solve problems are very persistent when faced with obstacles.

Having performed his own research, Romek (1996) concluded that self-efficacy is one of the components of self-confidence construct. According to him, the concept of self-confidence is sizable and includes an

emotional aspect. This phenomenon of self-efficacy based on a cognitive level requires disclosure in our study.

According to Gordeeva (2006), the individual's belief in his/her own ability to overcome certain barriers in achieving the result of activity is self-efficacy.

Gaydar (2006) analyzed theoretical papers and then developed a more detailed, in her opinion, definition of self-efficacy. In her definition self-efficacy refers to "a combination of a person's ideas about his or her own abilities and about abilities to be productive in the implementation of upcoming activities, communication and his or her confidence that he or she will be able to realize him or herself in them and achieve the expected objective and subjective effect" (Gaydar, 2006, p. 18).

A theoretical analysis of the self-efficacy concept in the psychological and pedagogical papers shows that though the problem was considered quite widely in the works of many scientists, a number of specific issues related to self-efficacy remain poorly developed, due to the freshness of this construct in modern pedagogy and psychology. Nevertheless, despite differences in definitions of the concept many researchers agree that this phenomenon is an individual's conviction or belief in his or her own strengths, capabilities and abilities to achieve successful results, goals in a particular field of activity. They explain that the efforts of a person and the emerged obstacles positively affect self-efficacy and thereby increase it.

Based on papers of Mitina (1998) we concluded that the phenomenon of 'self-efficacy' is a component of the teacher's professional identity because the spheres of professional activity and professional communication, which were noted by Mitina, were studied in detail by Sherer et al (1982), well-known American psychologists and scientists, when developing a test determining self-efficacy. American psychologists highlighted self-efficacy for activity and self-efficacy for communication. Many scientists claim that self-efficacy as a component of the teacher's professional identity becomes a determinant of the future specialist's professional development.

Derkach (1981) and Moskalenko (2013) distinguish the systemic components of professional identity, which include: the cognitive component (realized in self-knowledge: cognition, awareness and evaluation of oneself, one's actions through interaction with other society members); the motivational component (carried out in self-actualization: the individual's desire to realize and development his or her fullest potential and enhancement); the emotional component (carried out in self-understanding: the construction and correction of personal beliefs about oneself, about the self-image); and finally, the execution component (implemented in self-regulation: application of innate and acquired reactions when interacting with the environment).

We can see the relationship between the components of professional identity and self-efficacy selected by Derkach (1981) and Moskalenko (2013). For example, Bandura (1997) based self-efficacy on the socialcognitive theory and it involves awareness and appreciation of oneself, one's abilities, one's personal, professionally valuable qualities needed to achieve outcomes via interaction with the environment. This phenomenon is also called cognitive activity, self-knowledge, which expresses the cognitive component of professional identity. Bandura believes that self-efficacy is a motivational condition for any individual. Internal and external motivation, in his opinion, is not enough to create a condition that would serve as a trigger of motivational wave. It is a person's faith and assurance in his or her own abilities, opportunities, personal and professional qualities and capabilities that are necessary to initiate the motivation of a person. That builds the connection of self-efficacy with the motivational component proposed by Derkach (1981) and Moskalenko (2013). The emotional component, described by Bandura, affects the level of self-efficacy. He believes that stressful situations, disturbing conditions reduce self-efficacy, however people with stressresistance, self-control and low anxiety level possess high level of self-efficacy, especially in unpredictable situations. In this case, self-efficacy and the emotional component correlate too. The execution component, which implies self-regulation, completely proves Bandura's idea (Bandura, 1997): it is faith, the belief in self-regulation and organization of behavior and actions necessary for the successful execution of the outcome that is an indicator of self-efficacy.

Thus, the existing experience of researchers deserves special attention and helps us to draw our own conclusions about the certain stages in the development of the state of teacher's professional identity. First of all, a formed personality has to determine one's own needs and the needs of society when choosing a profession according to the labor market. After that, it is required to go through the stage of professional selfdetermination to acquire knowledge and hone skills in the chosen profession. The next important stage, in our opinion, is an active induction into the actual professional activity, interaction and building relationships with the work collective during teaching practice. It is crucially important to go through all these stages and to execute professional goals (fully or partially), aspirations in independent work as it should form the future teacher's professionally important qualities, level of creativity as well as the level of professional proficiency. Paying tribute to what was done by the predecessors, we also believe that the cognitive side alone cannot determine the professional identity of a teacher. Professional pedagogical activity has a number of other bright, emotionally colored volition affecting the general condition of a teacher and encouraging him or her to perceive the presence of professionally important qualities, as well as to form self-reliance. Thus, the teacher as a creative person and creator of his or her professional pedagogical activity, undoubtedly, should feel a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the work. He or she should emotionally experience the correspondence of his or her self-image to the ideal image of him or herself as a teacher. As a consequence, the self-regulating function of the teacher's professional identity is realized.

It should be noted that the developing of self-efficacy through vocational education is significant. After all, ideas about one's competence represent a motivational condition that predetermines a person's behavior, his or her persistent efforts in studying, and then in carrying out certain professional tasks, not personal abilities, knowledge, skills or traits.

Self-efficacy also plays an equally important role for the development of professional self-awareness of future teachers. Since the individual's faith in one's effectiveness facilitates adapting to the constantly changing requirements of the current society, helps to identify the abilities and capabilities of future EFL teachers, strengthens persistent will and active initiative, promotes overcoming barriers and obstacles in pedagogical activity, as well as achieve set goals.

It follows that one of the components of the future teacher's professional identity is self-efficacy, represented as feeling and perception of one's own competence, the objective possibility of the successful outcome of assigned professional tasks, and rapidly taking in non-standard situations.

Methodology

In the study we analyzed psychological, pedagogical and methodological papers and conducted the pedagogical experiment. The respondents were 80 prospective EFL teachers in their final year at KFU. The ascertaining stage of the experiment was to determine the initial values of self-efficacy: the level of formation of self-efficacy in learning; professional self-efficacy, communication self-efficacy. For this purpose, we employed 'Questionnaire about teaching experiences during the final school teaching practice' by Kaldi (2017) and 'Self-efficacy Scale' by Sherer et al. (1982). Statistical analysis of empirical research was done by means of standardized testing assessment in mathematical statistics (Wilcoxon T test).

Results

The case of the Institute of Psychology and Education at Kazan Federal University is described in the paper. The experiment engaged two groups of future EFL in order to diagnose their level of self-efficacy. All 80 participants were in their final year majoring EFL teaching.

We used 'Questionnaire about teaching experiences during the final school teaching practice' by Kaldi (2017) to study self-efficacy and other mental processes in the professional identity of future EFL teachers. The questionnaire was translated into Russian and was electronically transmitted to the respondents (https://forms.gle/Zy95xs34jPzsqipHA). For a qualitative analysis of the results we examined the responses of our respondents to "Part B - Self-efficacy training".

The results obtained revealed that 23 out of 31 statements received affirmative responses "agree" and "completely agree", which comprise from 65% to 87.5%. For example, 50% of students 'agreed' and 15% 'completely agreed' with the statement 9 - "I can take into account the level of preparedness of students in preparing lessons (students with disabilities or gifted students)" which makes 65% of positive responses. The answers we received on Statement 13 "I can use attractive study assignments for students" and statement 14 - "I can give students appropriate recommendations before they complete the study assignments" gained highest percentage of affirmative responses: 70% and 80% of the respondents 'agreed' with them, while 17.5% and 7.5% out of the 90% in both statements 'completely agreed'.

Therefore, the remaining 8 statements out of 31 received below 65% of the affirmative answers "agree" and "completely agree". For example, 55% agreed with the 6th statement- "I can answer complex student questions", while 7.5% out of the total 62.5% 'agreed completely'. The 10th statement - "I can introduce new concepts or skills to students", obtained 47.5% of affirmative responses with 40% 'agreed' and 7.5% 'completely agreed'. The statements 24 - "I can improve the performance of students with learning disabilities" and 27 - "I can make all students participate in the educational process, regardless of their level of readiness", 35% 'agreed' and 5% 'completely agreed' out of 40% of affirmative responses. The statements 25 - "I can develop critical thinking and research skills in my students" and 26 - "I can develop student creativity" made 50% and 57.5% accordingly and received the affirmative answers "I agree" and "I completely agree". The statements 28 - "I can help students enjoy the learning experience" and 31 "I can satisfy the learning needs and interest of students from different cultures" were agreed by 50% and 'completely agreed' by 10% of respondents correspondingly which in total makes 60% of affirmative responses.

Thus, to clarify the data obtained from the Kaldi's questionnaire, we calculated the average values of responses. Accordingly, we received the following averaged data for all the statements: 51.25% of respondents answered "agree", 9.5% - "completely agree", 30% - "not sure", 6% - "disagree" and 3, 25% - "totally disagree" with all proposed statements.

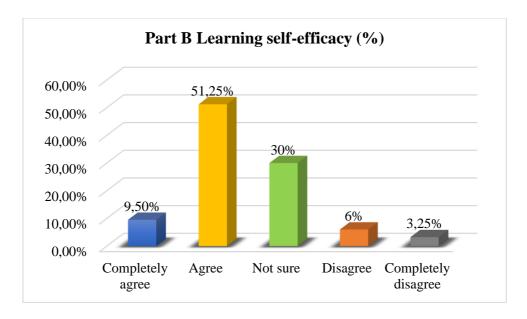


Figure 1. The responses to the Kaldi's 'Questionnaire about teaching experiences during the final school teaching practice'.

The bar chart shows that after experiencing final school teaching practice about 60.75% of the 80 respondents responded affirmatively to the proposed statements which means they considered themselves to be sufficiently competent students possessing professionally important qualities to be a teacher. Nevertheless, approximately 9.25% of the students under survey do not consider themselves capable and competent enough to cope with the various professional tasks proposed in the statements of the questionnaire. And about 30% of respondents took a neutral position and replied that they were "not sure". This suggests that they had difficulties in carrying out some professional tasks practically. During the interview some respondents noted that the most difficult was to interest students in real practice, even when they managed to find a common language, which required some efforts too. In general, we can assume that most students - future EFL teachers are confident in their abilities, capabilities and skills, which reflects good level of self-efficacy, but we should remember that the rest half suffered certain doubts about the implementation of some professional tasks proposed in the statements.

Along with the qualitative analysis we employed the quantitative analysis of self-efficacy - 'Self-efficacy Scale' by Sherer et al. (1982). This test gives a person's assessment of one's own potential in the framework activity and in the framework of communication, which are essential for future teaching activity.

It should be emphasized that the average values of the level of self-efficacy in professional activity are between -7 and +53, and in communication are between +7 and +15. Based on the results, we determined that the middle level of self-efficacy in activity prevails and amounts to 80%. Therefore, prospective EFL teachers adequately and positively assess their knowledge and skills which they acquired during training, teaching practice and lifespan. They are convinced that all the experience they gain in a professional activity or any other one will help them in the situations that appeared in the self-efficacy scale test. Such a belief in one's abilities is the most important professional quality for a teacher and a key factor for achieving successful outcomes.

However, 55% of the participants had low level of self-efficacy in communication. It can thus be suggested that low level of self-efficacy in communication of future EFL teachers was caused by the problems in establishing contacts (with students, classmates, teachers and others), rather than by the problems in the methodology of materials preparation. The student's idea that he or she is not competent enough in the communication and his or her lack of confidence in the ability to wisely solve communication problems is very likely to occur as negative experience during teaching practice or other associated activities. Bandura (1997) pointed out that such a negative experience reduces the self-efficacy of a person. It is known that beliefs, as a source of information and a factor in the development of self-efficacy, positively affect the development of self-efficacy of a future teacher. However, at the interview some students confessed that during the teaching practice they faced various difficulties in communication with schoolchildren, and sometimes with class teachers.

Discussions

From this perspective we detected the need to focus on the development of self-efficacy among future EFL teachers employing various forms and methods. To this end, we developed a program for the self-efficacy development containing 10 classes. The first class was informative: all participants were familiarized with the topic, rules, goals and objectives of the training. The second class was aimed at developing personal tendencies, techniques for confident behavior and enhancing self-confidence of future teachers. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth classes had a goal to develop communication skills. The classes were targeted at improving an ability to communicate, developing techniques for active listening and self-presentation, develop advertence, non-verbal communication skills, ability to build contact, come to an agreement avoiding aggressive behavior, and etc. During these classes, the trainees learned to navigate in different communicative situations, solve communicative problems and execute communication tasks. To devote most classes to developing communication skills is explained by the low level of self-efficacy in

interpersonal communication detected among future EFL teachers, compared to relatively middle and high level of self-efficacy in activity. It is possible that negative indicators of self-efficacy in interpersonal communication mean failed attempts to establish contact with students, with the class teacher or others, during teaching practice or continuous professional training, or at home. Bandura (1997) argued that the unpleasant accidents experienced in any activity drops self-efficacy. Such circumstances may have been caused by low level of self-efficacy in interpersonal communication. Moreover, the stress the students in their final year suffer from should also be considered.

The seventh class was aimed at developing communication skills, actualizing the ability to influence and persuade, developing memory, audio perception, persuasion skills, developing non-verbal communication skills. The eighth class was aimed at abreaction, distress, and depression via self-regulation and controlling behavior. The ninth class was aimed at inflating sense of self-importance, increasing the self-esteem, developing perception of personality as self-worth, trying to eliminate various phobias, invented and non-invented fears of all participants in the training. To shape self-confidence and self-importance was essential to pass the final testing on self-efficacy and that is what the class targeted at. The tenth class included updating and consolidating the acquired knowledge and skills.

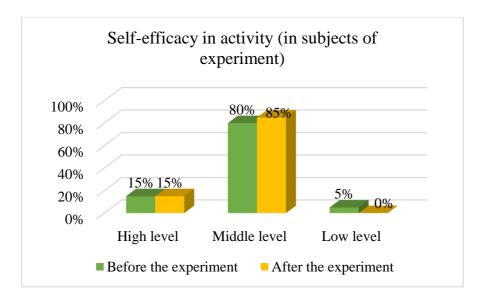


Figure 2. Results of a test to determine the self-efficacy level according to Maddux and Sherer before and after the experiment.

The results of the level of self-efficacy in the field of activity for future English teachers before and after the teaching experiment showed that the middle level of self-efficacy in the activity increased from 80% to 85% after the experiment, while the high level indicators remained unchanged at 15%.

Using one of the nonparametric methods, the Wilcoxon T-test for connected samples, we obtained the sums of ranks $T_{+} = 138.5$ and $T_{-} = 71.5$. This empirical value exceeds the critical value from the table, and therefore, the level of self-efficacy in activity in the experimental group demonstrates no difference between the results before and after the teaching experiment.

For a complete picture of the results, we turn to the obtained data on self-efficacy in the field of interpersonal communication.

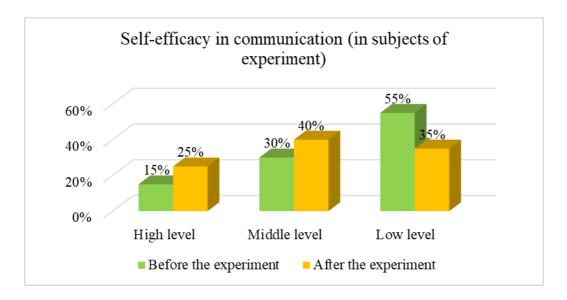


Figure 3. Results of a test to determine the self-efficacy level according to Maddux and Sherer before and after the experiment.

We can see that after the teaching experiment, the middle level of self-efficiency in communication prevails and now amounts to 40%. Meanwhile, a high level of self-efficacy in the communication increased from 15% to 25%, while low-level fell from 55% to 35%. Applying the nonparametric Wilcoxon T-test for connected samples, we obtained the following sums of ranks: $T_{+} = 151$ and $T_{-} = 59$ (Appendix 7). Where, $T_{emp} =$ the smallest sum of ranks 59, at $T_{kp} = 60$ (p = 0.05). This empirical value is less than critical, therefore, the level of demonstration shows that future teachers have increased the level of self-confidence, their communication skills, abilities, and a belief in the success of their actions and communication behavior. These data are confirmed by our mathematical processing of the obtained statistics. The use of

the Wilcoxon t-test suggested that the students' level of self-efficacy in all fields has significant positive difference.

We believe the data obtained prove minor, but positive changes in the final results of future EFL teachers. It should be pointed out that we placed the emphasis in the content of the program on the development of the communicative aspects of the problem under study, which explains the absence of significant changes in self-efficacy in activity.

Based on this, we believe that the final results show the effective functionality of our program aimed at developing self-efficacy among prospective EFL teachers.

Conclusion

The study supports the necessity to develop the self-efficacy of future teachers as an important element of professional self-awareness. An analysis of the research papers, as well as our own experience, has suggested that the effectiveness of the development of self-efficacy as a component of professional self-awareness of future EFL teachers will significantly increase if, based on these factors, we introduce a special program for the development of self-efficacy, using various interactive and active learning methods. From our point of view, when the individual is involved in active professional activity environment one can increase his or her self-efficacy using various forms and methods. Feeling of self-efficacy comes to the individual when he or she tests the techniques, exercises, tasks suggested in the development program and when he or she acquires the sense of identity in teaching. And the data obtained showed slight positive changes in self-efficacy of future EFL teachers. It should be noted that the program was focused on the development of self-efficacy in communication and did not affect self-efficacy in activity which explains no significant changes in it.

The result obtained proved that the program implemented is favorably effective in developing self-efficacy among future EFL teachers. The research results and the developed program can be used in the practice of secondary and higher professional educational institutions in the course of preparing prospective specialists for professional activities.

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