

Research into the Specific Aspects of Internal Conflict Displays in the Course of Professional Identification

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ABSTRACT

The applicability of the researched issue is preconditioned by the need for detecting key determinants which define the process of the person's professional development, identification with the professional environment, and sources of professional self-efficacy. The purpose of the article is to provide the deliverables of the empiric research for the purpose of detection of an aggregate of professional values, internal conflicts therein and specific aspects of their displays in the course of professional establishment. The leading approach to the research has been an ascertaining experiment by means of standardised tools as well as approbation of the modified diagnostic technique which enables detecting essential aspects of internal conflicts and dynamics of their displays. The dynamic structure of professional values is analysed, and contents of the internal conflict and development thereof in the process of professional identity establishment are studied in the article. The article may be of use when developing processes of training and adaptation of young professions, determining professional reference points of production trainers and tutors in the course of vocational training.

KEYWORDS

Identification, internal conflicts, person's professional development, professional values.

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Introduction

Various approaches are used in contemporary research of professional identity issues. Some research is conducted in the context of traditional understanding of identity issues by considering the professional identification process in the social context whereas other approaches try to find essential differences and develop professional identity from the social and personal one. In the traditional meaning, the outstanding methodology specialists in the psychological, philosophical and sociological sciences substantiate the contents side of the personal identification process and the identity as a result thereof.

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However, at present attention is paid to operational theories in order to increase efficiency of personal socialization support, human resource management in organizations, psychological and pedagogical provision for personal development.

Thus, when developing the cognitive paradigm within the identity issues approach, L. Festinger (1962), E. Fromm (1964), G.W. Allport (1968), F.E. Vasilyuk (1997) consider cognition of values which are presented by the society (in various structures and at various levels) as a process which preconditions personal identification. Cognition of professional values in the works of N.L. Ivanova (2006), D.N. Zavalishina (2001), E.F. Zeer & M.V. Kormiltseva (2012), E.F. Zeer & A.V. Streltsov (2016), Yu.P. Povarenkov (2000), E.M. Dorozhkin et al. (2016), S.I. Ashmarina et al. (2016), N.N. Davydova et al. (2016) shall be considered not only in the cognitive, but also in some social context.

We suggest considering the professional identification process as a multi-aspect and multi-level phenomenon where the cognitive component is only the first stage of personal identification with the professional community (amorphous identity). Then, having passed the emotional and conative identity development stages, the axiological stages follows in case of positive dynamics of professional development. A bearer of the profession gains genuine identity and turns into a professional. The axiological approach to analysis of professional identity development is basic for our research.

Professional identity is an integrative concept which expresses a complicated interconnection of personal characteristics which provide for orientation in the professional world, enable implementing personal potential in the professional activities to a larger extent and forecasting possible consequences of professional choice, and, finally, characteristics which precondition an ability of accepting values of the professional group.

Numerous researches into professional identity issues we have conducted (Rensh, 2011; 2014) allow us to provide in an experimental and empiric manner that:

- professional identity levels qualitatively change subject to the professional length of professional service;
- the highest level of formedness of professional identity is demonstrated by specialists with the large length of professional service;
- value orientation is displayed when a person enters the professional environment;
- there are differences in professional identity contents within various professional groups.

Our research represents results of changes in the process of comparison of professionals, i.e. their professional identity as long as length of their service increases when passing from one professional development stage to another one.

Despite various approaches to understanding the nature of value orientations, all researchers acknowledge that specific aspects of the structure and contents of value orientations of the personality precondition its direction and determine the person's attitude to certain phenomena.

The hypothesis of this research has been an assumption that undergraduate students studying within different vocational programmes have a large number of professional values characterized by an internal conflict due to lack of fulfillment of most professional values and emerging professional expectations crisis.

We have also supposed that during the professional development process the internal conflict structure in the professional values will change, which may demonstrate the establishment of professional identity.

Materials and Methods

Research Methods

The following methods have been used in the course of the research: theoretical methods (analysis of methodological approaches to the researched issue); diagnostic methods (Thurstone & Chave, 1929). Scale of Equal-Appearing Intervals, the technique “Value to Availability Ratio Level” of E.B. Fantalova (2001); empiric methods (ascertaining experiment, expert evaluation); mathematical statistics methods (scaling, comparative analysis, cluster analysis).

Experimental Base of the Research

The university fourth- and sixth-year students of various educational programmes (approximately 140 people) took part in the research. The fourth-year students who had decided to continue their studies in the higher educational establishment or other educational organizations passed re-diagnostics in two years (87 people). The research was conducted on the basis of the Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University, the Ural Academy of Civil Service, the Ural State University of Railway Transport.

Research Stages

The issue has been researched in three stages:

— at the first (preparatory) stage theoretical analysis of methodological approaches in the philosophical, psychological and pedagogical scientific literature, theses on the issue as well as theory and methodology of philosophical and psychological research was conducted; the problem, the goal and methods of the research were determined, and the plan of the experimental research was drawn up;

— at the second (ascertaining) stage the research methodology was developed by means of in-depth revision of L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929); experimental work was performed, and the conclusions made in the course of the experimental work were analyzed, checked and specified;

— at the third (final) stage the experimental work was completed, theoretical and practical conclusions were specified, and the results were generalized and systematized.

Results

Structural Transformation and Expert Examination of the Methodology

The research based on the L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929) Scale was conducted in groups. The data received were processed using the scaling method, and the remaining significant values were transferred into the questionnaire “Value to Availability Ratio Level”. Then the developed technique (designated for studying the extent of intensity of professional values) was checked with the same selection.

In-depth revision of L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929) and expert evaluation of judgments had been performed in advance. The experts were proposed to divide judgments into eleven grades of the future scale in accordance with the attitude to the object expressed in these judgment.

Here are sample proposed judgments:

1. Social benefits opportunities.
2. Work with like-minded colleagues.
3. Work which includes communication with a wide and dynamic circle of people.
4. Variety of labour.
5. Convenient working schedule.
6. Career opportunities.
7. Work under the guidance of a qualified superior.
8. Work within the occupation.
9. Calm work.
10. Work within the speciality.
11. Opportunity to establish business contacts and have additional income.
12. Good salary.
13. Opportunity to do socially significant work.
14. Comfortable working conditions.
15. Workplace close to the accommodation.
16. Ability to leave workplace immediately upon finishing work.
17. Prestige of the occupation.
18. Clearly organized working process.
19. Creative work.

Then the scale value of each judgment was determined with allocation of the expert's grades. For S_i , the frequency of expert grades in each out of eleven intervals was calculated, i.e. the quantity of experts who had referred that judgment to the given grade was calculated. Thus empirical distribution of expert grades to each interval was obtained.

Three quartiles are calculated for each judgment on distribution of the accumulated frequencies: M_i – median value, Q_{1i} , Q_{3i} .

M_i – the value on the number axis with regard to which half of the experts have referred S_i to the grades located to the right of M_i , and the second half – to the grades located on the left.

M_i is calculated on the basis of the formula:

$$M_i = (L_i + (n/2 - P_i)) / Z_i$$

Li – actual lower margin of the interval;
 Pi – frequency accumulated to the interval;
 Zi – interval frequency.

$$Q1i = (Li + (n/4 - Pi)) / Zi$$

$$Q3i = (Li + (3*n/4 - Pi)) / Zi$$

Q1i and Q3i are calculated in order to estimate Qi.

$$Qi = (Q3i - Q1i) / 2$$

Then significant judgments were selected on the basis of the judgment value and differences in expert grades. The resulting scale had one or two judgments on each grade.

Then the methodology of E.B. Fantalova (2001) was applied to the selection.

The methodology was based on the author's assumption that one of the essential determinants of the motivational sphere of the personality shall be a dynamic ratio between two dimensions of the “conscience” which was continuously changing subject to the life circumstances.

The results of the prior diagnostics at the L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929) Scale of Equal-Appearing Intervals were used in the methodology, and obtained professional values were ranged on the special template in pairs.

The research procedure was as follows: the research subject was proposed twelve concepts meaning different professional values. Then the research subject ranged those concepts in pairs on special matrices on the registration form twice: the first one by their Value (the first matrix) and the second one by their Availability (the second matrix). After that it was calculated how many times each value prevailed by its Value (V) and how many times it prevailed by its Availability (A).

Then the degree of difference between V and A was calculated by deducting one value from the other. The value received (V – A) is the indicator of the extent of intensity of this professional value. Then all indicators within each value were summed up, and the mean indicator of the extent of intensity of this professional value for this selection was calculated.

Analysis of Professional Values Structure

The results of the diagnostics of professional values conducted by means of L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929) Scale of Equal-Appearing Intervals are presented in Table 1 and constitute the structure of significant professional values of psychology students.

Table 1. Results of the Diagnostics of Professional Values Conducted by Means of L.L. Thurstone & J. Chave (1929) Scale of Equal-Appearing Intervals

Professional values	M _i - Judgement value	Q _i - Extent of concurrency of expert decisions	Lack of concurrency rank
1. Work within the occupation	0.94	1.35	8
2. Good salary	1.03	0.67	1
3. Career opportunities	1.15	0.86	2
4. Clearly organised working process	1.15	1.3	6

5. Prestige of the occupation	1.91	1.74	13
6. Social benefits	2.11	0.86	2
7. Work with like-minded colleagues	2.15	1.27	5
8. Work under the guidance of a qualified superior	2.18	1.44	9
9. Comfortable working conditions	2.35	1.34	7
10. Convenient working schedule	2.84	0.93	3
11. Work which includes communication with a wide and dynamic circle of people	3.21	1.54	11
12. Opportunity to do socially significant work	3.56	1.87	14
13. Opportunity to establish business contacts and have additional income	4.3	1.23	4
14. Work within the speciality	3.77	2.37	5
15. Creative work	2.97	3.68	16
16. Calm work	4.56	1.47	10
17. Workplace close to the accommodation	2.23	4.23	17
18. Ability to leave workplace immediately upon finishing work	4.85	1.68	12
19. Variety of labour	4.87	1.44	9

The final scale included twelve professional values which had been assigned the largest value in the relevance level and the lowest value in the scale of the extent of concurrency of expert decisions. Those twelve professional values were placed into the methodology “Value to Availability Ratio Level”.

Analysis of Internal Conflicts in Professional Values

Then lack of concurrency between value and availability in the structure of professional values of students and specialists of the same professional groups was diagnosed and compared. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Extent of Lack of Concurrency between Value and Availability in the Structure of Professional Values of Fourth and Sixth-Year Students

Professional values	Extent of lack of concurrency between the value and availability in this value	Lack of concurrency rank
1. Work within the occupation	4.56	6
2. Good salary	6.4	1
3. Career opportunities	5.54	2
4. Clearly organised working process	5.43	3
5. Prestige of the occupation	4.32	7
6. Social benefit opportunities	2.34	10
7. Work with like-minded colleagues	3.86	8
8. Work under the guidance of a qualified superior	4.57	5

9. Comfortable working conditions	3.48	9
10. Convenient working schedule	4.69	4
11. Work which includes communication with a wide and dynamic circle of people	2.27	11
12. Opportunity to do socially significant work	1.23	12

The results received at the first research stage from the fourth- and sixth-year students enable us to state that more than a half of the values, namely seven out of twelve, are characterized by an internal conflict. Therefore, the hypothesis that most professional values are characterized by an internal conflict due to lack of materialization of the majority of professional values and emerging professional expectations crisis has been confirmed. In addition, the analysis of the results received allows stating that the values leading in terms of the extent of the internal conflict are the ones related to formal characteristics of occupational activities in the organization (salary and career opportunities) rather than the ones related to professional expectations. They are followed by the parameters associated with the labour process and working schedule. It allows stating that prior to the crisis of professional expectations there is a crisis of formal expectations which is likely to determine the need for professional adaptation.

Results of the Diagnostics of Internal Conflicts in Professional Values in Two Years

The abovementioned sample selection was re-diagnosed in two years using the same methodology in order to determine the dynamics in changes in the professional values structure. The procedure for processing the results received was equivalent to the previous one. Table 3 presents values of the professional values structure of the selection totality in two years (the selection totality included only those respondents who keep working within their occupation).

Table 3. Extent of Lack of Concurrency between Value and Availability in the Structure of Professional Values in Two Years

Professional values	Extent of lack of concurrency between the value and availability in this value	Lack of concurrency rank
1. Work within the occupation	3.49	8
2. Good salary	4.68	2
3. Career opportunities	4.63	3
4. Clearly organised working process	4.44	4
5. Prestige of the occupation	3.67	7
6. Social benefits opportunities	1.56	10
7. Work with like-minded colleagues	3.75	6
8. Work under the guidance of a qualified superior	4.87	1
9. Comfortable working conditions	4.23	5
10. Convenient working schedule	3.67	7
11. Work which includes communication with a wide and dynamic circle of people	2.12	9

12. Opportunity to do socially significant work	0.58	11
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The data obtained were processed by means of cluster analysis, and the following results were received:

1. The first cluster (by intensity of internal conflicts) is related to formal characteristics of the organization (it includes such values as good salary, clearly organized working process, career opportunities).

2. The second cluster. It includes the values related to professional expectations from performance of the work (work within the occupation, work with like-minded colleagues, convenient working schedule, prestige of the occupation, comfortable working conditions, work under the guidance of a qualified superior).

3. The third cluster (no internal conflicts) is a social one and includes the values related to communication and social significance of labour (social benefits opportunities, work which includes communication with a wide and dynamic circle of people, opportunity to do socially significant work).

The cluster analysis results enable stating that the crisis of professional expectation is differentiated attitude to the professional values structure, and the differentiation results enable qualifying this crisis as non-occupational as the values related to the profession contain no internal conflicts.

Analysis of the re-diagnostics results of the research subjects who have started to work enables stating that the quantity of internal conflicts has decreased from seven to five, which demonstrates primary adaptation, as majority of the research subjects have completed vocational training and work within their occupation, i.e. they have passed a primary stage of entry into the profession.

In order to find out whether significant changes have occurred in the professional values structure and how significant they are, single-factor variance analysis has been conducted. Its results demonstrate that significant changes have occurred in one professional value only, namely the financial one, i.e. good salary (significance level $p=0.011$). The results show that the values are restructured rather than undergoing drastic reevaluation.

The data received demonstrate that passing the crisis of professional expectations reduces intensity of internal conflicts related to professional expectations of performance of the work, but even primary adaptation does not decrease but quite the contrary - increases the intensity of internal conflicts related to formal characteristics of the organization.

Discussions

The general context of the researched issue is discussed in scientific literature and researched quite widely. For instance, E. Fromm (1964) claimed that a human is characterized by the need for searching for answers to the questions about the meaning of life and determining the standards and values one should comply with, and they are the ones which determine direction of the personality at the respective system of values by means of assimilation and socialization processes. L. Festinger (1962) considers a conflict of value paradigms in the context of analysis of essential aspects of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive structures are a common term which is defined in various theoretical and empiric models in different manners. Therefore, studies of the value and meaning sphere of the personality (including impact on the behaviour thereof) are analyzed in the abovementioned concepts within the cognitive and semantic framework.

Then the research into the abovementioned issue developed in the direction of the social activity aspect which considers the process of transformation of the value and meaning sphere into the behaviour and action personality constructions. G.W. Allport (1968) calls transformation of means into goals, and transformation of external values into internal ones “functional autonomy” which he understands as the process of transformation of the “knowledge category” into the “significance category”. “Significance categories” appear in the course of autonomous comprehension of the “knowledge categories” received from the outside (Allport, 1968). F.E. Vasilyuk (1997), a national researcher, claims that values acquire properties of actual motives and sources of meaningfulness of being which result in growth and improvement of the personality in the ontogenesis process provided that he or she reflects on the process of his or her own consistent development.

The research of G.M. Breakwell (1986) who considers the personality identification process as the process of integration of cognitive and social elements where values are one of the determinants of the social identification process is of special interest for this research into the issues of the value determinant of social identification.

It shall be noted that in the research of our foreign colleagues focus is made on social (rather than professional) identity issues and its axiological determinants. Social identity is identified as an integral phenomenon. Professional identity is not identified as an individual phenomenon. This approach might be preconditioned by understanding of personality professional development as immanent aspects of the general socialization process.

Some time ago the national science discussed the issues of professional identity quite broadly trying to find regularities and sources of its establishment and development.

Thus, Yu.P. Povarenkov (2000) has established that a kind of “reciprocal” relations may arise between the professional development and the vital activities of an individual: having failed in the occupational activities, an individual fully plunges into vital activities, family life and leisure arrangement. In this case professional development may be perceived by an individual as a heavy social burden, only as a way to solve financial issues and a source of income. Therefore, the researcher establishes discrepancies in the processes of socialisation and professional development.

The original model of social fulfillment of a professional which harmonically combines social and personal grounds of professional identity has been developed by E.P. Ermolaeva (2005). According to the theoretical concept of E.P. Ermolaeva (2005), a professional fulfills himself or herself in the socially and professionally unstable environment designed by the system “person – profession – society”. By being a focus of this system the professional acts as a subject which simultaneously has social, individual and instrumental and operational essence. Three functions and three models of the profession and,

therefore, three components of the professional identity are distinguished on the basis of the abovementioned system: the individual, social and instrumental ones. The development of professional identity is presented as a stage of development of the subject of professional activities where the person fully identifies himself or herself with the profession and professional community and accepts the values, traditions of the profession and his or her own professional experience. From our point of view, this approach accords with the topic of this research to a sufficient degree, but it does not study the sources and determinants of the professional development process and does not describe the aspect of transfer (interiorization) of professional values.

In the work of D.N. Zavalishina (2001) the development of professional identity is impossible without cognitive activity of the subject aimed at both cognition of the professional world and self-cognition, and supplemented with specific aspects of the reflection of the professional environment by the subject of professional activities.

According to N.L. Ivanova (2006), the core of professional identity is also a cognitive component. It is the person's views on his or her place in the professional community, certain value and motivational orientation as well as subjective attitude towards his or her professional belonging which are the basis of professional identity.

We have listed only a part of the research related to the given issue, but it represents the general tendency of research approaches to the issue of the subjects professional identity. We can surely state that the axiological aspect of the problem of professional identity is represented insufficiently. On the other hand, a number of researches conducted by the author of the article (Rensh, 2011; 2014) allow to state that the value and meaning sphere of the personality is a key determinant which both defines the process of the person's entry into the professional world and regulates all principal trajectories of professional development and deprofessionalization. This research also confirms that changes in the structure of the value and meaning sphere in connection with the person's entry into the profession, professional adaptation are the beginning (or probably the source) of professional identification. The existence of the internal conflict in the value sphere related to professional values is one of the sources of professional activities.

Conclusion

To sum up the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that values transmitted by the professional community get significant for people only if the subject is included into professional activities. If the person does not encounter values, they are expectations in nature and are often characterized by the internal conflict. After the person meets bearers of professional values, i.e. the professional community, they are restructured and turn into activity regulations of the person's activities. Before application of practical professional experience professional values might exist in the form of expectation values and are characterized by the condition of internal conflict.

Due to the foregoing, we suppose that the professional identification process and professional identity itself begin to form as of the time of the person's interaction with the professional environment. That is the very period when reorientation of the value system occurs, and it mostly includes professional

values. It means that the structure of professional self-conscience is built into the personal mind-set by mastering professional values, thus starting to form professional identity.

Recommendations

The research data enable contacting organizational structures which are responsible for young specialists' adaptation process, mentors of young professionals in order to develop target adaptation programmes. The basic module of these programmes and in general of this kind of activities in organizations and at the enterprise shall be the axiological module which forms value attitude to the profession and professional labour.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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