

STUDENTS' AS PROSPECTIVE SPECIALISTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS FOR THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract. The main manifestation of a human's life is work (an activity). Of course, the professional activities in some sphere form the basis for the individual's existence; the profession determines the individual's social and, to a certain extent, also financial position in the society. The professional activities take about two thirds of the individual's life, of which he/she is aware, and thus determines the essence of the individual. The abundance of the individual's internal structure is, in various ways, dependent on the activities, determined by the profession.

The aim of the research: To perform research regarding the 4th year students' psychological readiness for the professional activities. The authors of this article carried out research at the Faculty of Engineering (Latvia University of Agriculture). It was important to study students as prospective specialist's readiness for the professional activities, including their readiness for the integration into the new labor environment and for the competition in the labor market.

Key words: psychological readiness, competence, professional activities.

Introduction

We live in the time of rapid changes. The world's economic, cultural, technological unity and diversity, the transition to the information society are the most characteristic features of the modern world. It is important that the new generation of Latvia would successfully prepare to live in the complex and changeable world of today and tomorrow. We cannot deny that the most significant preconditions for this will be the quality of students' acquired knowledge and their readiness to continue their education for a life-time. American sociologist G. Grinder has said: "There is no sense to wait till the world adapts to you. It will never happen. The only way to achieve progress is to adapt to the world yourselves."

The aim of the research: research and evaluation of the 4th year students' psychological readiness for the professional activities. *Research methods.* Informations and data obtaining methods: 1) theoretical analysis and synthesis – for the development of the methodological basis of research; 2) questionnaire on the psychological readiness for the professional activities. Data processing methods: 1) primary: descriptive statistics; 2) secondary: McNemar test and Cochran test (SPSS program).

Theoretical research results and discussion

Psychologists-humanists emphasized that a human's goal in life is the self-realization.

The beginning of the humanistic psychology we can find in C.G.Jung's views. He also proved that the self-realization can be achieved through the discovery of spiritual identity.

Every human being has the ability for and the tendency towards the individualization (self-development), as a result of which an individual comes closer the individual originality as integrity and its realization. The individuality is an internal, constant and incomparable uniqueness. The individualization is self-formation, becoming this individuality and its further personification, self-realization. The development of an individuality as an integrity is the movement towards the greater freedom. The development of an autonomy feeling C.G.Jung considered to be the main aspect in his therapy C.G.Jung's views on the personality's self-realization were developed by C.Rogers and A.Maslow (cited in Karpova, 1998).

The tendency of self-actualization C.Rogers considers as the fundamental feature of every living thing and a human. Its meaning is to spread, expand, develop, to become autonomous, to express itself, to become mature and competent in order to strengthen the organism and identity. Everyone has the ability to be competent and to form one's life, unless the human being can function freely and is not distorted by past events and present beliefs and prejudice.

The social-psychological readiness is the "collective individuality", which is developed through the integration of individualities and comprises not only the personality's developmental system of social factors. It is the intellectual-moral fund, which merges into the concept "noosphere" at the level

of humanity. This aspect of the unity of a human being and the universe is emphasized by Eastern philosophy and psychology, where behind the mysticism and religion we can find valuable self-realization ideas, such as overcoming individual's limits and stepping out – towards the transcendental cosmic level (overpersonal and oversocial) to unite with the world. According to Eastern philosophy, the self-realization is not self-development, but self-harmonization, self-purification, which is a common point of view of almost all world's religions. (cited in Бахромов, 2001).

Readiness for the activities

The main manifestation of a human's life is work (an activity). Of course, the professional activities in some sphere form the basis for the individual's existence; the profession determines the individual's social and, to a certain extent, also financial position in the society. The professional activities take about two thirds of the individual's life, of which he/she is aware, and thus determines the essence of the individual. The abundance of the individual's internal structure is, in various ways, dependent on the activities, determined by the profession.

According to the philosophical point of view, the professionalism is the qualitative description of an individual's economic activities not only from the point of view of utilitarian values, but, first of all, socio-cultural ones. The professional self-determination and the transformation of the profession in a form of an individual life determine the most important developmental mechanisms of a personality as an active, efficient and responsible subject (Ермакова, 2002).

In the second half of the 20th century in both Western and Eastern psychologies the issue regarding the development of a personality within the process of professional education and socialization becomes topical.

The new dynamic theories appear in psychology: the structural theory (S.Akselrod, Z.Ginzberg, V.Ginsburg, D.Miller, D.Super), the theory of motivation (V.Vrum), the theory of individuality (D.Holland, L.Tailer). In these theories there is the cognition emphasized that a personality is a complex, dynamic system. The importance of professional development is also stressed. The studies at the university level are very significant within this process. Eastern scientists identify the following trends in the student's personality and professional development: 1) the development of professional progress and the necessary abilities; 2) the professionalization and perfection of psychic processes and condition; 3) the raise of the level of independence and responsibility; 4) the raise of the level of needs for the sphere of future profession; 5) the ethical, aesthetical and spiritual/mental development; 6) the character building and the development of features necessary for the professional activities; 7) the raise of the level of initiatives and creativity; 8) the development of psychological readiness for the professional activities (Лешин, 2006).

The student's practical readiness, irrespective of the organizational model, is based on the following principles (Блинов, 2004): 1) the principles of the unity of theory and practice; 2) the principle of the sequential and systems of professional abilities and skills; 3) the principles of the functional link with the future professional activities; 4) the principle of visibility; 5) the principle of gradual increase of independence and responsibility regarding professional activities; 6) the developmental principle of students' practical teaching.

Our theoretical research (Baltušīte, Katane, 2007) shows that the substantiation of the concept *readiness for the activities* in pedagogy and psychology is remarkably based on Russian scientists' conceptions and theories, including the activity psychology representatives and their followers' (for example, R.Cvetkova, A.Leontyev, L.Osinovskaya A.Petrovsky, R.Sanzhayeva etc.) conceptions and theories.

The individual readiness for the activities is very important for a human life. Sometimes the concept "readiness" is used as a synonym of the concept "usefulness". However, the readiness is more an integral formation than "usefulness", because it reflects the integrity of a personality, that comprises not only the abilities and features necessary for the future activities, but also the attitude towards it, which manifests through needs, desires and motives. There are several types of the readiness for the professional activities identified in psychological and pedagogical literature: 1) psychological, which manifests as a personality's developed progress towards the professional activities; 2) theoretical readiness that comprises the amount of the necessary special professional knowledge; 3) the practical readiness that is characterized by the level of the necessary professional skills.

At this age the most important is the process, within which the personality and the active society member are developed. This age stage is particularly important as a period of time, when the moral and esthetic values are developed actively, as well as the character becomes stable. And, it is especially important, – the young adult acquires the full complex adult's social functions, including the civic, social and political ones, as well as the professional skills. The topical tasks are the choice of profession, the search for one's own social environment or its formation, the experience of friendship and love as relationships and feelings according to one's needs, as well as the detailed acquisition of culture.

At the beginning of the age stage, the individuals reevaluate and reformulate the previously gathered experience and conviction, taking as the point of reference the new status and the opportunity to participate in the development of society. The desire to develop in some sphere and the need to live separately prevail. The studies at a higher educational establishment partially satisfy these needs. The individuals make their first serious choice in some sphere; the personality's dependence or independence from the environment becomes stronger (Абрамова, 1997). В.Аnanyev (cited in Лешин, 2004) emphasizes that at the student's age there occurs the transformation of all the individual's system of values orientation and the development of the value of professional activities and the components of meaning.

The research performed at the Harvard University shows that the student's thinking has three stages. At the first study-years there is the authoritarian thinking, when the views, presented by a university lecturer, the student perceives as the only correct variant. At the second stage, the students have the tendency to determine their own views concerning the presented facts and to reject the existing theories. At the third stage the students continue their search for the interpretation; however, they become more tolerant also towards the other theories (Столяренко, 2002).

The students' teaching/learning process is implemented within the definite period of activities. It remarkably depends on the type of functions, the student performs within this process.

The functions can be the following: 1) the passive perception and acquisition of information that is received from others; 2) the independent active search for the information and its use; 3) the organization and use of the information provided by others.

In the first case the student is viewed as an object, the development of which occurs under the lecturer's influence. Memorizing in this case is based on the prepared information. The studies are implemented through imitation, the perception and repetition of words or concepts, reproduction, exercises and examples.

In the second case the student is viewed as a subject, whose approach towards the teaching/learning process is creative and who works in the sphere of his/her personal interests and goals. It is a natural type of self-education, when the student performs the selection of issues and tasks, the search for and the acquisition of information, the creative activities according to his/her interests and needs.

In the third case the university lecturer provides the student with all the needed sources according to the student's interests. The student performs the active selection and uses the necessary information on the basis of his/her interests. The study process is the student's cognitive activity through the purposeful application of leading pedagogical methods: the setting of tasks and the determination of a problem on the basis of co-planning and discussions.

The university lecturer as a subject of educational process must acknowledge the students' rights to be the subjects. It means that the university lecturer must be able to guide the students towards the level of independence by implementing the ideas of Humanistic Pedagogy under the conditions of confidence and collaboration (Тавгидзе, 2005).

The student-oriented teaching/learning process at a higher educational establishment facilitates the young adults to strive for self-education, self-analysis and independence. The student-oriented teaching/learning process ensures competence, the involvement into the cultural environment and the independent orientation, when the individual chooses the sphere of activities.

The student-oriented teaching/learning and educational activities provide the opportunity to prepare students, the young adults for the teaching of adults. The student will already have the

necessary skills, and, in the course of time, he/she will master the desirable profession, obtain the knowledge in some field of science, because the adult education nowadays is one of the most topical theoretical and practical problems.

The psychological and pedagogical support is important, as well as the university teaching staff's assistance. A. Dauge in his works emphasized the significance of the developing and supporting pedagogical environment that facilitates the application of personality's natural power (cited in Anspaks, 2003)

Thus the psychological readiness for the profession and the professional activities should become the result of the student's developmental and professional self-determination at a higher educational establishment. It is the time for synthesis; we need to evaluate the experience gathered by the mankind, to get insight into the knowledge of religion and philosophy and to substantiate scientifically the further development of humanity.

Experimental research methods, materials and results

The authors of this article carried out research at the Faculty of Engineering (Latvia University of Agriculture). It was important to study students as prospective specialists' readiness for the professional activities, including their readiness for the integration into the new labor environment and for the competition in the labor market. Research took place in March, 2007. There were 25 respondents – the 4th year students – involved in the research. They study at the Faculty of Engineering (Latvia University of Agriculture). *Research methods:* 1) the data obtaining method: questionnaire; 2) data supplementary processing (SPSS program).

Table 1. **The students' responses regarding the self-evaluation**

<i>Indicators/indications of self-evaluations</i>		<i>Responses regarding the self-evaluation</i>			
		<i>“Yes”</i>	<i>More “yes” than “no”</i>	<i>More “no” than “yes”</i>	<i>“No”</i>
		<i>Positive response “+”</i>		<i>Negative response “-”</i>	
		<i>The proportion of indications (%) in the sample selection regarding the self-evaluation</i>			
1.	I am ready for professional activities	60	20	16	4
		80		20	
2.	I am ready to show the professional competence	36	44	16	4
		80		20	
3.	I am ready to integrate into the new labor environment	40	56	4	0
		96		4	
4.	I am a marketable specialist	52	32	16	0
		84		16	
5.	I am ready for the competition in the labor market	56	20	20	4
		76		24	
6.	The chosen profession and the qualification correspond to my future intentions, goal of life, plans and interest	32	48	20	0
		80		20	
7.	After the graduation of the university, I will work in the profession I have chosen	40	44	16	0
		84		16	
8.	I have found my future workplace that would correspondent to the specialty I am studying	24	28	28	20
		52		48	
9.	I am ready to continue my education/studies also after the graduation of the university	24	28	28	20
		52		48	

After the primary data processing we obtained the following results (see Table 1): 1) 80% of respondents are ready to start their professional activities, but 20% are not ready to start their professional activities immediately after the graduation of the Latvia University of Agriculture; 2) 80% of respondents are ready to show their professional competence in practice and to take the responsibility for their professional duties to be performed; 3) 96% of students are ready to integrate into the new labor environment; 4) 84% of respondents consider themselves as marketable specialists; 5) 80% of respondents are ready for the competition in the labor market; 6) 84% of respondents consider that the chosen profession and the qualification to be obtained correspond to their future intentions, goals of lives, plans and interest; 7) 84% of students, after the graduation of the university, are going to work in the profession they have chosen; 8) only 52% of respondents have found their future workplaces that would correspond to the specialty they are studying; 9) 52% of respondents are ready to continue their studies also after the graduation of the university.

In the continuation of our research we carried out the secondary data processing. We used McNemar test and Cochran (SPSS program). We raised the following hypotheses.

H_0 : there is a coincidence/a correlation between two sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation. H_1 : there is no coincidence/correlation between two sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation.

Table 2. Results and Conclusions

No	The selections of comparative indications	Results		Conclusions
		A. McNemar Test Exact Sig. (2-tailed) = p-value	B. Results of Cochran Test Asymp. Sig. = p-value	
1.	The readiness for the professional activities & The readiness to show the professional competence	A. $p = 1.000 > \alpha = 0.050$ B. $p = 1.000 > \alpha = 0.050$		Verification of H_0 . Remarkable coincidence/very close-set correlation between the sample selections of indications
2.	The readiness for the professional activities & The readiness for the integration into the labor environment	A. $p = 0.219 > \alpha = 0.050$ B. $p = 0.102 > \alpha = 0.050$		Verification of H_0 . Good coincidence/enough correlation between the sample selections of indications
3.	The readiness for the professional activities & The readiness for the competition in the labor market	A. $p = 1.000 > \alpha = 0.050$ B. $p = 0.564 > \alpha = 0.050$		Verification of H_0 . Very good coincidence/close-set correlation between the sample selections of indications
4.	The readiness for the professional activities & I have already found my future workplace	A. $p = 0.039 < \alpha = 0.050$ B. $p = 0.020 < \alpha = 0.050$		Verification of H_1 . There are differences between the sample selections of indications. There is no correlation

We chose five sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation to compare them, and we developed the table for the secondary data processing. The students' positive responses were encoded as "1", but the negative responses – as "0". Thus we obtained five dichotomous scales. After the secondary data processing we obtained the following results and drew the following conclusions (see Table 2).

We obtained three types of the verification of H_0 and concluded that there is a coincidence/a correlation between the first, the second and the third pair of the sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: between the readiness for the professional activities, – on the

one hand and the readiness for the integration into the labor environment competence; the readiness for the integration into the labor environment; the readiness for the competition in the labor market, – on the other hand. We obtained one type of the verification of H_1 as well, namely, there are differences between the following the sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: the readiness for the professional activities and the students' fruitful search for the future workplace. There is no correlation (See Table 2).

Conclusions

1. The psychological readiness for the professional activities is a personality's developed progress towards the professional activities, which comprises motives and values orientation.
2. Majority of respondents are ready to start their professional activities.
3. More than a half of the students involved in the survey are ready to show their competence in practice by performing their professional activities.
4. Majority of respondents consider themselves as marketable specialists and are ready to compete in the labor market.
5. The chosen profession corresponds to the respondents' future intentions, goals of lives, plans and interest.
6. Majority of respondents have not yet found their future workplaces.
7. There is a remarkable coincidence/a very close-set correlation between the following sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: the readiness for the professional activities and the readiness to show the professional competence.
8. There is a good coincidence/enough correlation between the following sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: the readiness for the professional activities and the readiness for the integration into the labor environment.
9. There is a very good coincidence/a close-set correlation between the following sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: the readiness for the professional activities and the readiness for the competition in the labor market.
10. There are differences between the following sample selections of indications regarding the students' self-evaluation: the readiness for the professional activities and students' fruitful search for their future workplaces. There is no correlation.

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