

ON THE QUESTION OF STUDYING THE PROFESSIONAL SELF-IDENTITY OF YOUNG EMPLOYEES IN THE PROCESS OF SERVING IN THE PENAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: the paper addresses the problem of professional identity development and the need to work on a significant number of mechanisms for the professionalism development, as applied to the professional activities of the penal system staff. The study is relevant due to the ever increasing importance of work and career in life, their internal determinants. Modern socio-economic conditions impose high demands on people's inner activity and self-determination at different stages of their professional careers. So it is impossible to do without special knowledge of professional self-identity. The paper presents the results of an empirical study of the employees' professional identification with their future profession at the stage of training upon higher education programs. It

reveals the personality psychodynamics of the cadets at the Academy of Law and Management of the Federal Penal Service of Russia, depending on the year of training. This work substantiates the role of professional constructs when forming the professional identification of a cadet.

Keywords: professional identity, professional competence, personality development, professional training, professional constructiveness.

1. Introduction

In current situation, there is recognition of the high importance of not just a human resource, but an effectively acting person [27]. So the individual's recognition that he belongs to a particular social and personal position

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within professional and social roles is an epicenter of each person's life cycle or, in other words, the identification process [9].

The formation of professional self-identity, as the leading characteristic of the subject of labor, is a key stage in building the necessary foundation for the personality of the officer, as well as gaining the high level of skill and professionalism as a reliable support [7], [15].

Professional identity is becoming a criterion for the individual's professional development. According to Yu. Povarenkov, it testifies the acceptance of the chosen job as a means of self-realization and self-development, and also the degree of recognition of oneself as a professional. [15].

At present, the works of Russian scientists Ye. Klimov [9], N. Pryazhnikov [17], A. Markova [12], V. Shadrikov [25], and others, cover the problems of professionalism and professional self-determination. They proved that a developed identity in the professional sphere helps the specialist to easily navigate in new working conditions and tasks, overcome

difficulties and successfully fulfill his or her professional functions [6].

Russian psychologists pay more and more attention to professional identity as a phenomenon that emerges and develops when the employee successfully goes through a number of crisis moments related to his work [8], [15], [16].

At the same time, we often observe another concept - the identity crisis. It reflects the state of internal crisis and the lack of psychological readiness to work in changing conditions. In most cases, the inability to develop professional identity is initially caused by impeded adaptation to new specific conditions, as well as by overestimated expectations and the lack of integrity and order in routine work [1]. This usually leads to lacking tolerance to fluctuations caused by the changing demands of the service [4]. An individual becomes maladjusted, begins to work in the asthenic mood. It means rapid fatigue, exhaustion of mental power. On the other hand, the profession requires successful formation of multiple adaptive responses when performing service duties. But it is also not always a

positive factor in constructing a sustainable professional identity.

Identity and development in the course of professionalization intertwine closely and intricately. On the one hand, professional identity forms in the process of professional development. On the other hand, it is one of the important indicators for the professional's personality formation. In practical terms, this means that in order to survive in new professional conditions, the employee must be capable of constant self-development and self-analysis.

If the cadets' training in educational organizations is one of the formation periods for the professional identity of the penal system staff, then it can contain the following stages. The first stage is the introduction to the profession (I-II years). The second stage is the primary identification with the profession (III year). The third stage is the beginning of the professional identity formation (IV-V years) [10]. The idea about the formation of readiness to serve, responsibility and independence (self-education, self-organization and self-regulation) is important at all stages. These concepts include the ability and readiness of students to plan their

academic and free time independently, judiciously and reasonably, as well as the capacity for self-persuasion and self-empowerment (endurance, alertness, the experience of successfully overcoming complex obstacles).

Within the framework of the approach to personal formation study, professional identity acts as a criterion of development and indicates the qualitative and quantitative features of the person's acceptance of a) himself or herself as a professional; b) specific professional activity as a way of self-realization and satisfaction of needs; c) the system of values and norms characteristic for the given professional community.

Thus, there are three main lines of professional identity development: real or predicted professional self-esteem; person's attitude to the content, conditions of professional activity and professionalization in general; person's attitude to the system of values and norms, traditions and rituals specific for each professional community.

The main characteristics are: interest and involvement in activities; professional value and meaning orientations that coincide with the nature

of service in the penal system; the structure of professional and role identities; the temporal consistency of the professional self-image, corresponding to the requirements of the profессиogram for the future employee of the penal system.

The external and internal conditions that determine the central contradiction (“drama” and some “disagreement with this or that condition”) of each period, associated with the need to reconcile professional and professional roles, are significant for the professional identity formation. As a basis for the formation of own identity, an employee is to determine his or her attitude to “insiders” and “outsiders”. In reality, the surrounding world presents itself to every person in the form of conflicting opportunities to establish one's identity (mainly professional), which makes the individual determine himself or herself in relation to them. Therefore, the concepts of E. Erikson and L. Vygotskiy, according to which a person experiences a number of psychosocial crises during life [5], are significant. For example, E. Erikson identifies eight stages of identity development. At each of them, a person

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makes a choice between two alternative phases of solving the age and situational problems of development. The choice of identity will be the result of internal self-determination. The nature of choice affects the entire subsequent life in terms of its success and failure [27].

There is a stage of individual's identity development (25-55/60 years). It occupies the lion's share of human life. It has contradiction between the person's ability to develop, based on experience acquired at previous stages, and the desire for stability and comfort, which sometimes looks like personal “stagnation” and slow regress in the process of everyday life.

The idea of crisis periods in life that interfere with person's self-determination and development, as well as the consequences of these crises, was justified by Erich Fromm. He described a person who became a conforming “machine”. Such person is like everyone else and behaves the way that is generally accepted. Most often, he or she is not autonomous in behavior, is dependent and controlled, and has high level of fear to be different [24]. “The individual ceases to be himself; he adopts entirely the kind of personality

offered to him by cultural patterns; and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be.” [24]

Self-determination can be adequate to the professionally important problem. Then personality develops. If self-determination is inadequate, it generates internal conflict and activates protective mechanisms instead of development. At the same time, desire for self-development, as an end to itself, does not always contribute to successful professional self-determination and professional adaptation.

Necessary qualities are perseverance and the ability to stay physically and mentally stressed for a long time. In other words, it is the ability to focus and concentrate on the desired object or task, patiently overcoming some internal discomfort.

Thus, there is a number of mechanisms for identity development in the penal system employees' profession: awareness of their identity with professional culture, positive psychological significance of the membership in it, peculiar mentality, sense of belonging to the common cause, experiencing their professional integrity

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and certainty. In this regard, there are contradictions between the demands of practice, to develop professional identity to increase the productivity of the penal system employees, and the lack of theoretical knowledge on the presented problems, including the lack of operationalization of new concepts and the need to adjust the existing ones.

2. Materials and Methods

The leading approach to this problem is the cultural and historical concept of L. Vygotsky [5]. It allows to consider student's personality change under the influence of social environment. The personality concepts of A. Leontyev [11], V. Stolin [23], B. Ananyev [2] and A. Derkach [6], as well as Yu. Gippenreiter's [18] provisions that self-identity is inseparable from the man's properties, were also significant for reviewing the content, structure, dynamics and characteristics of professional self-identity.

The methodological tasks of the research were solved via theoretical analysis and generalization of conceptual and empirical works on the problems related to the socio-psychological aspects of future young

penal system employees (cadets).

Based on the study purpose, methods of examining individual's self-identity belong to one of two categories. The first one includes research methods for psychological and typological features of cadets' personality, which determine their professional identification: the Cattell test for the overall structure of personality; the method for strong-willed self-control to assess individual development of volitional regulation; J. Kellerman's and R. Plutchik's "Life Style Index" test for the intensity of psychological defenses, normal behavioral responses and possible deviations, accentuations, and the group role type. The second category includes methods of diagnosing cadets' subjective perception of their social situation and identification with a professional group: a socio-biographical questionnaire and an expert survey; Thomas-Kilmann method for behavior in a conflict situation; the technique of C. Rogers and R. Diamond for the socio-psychological adaptation.

3. Results

Features of emotional maturity are dominant among undergraduate

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cadets, which may suggest an increased responsibility. They became ready to cooperate and adopt group norms stipulated by professional activity. In interpersonal interaction, they began to show more openness, sincerity and ease. They began to perceive and process information better. They started to share responsibility for occurring events with their social neighborhood. Desire to control the situation completely disappeared. Anxiety and aggressiveness when the situation is out of their control decreased.

The junior cadets, familiarizing themselves with the profession, demonstrate the lack of desire for self-affirmation, self-sufficiency and independence. Anxiety becomes stronger and their spirits become lower.

The psycho-correctional work gave positive changes in the volitional, communicative and emotional aspects of personality. Open manifestation of unmotivated aggression by cadets almost disappeared. The self-esteem became more adequate. The emotional maturity increased. They also reassessed their view of life. Models of interaction with their social

environment and strategies of behavior in critical situations changed.

4. Discussion

For this study, there were important provisions: on the emergence, functioning and development of self-awareness in relationships and for personality development (A. Leontyev [11], S. Rubinshtein [20], V. Stolin [23], and others); on development of professional self-awareness on the basis of individual's general self-awareness (B. Ananyev [2]); on generation of certain forms of consciousness by professional activity (Ye. Artemyeva [4], Ye. Klimov [9], V. Petrenko [14], and others); on relationship between self-identity and person's career (L. Mitin [13], N. Stambulova [22], and others); on professional self-identity as a product of professional self-awareness (A. Rikel' [18]).

This research studied volitional, communicative and emotional aspects of cadets' personality. These aspects influence development of professional constructiveness. It is the basis for professional identity of the penal system employee. The analysis indicates the beginning of development

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of professional constructiveness of the penal system employee, necessary for further professional activity.

5. Conclusion

Comparatively easy orientation of a young employee in new service conditions and his or her successful overcoming of difficulties depend on his or her professional self-determination, as well as the settlement of the central contradiction between external and internal conditions (“drama”) of each period of personality development, while coordinating educational, service and professional roles.

Thus, the basis for successful development of young penal system employees' self-identity is the ability to reflect changes in professional environment and to construct their professional identity. This will be the key for successful development of the penal system specialist.

Professional self-determination and development of young employees' self-identity is not simply the choice of profession or alternative scenarios of professional life. It is a peculiar creative process of personality development. Therefore, the task of resolving the

individual's central contradiction between external and internal conditions ("drama") of each period, and reconciliation of service and professional roles, will lead to more and more developed and stable internal autonomy. It means that an individual is able to create independently or choose ways of responding and behaving.

6. Recommendations

The materials of the paper may be useful for monitoring the practical orientation of educational programs in educational institutions.

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