

METHODOLOGY OF WRITING AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY ON SOCIAL AND PEDAGOGICAL TOPICS

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ABSTRACT

The article concerns the problems connected with the use of such non-standard creative method of professional training of the future teacher as an argumentative essay, having high potential of independent scientific study of the problem that has clearly expressed personality-oriented priorities. Both the concept and the methodology of preparing and writing an essay on social and pedagogical topics by the student are based on the determined theoretical positions that reflect the essence of the argumentative essay, the logic of its formation, indicating a fundamental difference in relation to functional and content-procedural features of writing a discursive essay.

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In the context of development of social and pedagogical as well as socially reflective competences of the future teacher, the usage of the method of writing an argumentative essay has great importance as it implements the function of the personality-oriented comprehension of a socially and pedagogically significant problem, self-determination in its context and the formation of the capability to provide a logical and reasoned proof of the legitimacy of one's own position, conclusions made, etc.

Studies of various aspects and directions with the use of the essay method in education, psychology, and sociology were the subject of scientific and methodological researches of such scientists as M. Balaklytsky, E. Tsymbalova, I. Holodiuk, Ye. Kirov, T. Milevska, K. Serazhym, K. Shenderovsky, interpreting its essence, system-forming characteristics, conditions for effective implementation, including within the educational process.

According to I. Holodiuk, the essay, being a genre of philosophical, literary-critical, social and publicistic prose, which is oriented on the everyday language and characterized by the deliberately individual and subjective position of the author in interpreting realia, problems, processes, has a wide range of varieties among which the argumentative essay stands out. This type of essay is characterized by the fact that the author gives their position regarding a certain problem, confirms it with clear arguments and illustrates them with examples. At the same time, the author does not try to convince anyone, but rather expresses an opinion [2].

The specific nature of the argumentative essay is determined to a greater extent by emphasizing the need to prove the reflection on the problem to logical conclusions within a complex of verified arguments; it is some kind of orientation on convincing the other person in the correctness of the own position. Being based on logically constructed facts, the argumentative essay intends to persuade the reader to agree with a certain thought, perform a certain action or do the both actions mentioned. The author of the argumentative essay achieves their goal via rational influence based on unbreakable truths, opinions of authorities, primary sources of information, statistical data, etc. [6].

Consequently, the effectiveness of the argumentative essay is determined by the existence of the author's clear position regarding the problem, its logic and argumentativeness, the ability to provide convincing arguments in its favor.

The **purpose of the article** is to elucidate the essence of the argumentative type of essay, its specific features and main quality criteria, as well as to use it as a basis to develop the methods of training the future teacher to write an argumentative essay on social and pedagogical topics.

The theoretical study of the problem determined the basic vectors aimed to provide the personality-centered orientation of the method of writing an argumentative essay used by the student, the accuracy and sequence of logical connections in the process of the analysis, namely:

- orientation to individual needs and specifics of professional self-development according to the definition of the essay problematics within the process of professional and social self-actualization;
- ensuring the integration of professional and pedagogical, social and life issues in the process of prioritizing the problematics for the essay, as well as its preparation and writing;
- orientation on social and pedagogical development, self-development, raising social reflection in the context of the future pedagogical profession.

The mentioned vectors indicate that the search for forms and methods of work on the argumentative essay should be based on its polyfunctionality, provision of the comprehensive approach to the formulation of questions (different in terms of content and form, but related in terms of the ultimate goal) and the search for answers to them. Considering the above-mentioned, the basic requirements for using the argumentative essay method in the process of students' educational activity were determined:

1. The methodology of writing an argumentative essay should be formalized and have a certain framework, since it is necessary to design a strategy for the development of thoughts and other analytic and reflexive actions in accordance with the chosen vectors, as well as to provide for the intersection of different logical chains in the context of multifaceted, often spontaneous thinking processes, keeping the general subject and logic of analysis in order to achieve ultimate well-reasoned conclusions.

2. The method of writing an argumentative essay should provide a wide field for personality-oriented interpretations of the problem in a complex of attitudes, feelings, evaluative judgments, reflections, and create conditions that would encourage the implementation of a creative approach, informal thinking, search for certain contradictions, as well as the design of own algorithms for their solution, when different positions are correlated, as well as the legitimacy of the own point of view is proved.

The specific character of applying such method of work as writing an argumentative essay, implies the already existing, that is, formed by the author, problematics, idea, concept, adequate content, etc., as the main function of such an essay is to perform a profound analysis of the topic, which is already actualized, and draw conclusions with a valid evidence base. Considering the above mentioned as well as the fact that it is the essay that is determined as the method of analytic and synthetic educational activity for the students, one can form basic problematics and a range of questions that involve searching for answers with the help of the tools used when writing a discursive essay. Such combination of discursive and argumentative essays as adjacent methods with different tasks will make it possible to clearly trace the logic of the combined interrelated process; this will provide a dynamic transition from subjective self-determination and accumulation of informative, experiential base regarding the problem to its analytical elaboration at the level of systematization and generalization, keep a sequence of logical connections and provide usability in further orientation and post analysis. Thus, it is recommended to consider the process of writing an argumentative essay as the second (sometimes the final) stage of the process of complex work on a specific social and pedagogical problem that is relevant for the future profession.

In case of choosing a discursive essay as a tool for accumulation of the informative and experiential base required to write an argumentative essay on the problem, it is worth emphasizing the commonalities and differences between those two elements of such a binary system. In particular, the main difference lies in the formulation of tasks, which leads to the specific use of similar tools of working with the text, the forms of their written objectification. If one considers the mentioned types of essays in the form of the system construct with a clear staged transition from the discursive to the argumentative one, then the first stage should be positioned as a stage of personality-oriented understanding, interpretation of key questions posed by the given topic, the identification of key contradictions of actualization, the formation of the personal relation to various aspects of problematics, coverage of the emotional background formed by the author in the process of work.

Analytical mechanisms are used here mostly to allow for the deep penetration into the essence of concepts, comprehensive understanding of problematics within the topic defined. This stage deals with the *process* of searching for answers to the posed questions and is characterized by a freer form and style of reflections and their verbalization.

The second stage of the mentioned system involves the argumentative essay that is more focused on the *generalization and summarization* component of the searching process and is characterized by a higher level of the form clarity and style of written speech, the need to adhere to certain principles of analyticity of thinking, formulation of conclusions on its basis. Therefore, the process of analyzing available information and formulating corresponding conclusions is the main task faced by the author of an argumentative essay. The stage is notable for more specific formulation of intermediate goals and pursuit of the given vectors, which should necessarily complement each other logically and holistically and come to a logical conclusion.

In order to write an argumentative essay on the social and pedagogical topics in an efficient way, it is important to consider the following requirements.

1) Throughout the whole process of work on the essay, it is necessary to constantly remember the goal (as a pedagogical problem in the relevant social context) and compare it with the defined vectors of analytical actions, to check whether causative-consecutive relationships are unfolding in the correct direction. This need is explained by the fact that the main purpose of this type of essay is to form clear conclusions through a deep (vertical perspective) and comprehensive (horizontal perspective) analysis, which means that a qualitatively written argumentative essay should have a vertical structure that determines the analysis depth in accordance with the goal, the methodology of the detailed search for the answer to the entire range of the questions raised.

2) According to the peculiarities of the essay writing method, the work should acquire the most individual, personality-oriented character, considering that both in the formulation of statements and in the search for argumentation, it is required to rely, first of all, on a subjective assessment/attitude/approach to problematics, to appeal to the one's own experience, connected, among others, with its educational activity, its social content. It is necessary to avoid the domination of external influences on the analytical process.

3) Before writing an essay, the author should actualize the basic theoretical and experimental material (if it is prepared in the form of a discursive essay, it will also allow to remember the whole technology of the process of writing this type of work). It is important to pass the stage of emotional and value-based comprehension in the context of burning social and pedagogical problems that occurred in specific life, educational situations and were accompanied by personal feelings.

4) It is important to observe the analytical style of writing, to correlate the most different points of view regarding the problem, to submit controversial arguments, to create logistical conflicts (sometimes even intentionally), etc.

Specific features of preparation. As it is noted above, the preparation for writing an argumentative essay on social and pedagogical problems should be based on the preformed informative base. One of the tools of such formation may be a discursive essay, the preliminary writing of which, despite other positive effects mentioned above, will shorten the time for mastering the methodology for writing this type of work. The author will only need to understand basic requirements for this type of work and realize the differences from work on a discourse essay. If the argumentative essay is considered as a self-sufficient work or the author has chosen other methods to accumulate an informative and experimental database related to the topic, first of all, one should get acquainted with the essayism theory and get clear understanding of the criteria for writing essays, both general and characterological, those ones that relate to the specifics of writing an argumentative essay.

As the specific character of the argumentative essay requires a clear structure (despite the general concept of the essay as a type of scientific and literary work, which testifies to the author's broader opportunities for manifestation of creativity and individual style), it is necessary to compile both the most general work plan and a detailed flowchart before writing. For a general plan, it is sufficient to have a scheme, which is standard in such cases, with certain amendments with consideration of specifics: actualization of the accumulated material – detailed planning – writing – conclusions – correction/re-writing.

Stage of the accumulated material actualization. As it is already noted, first of all, it is necessary to comprehend the pre-accumulated informative base in its entirety, actualize the material,

think over and highlight the most important aspects, and specify the purpose of the work. It is necessary to think over the vectors that will guide the process of the analysis so that it could involve all the highlighted aspects in the widest range and lead to the maximally deep and systemic conclusions. The author's clearly defined position regarding the topic and purpose of the work (its importance for their own social and pedagogical development) will serve as an emotional and semantic starting point during work and determine the personality-oriented problems in the most understandable way, that have developed in the process of generating basic ideas and forming an informative basis for the work. It is important for the topic to be "close" to the student, in other words it should accumulate the experience of problematic situations, emotional experiences, search for semantic reference points around its interpretation and patterns of adequate behavior that occurred in the past and stay relevant up to the present moment.

After receiving the generated topic and goal, one can proceed to detailed planning of the work progress.

Stage of detailed planning. Perhaps this stage is the most important part because clarity, availability of vectors, purposefulness and maximum use of the entire spectrum of analytical tools are the main requirements for successful writing an essay of this type, which means that understandable and specific instructions are required (Table 1). As an option, for the sake of clarity, a manual was developed in the form of a table: when using it, the author can clearly plan, regulate and monitor the work progress. The principle of induction was defined as the main principle of arranging intellectual and educational activities of students and construction of logical connections within its systematization. This principle provides for the formation of a conclusion based on the analysis of individual facts, but, unlike the deductive principle, it does not require the strict usage of only existing and accomplished facts, and it is not final, as the conclusion generated on the basis of inductive actions and mental operations can be refuted or generalized when additional facts and arguments occur, in the case of the subsequent, the highest level of the problem understanding. This principle allows the author to identify an individual approach in the construction of both the general logic of the work and the structuring of individual causative-consecutive relationships. Additionally, the author is less dependent on framework conditions, formal limitations of the creativity range, and priorities of the personal self-realization.

Stage of writing. In the process of writing the work, it is important to follow the stage-by-stage approach and to narrow the focus with each subsequent conclusion (the number of steps and conclusions can be arbitrary), thus, going to the generalization of the higher level through highlighting the most important aspects, gradually developing the main vector that will direct all analytical constructions to the formation of a general conclusion. The instructions (Table 1) show a variant of the simplified model for constructing vectors, however, in practice, the author can randomly choose the number of vectors, their importance and the model of generalization. The following logic of the stage-by-stage approach to work organization may be used: a clear thesis is formulated within the framework of a specific social and pedagogical problem (chosen for writing an argumentative essay) that defines the problem and outlines its contours. A counter-thesis is formulated that denies the previous thesis actually or hypothetically, for example, the author's assumption. An alternative angle of view on the essence of the problem, the problematic in its context, and the mechanisms of its objectification is defined. The problematics is considered at different angles and in different scales. Substantiated evidences "for" and "against" are formulated. The analysis and evaluation of the argumentation are performed. Final generalizing positions of the performed work are determined, the conclusion is formed.

The analytical process, both within the framework of a separate block and in the overall structure of writing essays on social and pedagogical topics, can be cyclical. This means that the author can return to previous designs and modify them, or re-analyze under the conditions of subjective dissatisfaction with the work results, receipt of new informative data, changes in the angle of study of the problem in the context of new topical socially defined situations etc.

Table 1.

The topic of the essay, problematics of analysis, basic theses, concomitant aspects, search vectors.			
Vector 1	Vector 2	Vector 3	Vector 4
-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis	-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis	-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis	-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis
Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion
Generalization, formation of the further vector		Generalization, formation of the further vector	
Vector 1		Vector 2	
-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis	-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis		
Conclusion	Conclusion		
Generalization, specification of the further vector of research work			
Vector			
-Thesis - Counter-thesis - Alternative point of view - Scaling - Argumentation - Analysis			
General conclusion (conclusions)			

Stage of analysis and writing conclusions. A correct, in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the performed work is no less important than the method of writing an essay itself.

Considering the peculiarities of the competence-oriented vocational education system, self-assessment and self-evaluation of all types of professional training of the future teacher, especially when it comes to creative work, are particularly important, as they allow the student to obtain valuable information on the level of formation of the competences required for the future profession, and the effectiveness of educational work aimed at their formation.

Self-analysis of the essay on social and pedagogical problems allows the student to find out: how competent they are within a clearly defined topic, how well they understand its theoretical foundations and how effectively they can actually analyze facts, situations, and processes, appealing to adequate theoretical positions; how the formalized knowledge of the problem and the experimental material, actualized in the context of their own social, educational and pedagogical practice, are integrated; the level of formation of analytical, creative and educational activity, and its effectiveness in comprehending complex social and pedagogical problems, identifying causative-consecutive relationships within them, and searching for their own algorithms to answer pressing questions, developing evidence base, argumentation tools, bringing the validity of their own judgments, inferences, conclusions.

Conclusions. Summing up what has been said, the method of the argumentative essay is interpreted as a modern interactive method of professional education of future teachers, a real means of enhancing their social and educational competence on an analytical and reflective basis. The method has a high potential for optimizing the independent scientific work of students, and also for developing the capacity for creative activity.

The method of preparing and writing an essay on social and pedagogical topics by the student should have a clear conceptual and theoretical basis and provide for the logic of the formation of analytical positions regarding the problem, their generalization and systematization, the formation of intermediate and final conclusions with an adequate argumentation basis.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of using the method of writing an argumentative essay in the context of the development of the teacher's social, pedagogical and socially reflective competencies, as it implements the functions of the personality-oriented comprehension of the social, pedagogical problem, self-determination in its context, and then the optimization of the individual trajectory of professional development.

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