The Factors of Students’ Professional Self-Determination at Higher Education Institutions

ABSTRACT
Professional life of a person under nowadays conditions is highly vigorous and chaotic. To choose a profession is a sophisticated process which is accompanied by doubts and stress. The attitude to the profession, the career understanding and the meaning of work changes under various factors. The influence of social factors, especially the specificity of the sociocultural conditions of life, interlacing in the complex of the psychological characteristics of the student (motives, experience etc.) is manifested in the peculiarities of his activity, behavior and interaction with others. 

Purpose of this article is to analyse the factors of students’ professional self-determination of higher education institutions.

Methods of research:
1. Theoretical methods: analysis and generalization of scientific literature.
2. Empirical methods: for the study was used quantitative research method.

Results. The questionnaire of students showed that social orientation largely determines professional self-determination of a person. Certain factors are important to choose a profession. They are divided into internal (health, vocation, ability, interests) and external (family, friends, career opportunities, the situation at the labor market, the various country and the world’s events). The most important elements for future profession for students were the possibility of employment and the salary. Health conditions are one of the most significant factors for students’ professional self-determination.

Keywords: self-determination, profession, students, life, factors of vocational decision.
Introduction

Recent situation in Ukraine at the professions’ market has a number of peculiarities: the unstable social and economical situation in our country leads to instability in the world of professions. The demand for certain specialties increase while others remain unclaimed. Young people tend to choose a profession, focusing on its prestige, which does not always coincide with their individual and personal characteristics and capabilities. As a result of incorrect professional choice, many young men and women do not find their place in the profession. In connection with this, psychological and pedagogical studies get special actuality. To assist young people in the conscious determination of their professional direction in modern society acquires particular urgency.

The concept of “career” is widespread in the West (for example, in the United States, career guidance is often called as “career psychology”). In Ukraine there is a traditional use of a word “career” – it is a success in any activity, but with some negative shade (sort of “careerism”). In the Western tradition, the concept of “career” is increasingly connected with irony and condemnation. For example, W. Berg in his book Career-Super Game, writes: “A successful career is not a happy chance. Try not to get on the “tooth” to those who managed to make a brilliant career, to the “wolves” of the economy and politics, but learn how to go out and hunt with them. Why not to start persecuting of your colleagues around you? Become a murderer until you become a victim. But you should always remember that this will slightly offend your conscience. However, your enemies, your competitors, your envious – colleagues... they act the same way. Persecution, intrigue, envy do not cause a sensation of shame more” (Berg, 1998, p. 8). D. Super believes that during a lifetime (career) a person is forced to make many choices (career itself is seen like “alternating elections”).

In psychology, it is generally accepted that adolescence is decisive for the professional self-determination of the individual. In the conditions of educational-professional activity at this age, the professional self-determination of students turns into a directed and consistently implemented process of evaluating oneself and one’s abilities in the chosen profession. It involves the inclusion of all that is associated with the future profession in the structure of life plans and the system of values of the individual.
At the same time, the process of professional self-determination not only does not end by the time of graduation and admission to the university, but continues throughout the period of all professional training. Great importance for successful professional self-determination of students are: the content of training, the forms and methods of organizing the educational process and production practices, the extra-curricular activity of students, the educational environment of the institution as a whole.


The choice of profession is a difficult and rather paradoxical task. The paradox lies in the fact that on the one hand, each profession is a complex world, which requires years of studying and training and the adaptation of a young specialist to a professional community. On the other hand, before any profession choosing a person should know in advance what his or her preferences are.

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**Concepts: self-determination, professional and life self-determination, professional choice, vocational guidance**

Before we can say anything meaningful about the factors which influence on the student’s self determination, it is necessary to consider what self-determination means and which types of self-determination exist.

Self-determination of a person is a concept that plays a key role in the formation of his personality. It is an active process of understanding yourself, your place in society and your mission in life, multistage process of human
development. Self-determination of a person is influenced by many factors, the main of which are personal characteristics – the responsibility degree, the psyche stability, the adequacy of reality perception, and others.

Life self-determination of a person is a conscious activity of a person in identifying and introducing into everyday reality his life position. Life self-determination of a person determines the psychology of a person, giving interpretation to such important concepts as justice, freedom, development. From this perspective it is the basis for setting goals and setting life’s guidelines. In a high degree, a self-determined person gets the ability to reveal his abilities, an active participation in the life of society and harmonious life in general. A key role in the process of life self-determination belongs to the consciousness; although to some degree it is influenced by external circumstances. So, the life self-determination of a person is his up close and personal, one might say, an existential choice. It cannot be done without the clear priorities’ setting and a strategy of being worked out on the basis of personal experiences. In the final analysis, self-determination directly follows from the meaning of human life and its value orientations. In addition, life self-determination is inseparably linked with the personal, professional and social self-determination of a person.

In psychological science there is no single definition of the concept of “professional self-determination”. So, professional self-determination – the decision-making process related to the professional development. Professional self-determination is a self-determination of person with regard to worked out in society (and accepted by the person) criteria of professionalism. E.A. Klimov distinguishes two levels of professional self-determination:

- gnostic level (restructuring of consciousness and self-consciousness);
- practical level (real changes in a person’s social status) (Klimov, 1983, pp. 62-63).

E.F. Zeyer highlights the problem of individual self-determination in the context of applied psychology, where professional self-determination is noted as:

- by selectivity, in attitude of individual to the world of professions;
by choice, taking into account individual qualities and characteristics of a person, as well as socio-economic conditions and requirements in the profession;
constant self-determination of subject throughout life;
by determination of external events (change of residence, the termination of training);
by manifestation of social maturity of the individual with a close relationship of self-realization (Zeyer, 2003).

The choice of a profession depends on the well-being of a person. A well-chosen profession enhances a person’s self-esteem, forms a positive vision on himself, increases his life satisfaction, reduces the risk of physical and mental health problems, etc. Professional, pragmatist motives form gradually, beginning with the outstripping ideas about their forthcoming professional activity. That is why the choice of profession is an extremely important step in the life of a person who chooses his way of life. Vocational guidance and professional counseling is the “orientation” of the optant, whereas professional self-determination is more correlated with the “self-orientation” of the student acting as a subject of self-determination (Klimov, 1983, pp. 15-21).

The main (ideal) aim of professional self-determination is to form gradually the client’s inner willingness to plan independently and consciously, to adjust and realize the prospects of his development (professional, life and personal) (Pryazhnikov, 1999, pp. 45-46).

As mentioned above, professional self-determination is not only the choice of a particular profession, but often the choice of a whole life. It is a reminder that abroad, according to D. Super, a close concept “career” assumes a constant change of various life roles and the fulfillment of these roles. (Super, 1957).

The choice of a profession is determined, first of all, by the interests of a person. In addition to interests, the person who chooses the future profession should evaluate and take into account his objective abilities – level of training, health status, material conditions of family, etc. There are various approaches in professional self-determination:
- sociological – when society poses challenges to the individual;
- socio-psychological – step-by-step decision-making by the individual, as well as harmonizing the needs of society and personal preferences;
- differential-psychological – the formation of an individual life system.

Symbolically distinguish the interrelated stages of professional self-determination of students:
- preschool stage, including the formation of initial labor skills;
- primary and high school, that includes the recognition of the work role in the life of the individual through participation in various types of activities: educational, game, work.

Today, a new role is assigned to vocational guidance: the need to create conditions for psychological and pedagogical support of students in their professional self-determination, to help to identify professional interests, inclinations, to determine real opportunities for mastering a particular profession, successful socialization in society and active adaptation at the labor market. Psychological and pedagogical support in students’ self-determination is aimed at realizing of conscious choice of profession.

As university training program should provide students with career guidance information about the directions and specialties of the university, bachelor’s profiles, preparation for the Master’s degree programme, professions and job opportunities, advanced training in the system of additional professional education so, there is a need to use modern innovative technologies, description of professions and factors that determine future profession, to ensure free access of students to information career guidance resources.

**Factors that Influence on Students’ Professional Self-Determination**

With all the variety and productivity of the conducted studies, the problem of providing effective assistance to students in professional self-determination at the stage of entering the professions’ market remains unsolved.
According to Kęstutis Trakšelys (Kęstutis Trakšelys, 2016, p. 432) the modern world gives weight to education, as well. Education has to become the sole and essential instrument to help to rise from any social class to a higher stratum. The surveys of graduates looking for a job are only summary statistics that provide framework image on unemployment of the graduates, but cannot describe the specifics of individual fields of study and in particular the quality of employment of individual groups of university graduates itself (O. Bočáková, D. Kubičková, 2016, p. 57). To increase the effectiveness of the educational process and to study the dynamics of professional view of students, a questionnaire was conducted among students of Open International University of Human Development “Ukraine”, specialty “Philology (Translation)”. The aim of the research method was to identify the general characteristics of the professional view of students. The results of the survey showed that first-year students have a rather vague idea of themselves as future specialists. The first-year students named the most significant qualities of professional translators: talent, communication, good memory. These characteristics can be attributed to specialists of any other profession.

Other aim of questionnaire was to survey the change in the level of professional view after two years of study. In the third year, on the basis of integration of theoretical knowledge and acquired practical skills, students were found to have a more accurate idea of the future profession. A generalized image of oneself as a professional was formed, the level of preparedness for the future work increased, the outlook was expanded, the value orientations under the influence of micro environment of the university were changed. The notion of professional characteristics has become more differentiated. Professional qualities of translator for students started to be: at least rudimentary knowledge of the language, high literacy, attention, knowledge of special vocabulary, good diction, emotional stability, communicative competence, to use information technology in practical work.

Certain factors are important to choose a profession. They are divided into external and internal. To the external factors belong: position of parents, the opinion of friends and people, the demand at the profession’s market of one or other profession, requirements which demand profession to the
state of health, psycho-physiological properties and psychological qualities of a person, social conditions, prestige and image of professions in society, the media, etc. The prestige of the profession is the main factor of choice for youngest people. About demand can be said the same. Those professions that are in demand today in the profession’s market may be unclaimed tomorrow and conversely. Salary in the choice of profession plays a critical role. For some jobs starting salary can be very high, in time it will not increase; for others it grows with the years, and after a while the second will greatly overtake the former. The opinions and desires of relatives, especially parents, are the most ambiguous condition of choice. On the one hand, the older generation has experience that needs to be used, but from the other side is different, they are not always well proficient in the structure and dynamics of the modern profession’s market.

Internal factors are human abilities, talents, desires and believes. There is no need to set the bar above capabilities. It is not necessary to dive with a head in medicine, if chemistry and biology were complex. A teacher without creativity, patience, and love to the children will conceal himself in a mental disorder. Work should bring a favor and it should be interesting for the employee, not only from its material side, but also from the content.

One of the most essential problems of modern higher education is the construction of the studying process as the basis of formation of student motivational sphere. For a long time there existed a belief that higher levels of motivation would lead to better performance. This kind of thinking lead to the attempts to improve the productivity and efficiency of people, whether as employees, students or citizens, using external incentives such as deadlines, performance targets, testing, grades, performance-based remuneration, prizes and fines or other forms of reward and punishment (Zielicz, 2017, p. 186) In general terms, a motivation of educational-professional activity is considered as a set of needs and motives that determine the various forms of activity of all subjects of educational process at higher education institutions. Researchers note the need to identify the conditions associated with the formation of positive attitude of students to the training and future professional activity. The positive attitude of student to the process of studying at higher education institutions
moves with the development of motives which ensure self-development, self-realization, self-education of student personality and the desire to gain professional competence, skills, abilities and qualities.

Motivation of student educational-professional activity is a system of psychological factors, which represents the unity of student motivation to educational-professional activity for solving specific problems and educational tasks of future professional activity in the conditions of continuation of mental activity in non-stimulating circumstances.

It should be noted that the motivation of educational-professional activity is poly-motivated as student’s activity has different sources. It is accepted to allocate three types of sources of activity: internal, external, personal.

The internal sources of educational-professional motivation include cognitive and social needs, needs of the future profession.

External sources of educational-professional motivation are determined by conditions of the student’s life, which include requirements, expectations and opportunities. Requirements are related to the need of observance of social norms of behavior, communication and activities. Expectations characterize the attitude of society to studying as to a standard of behavior, which is accepted by person and allows to overcome the difficulties connected with the implementation of educational-professional activity. Opportunities are objective conditions that are necessary for deployment of educational-professional activity (availability of higher education institutions, manuals, textbooks, library etc.).

Among the mentioned sources of activity, which motivate educational-professional activity, personal resources are taken into account: interests, needs, settings, standards and stereotypes, and others that determine the desire for self-improvement, self-realization in educational-professional activity. The interaction of internal, external and personal sources of motivation affects the nature of educational-professional activity and its results.

Determination of motivation factors of educational-professional activity gives the possibility of further research in this direction and the development of recommendations concerning motivation formation of motivation of student’ educational-professional activity at higher educational institutions.
Conclusions

In the conditions of modernization of education in our country and a dynamically developing of professions’ market, ahead the young man who makes a choice arise a difficult task of determining a professional path – professional self-determination of individual. Professional self-determination of students is a part of life self-determination of the individual, which acquires special relevance in the process of professional training.

Defining characteristics of professional self-determination of students at higher educational institutions are insufficient awareness and increased social dependence of professional choice, weak differentiation of professional attitudes, while reducing the interest in the content of future activity. The key factor in the successful professional self-determination of students is a positive self-conception as the basis for the formation of a positive image of the individual – a system-forming component of the functional structure of self-determination.

Student’s self-perception as a future specialist is a psychological condition for the professionalization of personality, formation of professionally important qualities, and responsible attitude to future work. As the questionnaire showed, during the studying period students are more adequately formed professional image: an image of an interpreter, who has a specific set of professional qualities necessary for successful activity is created. The profession difficulties which are associated with training, acquisition of certain knowledge, skills and habits are understood better.

References


