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Abstract

This article examines the strategic planning of activities to support the professional development of students in education. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, individuals are required to possess not only knowledge but also advanced skills and competencies that enable them to adapt to rapidly changing social, technological, and professional environments. Education plays a pivotal role in cultivating these competencies, as today's students represent the specialists and professionals of the near future. The demands of the modern era pose various challenges for students, including how to effectively manage their time, organize their learning activities, and continuously develop their knowledge, skills, and creative potential. In addition, fostering the personal and professional growth of students requires attention to both intellectual and practical aspects of learning, ensuring that students acquire the ability to think critically, solve problems independently, and engage in meaningful educational and social projects.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of activity planning on the professional development of students in higher education. The research examines the opinions of university students regarding their ability to organize, manage, and implement educational and extracurricular activities, and draws conclusions based on data collected through a descriptive quantitative research method. By identifying the challenges students face in managing their time and activities, this study emphasizes the importance of structured planning as a tool for achieving academic and professional goals. Furthermore, the findings aim to provide practical guidance for students, enabling them to enhance their learning efficiency, cultivate creativity, and achieve successful outcomes in their professional development.

Keywords: planning in education, student activity, time management, professional development, educational strategy, academic success

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in advancing scientific and technological progress worldwide. It must prepare specialists capable of managing the future—individuals who can predict events through imagination, critical thinking, and intuition, foresee solutions to problems, and implement them effectively. In other words, education must cultivate the “person of the future,” as former U.S. President John F. Kennedy described: “...people who wish for what never was...”

The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Education” emphasizes the development of personalities with high moral and civic values. The main objectives of education are:

- To cultivate citizens who are aware of their responsibilities to the Republic of Azerbaijan, respect national traditions and democratic principles, uphold human rights and freedoms, demonstrate patriotism and loyalty to Azerbaijani ideals, and think independently and creatively.
- To prepare specialists who protect and advance national, moral, and universal values, possess a broad outlook, can evaluate innovations and initiatives, acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge, and remain competitive in modern society.
- To ensure the systematic assimilation of knowledge, skills, and habits, continually enhance qualifications, and prepare students for active social engagement and effective professional activity (Law on Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2009).

Technological and scientific developments increasingly necessitate educational innovation. Developing countries, in particular, require a highly skilled workforce to keep pace with global advancements and achieve development goals. Education is a key factor in shaping such human capital, and nations invest significantly in improving educational quality to ensure sustainable progress.

Teacher education is central to these efforts, as teachers play a crucial role in shaping future generations. Today's students in higher pedagogical institutions—the future educators—must actively develop their intellectual, cultural, and professional capacities to meet the challenges of rapidly evolving educational and societal contexts. They must engage in continuous learning, research, and skill development, integrating knowledge into practical and innovative solutions.

The document “Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development” (President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2021) underscores the strategic importance of human capital. One of its five priorities, “Competitive human capital and modern innovation space,” highlights the role of education in fostering a creative and innovative society capable of thriving in global competition.

Amidst the Fourth Industrial Revolution, various public-private initiatives and projects have emerged to equip individuals with essential skills. The 2020 World Economic Forum meeting emphasized education reform through the “Reskilling Revolution Platform,” aiming to provide one billion people worldwide with new competencies by 2030 (Bashirov, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated educational innovation, prompting widespread adoption of online training, webinars, and other professional development activities. Students and educators are now expected to participate actively in daily learning, acquire digital literacy, solve practical problems, and apply modern technologies. These efforts are essential not only for professional growth but also for shaping the “person of the future.”

However, several questions remain: Are our current pedagogical programs adequately preparing students to educate future generations? Are students actively engaging in projects and activities that enhance their competencies? How effectively can educational institutions adapt to technological transformations while maintaining high-quality human capital development?

Thus, to address these questions, a survey was conducted among students to assess their perspectives and experiences. The research was carried out in March 2021, providing insights into the current state of student engagement and preparedness.

Addressing these questions is essential for strategic planning of student activity in education, ensuring that future specialists are equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving world.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of activity planning on the professional development of students in education. The research focused on the opinions of students in a higher pedagogical school,

and conclusions were drawn based on the collected data. A descriptive quantitative method was employed for this research.

Problem and Research Question

Research question: How do students ensure their professional development in education?

To answer this question, a survey was conducted among 130 students, including 19 male and 111 female participants. The survey consisted of a questionnaire with three questions:

Question 1: Are you able to perform the tasks provided by the syllabus on time?

1. I can hardly perform it
2. I partially perform
3. I perform to a certain extent
4. I fully perform

Question 2: Do you participate in educational projects?

1. I do not have enough time
2. I attend occasionally
3. I try to find time for participation
4. I always attend

Question 3: Do you participate in the social life of your university?

1. I do not have enough time
2. I participate occasionally
3. I participate when I have time
4. I always attend

The survey results are summarized in the table below:

The survey results are listed in the table.

№	Responses Questions	1	2	3	4
		Number of students by number (in %)	Number of students by number (in %)	Number of students by number (in %)	Number of students by number (in %)
1	Are you able to perform the tasks provided by the syllabus on time?	10 (7,7%)	71 (54,7%)	30 (23%)	19 (14,6%)
2	Do you participate in educational projects?	39 (30%)	54 (41,6%)	25 (19,2%)	12 (9,2%)
3	Do you participate in the social life of your university?	27 (20,8%)	53 (40,8%)	34 (26,1%)	16 (12,3%)

Findings

The survey revealed that:

- 7,7% of students could not complete the tasks given in the syllabus on time, while 14,6% were able to complete them fully.
- 30% of students did not participate in educational projects, and only 9,2% always found time to participate.
- 20,8% of students did not participate in the social life of the university, whereas 12,3% actively participated.

These findings indicate that students face significant challenges in developing their professionalism. According to the students, the main reason for these difficulties is insufficient planning of their educational activities. Proper organization and strategic planning of student activity are, therefore, crucial for enhancing professional development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Students in higher education are being prepared for professions they may have little prior knowledge of and have never practically experienced. Therefore, they must not only understand the ideas presented during the learning process but also develop the ability to generate new and creative ideas. Lessons should address students' needs and reveal their potential. How students comprehend and respond to the ideas they encounter, as well as their capacity for creative thinking, reflects their level of future professionalism.

In the educational process, it is essential to allocate time for students to think critically and participate in discussions. This consideration should be integrated into lesson planning; otherwise, the content delivered may not have the desired impact. Modern and strategic planning approaches are therefore necessary. When

teachers implement such strategies, students are encouraged to become active, self-motivated learners who seek ways to develop their skills independently. An active student will recognize gaps in their knowledge, which fosters purposeful and well-planned engagement.

What is planning?

Planning is the process of goal formulation and the concretization of methods, measures, and resources to achieve those goals. The outcome of planning is a concrete plan - a structured model of action. Effective planning requires forecasting, also referred to as foresight. Long-term forecasting serves as the foundation of social and strategic planning. However, the rapid and synergistic development of today's world complicates accurate prediction.

The essence of planning lies in defining strategic goals and tasks, making operational and strategic decisions, determining methods for achieving objectives, allocating duration and resources (material, financial, labor), and assigning responsible persons. Planning establishes a link between the current state and the desired future state while answering critical questions: *What should be done? When should it be done? Who is responsible for it?* (Ahmadov, 2013).

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that students must properly plan their time to ensure professional development in education. Timely completion of tasks and effective use of time are essential for achieving goals. It is impossible to become a high-quality teacher, doctor, engineer, or future-ready professional without structured and purposeful activity.

Futurist Alvin Toffler emphasized that the functions of education in the near future have evolved. He defined illiteracy in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution not as the inability to read or write, but as the inability to *learn, unlearn, and relearn* (Israfilov, 2018). This perspective underscores the importance of planning, adaptability, and continuous professional development for students in education.

Proposals

In this context, training programs that support the professional development of students should be systematically organized. Methodical materials must be prepared, and students should be actively involved in various research publications. Furthermore, each student should be able to independently monitor and control their learning activities, and this progress should be reportable.

Students can plan their educational activities effectively by considering the following steps:

- **Define learning goals:** Clearly identify what you aim to achieve in each learning activity.
- **Create a plan for each task:** Organize a structured approach to every assignment or project.
- **Clarify learning objectives:** Specify what knowledge or skills you want to acquire.
- **Allocate time effectively:** Set realistic timeframes for each task or activity.
- **Stimulate motivation and creativity:** Set goals that increase interest and encourage critical thinking.

- **Plan targeted learning activities:** Design tasks that directly contribute to achieving your objectives.

- **Adapt the plan to your needs:** Customize your approach based on your strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Develop strategies:** Determine *what* to do and *how* to accomplish it.

- **Conduct research and gather resources:** Read books, watch relevant videos, and create a knowledge database.

- **Review and refine the plan:** Continuously evaluate your progress to ensure efficiency.

- **Prioritize important tasks:** Identify key activities and focus on executing them.

- **Maintain resilience:** Be patient, confident, determined, and persistent, even in the face of failure.

- **Work diligently:** Apply consistent effort and dedication, understanding that perseverance leads you closer to your goals.

Implementing these strategies will enable students to actively plan, manage, and enhance their professional development, ensuring that they are well-prepared for the challenges of the future.

Conclusion

Planning is the deliberate and systematic preparation of work in advance. It is a social skill, not innate, that is developed and refined through education.

A student must clearly define their educational goals: what should be studied during class, what can be studied independently after class, and which tasks have higher priority. This requires thoughtful decision-making and effective time management. Strategic planning plays a critical role in managing time efficiently. A student who applies action planning demonstrates greater sophistication and reliability in solving tasks. By preparing a structured plan, it becomes possible to determine the most rational methods for achieving targeted goals and successfully reaching desired outcomes.

Maye Musk, the mother of Elon Musk, the second richest person in the world, reflects on her experience of success: *"You have to make a plan to successfully get out of the twists and turns in life. If you do not want to be disappointed, you need to plan. If a plan is not working, the plan needs to be changed. This is a requirement of life."*

In all areas of life, including education, success can be achieved by planning each task carefully. Proper planning of educational activities is the most effective way to achieve learning objectives and foster professional development.

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