

THE INFLUENCE OF MENTORING ON THE PROFESSIONAL SELF-IDENTITY FORMATION OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

Inna Boychenko

State Institute of Family and Youth Policy, Ukraine
E-mail: innaboych18@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the features of the professional self-identity in future psychologists in terms of educational and professional training. The objectives of the study were: 1) to identify theoretical approaches to the problem of professional identity and self-identity in terms of professional training; 2) to research the features of self-identity in the course of a professional choice by students-psychologists and their educational and professional adaptation. To solve the particular research problem: 1) the features of self-identity in the course of professional choice by students-psychologists and their educational-professional adaptation are defined; 2) questionnaire was developed for identification of the features of students-psychologists' awareness of their professional choice and adaptation to professional training and the need for professionally significant qualities. To identify the features of the professional self-identity of future psychologists in the study of a number of methods were: 1) "Methods of studying professional identity (MVPI) (author LB Schneider); 2) questionnaire "Professional choice and educational-professional adaptation of future psychologists" (author IS Boychenko). 178 students of III-IV courses of the Pedagogical and Psychological Institute of the National Pedagogical University named after MP Drahomanov and 5-th courses of the psychological faculty named after T.G. Shevchenko and the Faculty of English of the National Linguistic University took part in the survey. The analysis of the conducted methods revealed that the predominant types of professional choice awareness by students-psychologists in the course of their educational and professional activity are the moratorium on professional identity, premature professional identity and diffusion of professional identity. The reasons for this state of the students may be unconscious or insufficiently conscious choice of profession by the latter as well as insufficient professional support of these students by psychologists.

The acquisition of professional self-identity by future psychologists takes place: (I) in a group during the educational process (lectures, practical group classes, educational and psychological practice, attempts at one's own psychological practice), (II) individually, and (III) under the guidance of a mentor. In the course of these psychological practices, especially during their own attempts at practice, future psychologists begin to form an idea of their professional functions. This is an important prerequisite for the formation of their professional identity. According to the results of the research of the students-psychologists with achieved positive professional identity, the types of practical activities can include psychological (attempts at personal practice) and educational-psychological practice (according to the curriculum), that is mastering the profession through training in HEI and beyond, satisfaction of professional needs. The perspective of the research is the problem of conformity of the

professional self-identity formation of future psychologists to the social requirements and the availability of conditions to ensure their professional development during educational activities and beyond.
Keywords: future psychologist, professional self-identification, professional self-identity, professional identity

Introduction

Modern changes in society actualize the need for rethinking the individual life directions, professional choices, values, based on the understanding and affirmation of their own identity and opportunities for self-realization. Today, new branches of practical psychology are emerging for our country, which are embodied in the creation of numerous socio-psychological services, psycho-counseling and psychotherapy rooms at various enterprises and organizations. Consequently, the theoretical and practical significance of the problems connected to the professional self-identity formation of the future specialists of human-centric professions, particularly psychologists, increases. Nevertheless, the domestic school of professional training for psychologists mainly remains in the field of theoretical and cognitive competence with limited results in practical attempts. At the same time, the issue of diagnostics at the initial stages of students' professional suitability, consideration of their individual features, inclinations, beliefs and professional motivation in order to specify and facilitate the choice of their further specialization, determination of their specific psychological field remains urgent for professional psychologists, within which the future psychologist will show the greatest efficiency and competitiveness, providing support to others. After all, a modern efficient professional should have the most pronounced professional qualities, have a clear self-identification with his profession and be focused on constant professional development in the social environment. His/her formation involves a focus on professional and personal growth, a high level of work, familiarity with new technologies and information, which provides flexibility in choosing goals and making responsible decisions. Since the elucidation of these features is a necessary and significant prerequisite for the training of professional psychologists, it is important to determine the peculiarities of the professional self-identity of the future psychologist, which is an integrative personality formation as it combines a number of vectors of personal development, namely, defining and accepting one's role in a professional group, outlining the degree of professional ability and competence, ability to build a long-term plan of professional self-realization, etc. Contrary, the study of the professional self-identity formation of future psychologists in the course of their educational and professional training, namely its components, levels of development and factors influencing its formation, has not been carried out before within the personal-professional approach.

Research Methodology

General Characteristics

In 2006-2007 academic years on the professional and preparatory basis of the Psychological and Pedagogical Department of the Pedagogical and Psychological Institute of the National Pedagogical University named after MP Drahomanov and the psychological departments of the Psychological Faculty of the National University named after T.G. Shevchenko and the Faculty of English of the National Linguistic University, psychological research of 178 student psychologists was conducted with the informed consent.

Sample Selection

Using the data of the questionnaire to determine the features of professional choice, students-psychologists were divided into 2 groups: the main group consisted of 178 students (32 future psychologists, who were focused on practical activities and 146 future psychologists - on theoretical activities); the comparative group consisted of 170 future managers.

Instruments and Procedures

To identify the peculiarities of the professional self-identity formation of future psychologists in the study used a number of methods: 1) “Methods of studying self-esteem” (author Budassi); 2) Methodology “Self-assessment of mental state: well-being, general activity, mood (SAN)” (author: Doskin, Lavrentyeva, Sharay, & Miroshnikov); 3) “Scale of reactive and personal anxiety” (developed by Spielberger, adapted by Khanin); 4) questionnaire “Professional choice and educational and professional adaptation of future psychologists” (author Boychenko); 5) “Methods of studying professional identity (MVPI) (author Schneider).

Using the questionnaire and the method of studying the manifestations of professional identity, it was determined that students-psychologists who are focused on practical activities, make practical attempts in their future activities. The availability of professional assistance from a specialist mentor in these attempts was taken into account.

The study used methods to assess the psychological characteristics and mental state of the individual to determine the level of self-esteem, anxiety, well-being and general activity, the mood of psychology students.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the obtained data was carried out by methods of mathematical processing of results - primary statistical analysis, determination of correlations (Pearson correlation coefficient), finding differences between groups on a certain basis (Student's t-test, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test – depending on features of data distribution), factor analysis with further qualitative analysis and generalization of the obtained results. Data processing was performed on SPSS 20.0 for Windows software packages.

Research Results

In accordance with the procedure of empirical research, the distribution of future psychologists by levels of development of the structural components of professional self-identity was determined (Table 1).

Table 1

Distribution of Future Psychologists by Levels of Development Structural Components of Professional Self-Identity

Components of professional self-identity	Levels of development (number of subjects, in %)		
	Low	Average	High
Motivational	21.2	33.6	45.2
Cognitive	24.4	43.4	32.2
Operating	60.6	20.0	19.4

As can be seen from Table 1, the least developed was the operational component of professional self-identity of future psychologists, a high level of which was found only in 19.4% of respondents, others have a low 60.6% and average 20% level of development.

The operational component of professional self-identity contains a number of professional individual psychological features of future psychologists, and directly affects the process of its formation. There are three components in this component: involvement in psychological practice, professional cooperation with a mentor, practical awareness of professional activity.

Table 2

Distribution of Future Psychologists by Levels of Development Components

Components	Levels of development (number of subjects, in %)		
	Low	Average	High
Involvement in psychological practice	33.0	51.4	25.0
Professional cooperation with a mentor	45.7	29.4	15.6
Practical awareness in professional activities	46.7	41.8	11.5

As can be seen from Table 2 only 25.0% of respondents found a high level of involvement in psychological practice, which is a negative indicator for the future professional activity of a significant number of psychologists.

51.4% of respondents have an average level of involvement in practice, and a low 33.0%, which indicates the unstable ability of psychologists to make the right decisions in solving practical problems in the future.

The next component of the operational component of professional self-identity is professional cooperation with the mentor, the empirical referent of which was the level of professional influence of the mentor (teacher) on the future psychologist (student) through such influences as explanations, advice, recommendations. According to the results of the analysis presented in Table 2, only 15.6% of respondents are characterized by a high level of professional cooperation, and 29.4% by an average. Most of the respondents have a low level (45.7%), and, therefore, the relevant data do not allow to determine the main type of professional influence of the teacher on the student, only certain trends.

Investigating the level of professional influence of the mentor on the student-psychologist, it was analyzed both as a general indicator and comprehensively, taking into account the manifestation of the subjects in different areas: personal, professional.

Table 3 shows the distribution of types of professional influence of the mentor on the student according to their level of influence on the effectiveness of the formation of professional self-identity of students-psychologists.

Table 3

Distribution of Students-Psychologists According to the Level of Influence of the Mentor on the Formation of Their Professional Self-Identity

Types of professional influence	The level of influence on the formation of professional self-identity	Number of students with the appropriate level of professional self-identity, in%
Explanations	Low	5.6
	High	25.0
Advices	Low	12.6
	High	22.4
Recommendations for various forms of skill improvement	Low	11.2
	High	20.0

The third component of the operational component of the professional self-identity of a psychologist is practical awareness of professional activity. Practical awareness of professional activity is a complex component that includes auxiliary characteristics, such as professional behavior manners

(communication style, slang, typical ways of communication, expected preferences, etc.); possession of professional tools (professional theories, methods, techniques). The formation of psychologists' manner of professional behavior and the acquisition of skills to use professional tools forms the ability to effective practical activities. That is why this component of professional self-identity is very important for future psychologists.

But during the analysis, practical awareness in professional activities is characterized by the lowest level of development (Table 2), a high level of which was found only in 11.5% of respondents, and medium and low 41.8% and 46.7%, respectively.

Thus, many future psychologists find it difficult to make informed decisions when solving professional problems, analyze past experience to correct behavior in the future, and are insufficiently aware of responsibility for their consequences.

In accordance with the objectives of the study, the results were compared with the levels of development of professional self-identity of future managers. Thus, the results of analysis of variance revealed some differences in the formation of professional self-identity of future psychologists and managers, namely: there are statistically significant differences in the levels of professional tools (professional theories, methods, techniques). The level of mastery of professional tools is higher for psychologists than for future managers: if the average score of mastery of professional tools for managers is 3.0, then psychologists have 3.5 points ($p \leq 0.05$). This suggests that psychologists are better than managers making professional decisions in terms of solving a problem situation, able to act in the interests of the client.

Instead, the level of mastery of professional behavior manners of (communication style, slang, typical ways of communication, expected preferences, etc.) in psychologists is lower than in managers (at the level of trends, $p = .079$). This indicates the specifics of the profession of psychologist, where the latter must act only within the client's request, taking into account its values, characteristics.

Thus, based on the analysis of the operational component of professional self-identity, it is clear that readiness for practical activities, which is an important condition for successful psychological activity and an important basis for personal development, is poorly developed in future psychologists: the vast majority have low levels of this trait.

It was also found that future psychologist professional cooperation with the mentor as a professional influence of the mentor on his student (future psychologist) to facilitate his practical activities is poorly developed and requires more focused attention of the educational process.

Discussion

The national system of higher education standards, the main purpose of which is to realize the possibilities of forming socially and professionally important knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies (ways of thinking, professional, worldview qualities and moral values) in a higher education institution, should address the modern requirements of the national labor market and European community (Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education", 2017). The Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" № 2145-VIII of 05.09.2017 states that the main objectives of scientific, scientific and technical, and innovative activities of higher education institutions are: obtaining competitive scientific and scientific-applied results; application of new scientific, scientific and technical knowledge during the training of highly-educated specialists; formation of modern scientific personnel, who is able to ensure the development and implementation of innovative scientific developments. Taken together, it should be noted that the effective result of professional training of future professionals is the formed professional identity, self-identity of the individual, in particular future psychologists. In combination with professional self-identity, personal identity is also acquired and influences the development of the professionalism of the future specialist. Personal identity is a set of characteristics that makes a person individual, unique, not like other people.

Since professional identity is an important condition for the integration of a psychologist into the profession, and self-identification is an important factor in this process, the latter is determined through the identification and passage of the initial stages competence with the mentor. Lack of professional identity leads to professional maladaptation.

Numerous theoretical and applied research studies by foreign researchers (Erickson, 1968 etc.)

are devoted to the study of professional identity. The analysis of the concept “professional identity”, presented in the works of many authors (Barbour & Lammers, 2015; Neary, 2014; Pratt et al., 2006), indicates the lack of a common definition of this phenomenon. In general, professional identity can be defined as a complex structured personal construct, which includes: a system of ideas about themselves and their position in the profession; acceptance of its goals, functions, roles and methods of implementation; attitude to it as a personally significant value that gives self-esteem; readiness to master professional activity and its improvement; identification with a group of professionals on the basis of self-knowledge, acquaintance with the world of professions, comprehension of professional skills and comparison of their personal characteristics (life goals, self-realization plans, abilities, etc.) with the requirements for the professional activity; a set of external and internal conditions and factors that influence the choice of profession.

For example, such an external factor as a person’s immediate environment and the circumstances of his/her life play an important role in choosing a profession. Internal factors include optimism for the future, anxiety, self-esteem, and so on.

In a number of foreign studies, professional identity is an internal scheme that reflects a person’s ideas about what he/she should be, what he/she should be able to do and how to behave in the professional community to be effectively realized in the profession (Tavrovetska, 2011).

The professional self-identity of the individual in psychology is determined by the formed educational and professional interests, goals, expectations, actions, achievements, results, qualities that make up the potential of the professional, the values of future professional activity, etc. (Varban, 1998).

The use of mentoring as a tool of professional assistance in the formation of the individual professional self-identity, reduces the period of adaptation to specific conditions of professional activity, independent and quality performance of duties, perception of professional goals and objectives and requirements for executive behavior. The purpose of mentoring should have specific, achievable and measurable goals and objectives (Alyushina, 2014).

In the context of the American labor rights movement of the second half of the twentieth century, the word “mentor” and the concept of career guidance came into use with other terms related to social capital – such as glass ceiling and bamboo ceiling, networking, role model and gatekeeper – and serve to identify and overcome the problems of minorities in achieving social success.

In the system of vocational education and industrial training, mentoring spread in the USSR, and from the 1950s it became a mass movement. Mentoring as one of the forms of methodical work in high school is defined as the help of an experienced teacher to a young specialist or trainee “adapt to new working conditions, consolidate a number of necessary in these conditions primary skills” (Gavrilov, 2009).

One of the most important areas of life for the formation of self-identity is the choice of profession and career path (Waterman, 1982).

Establishing one’s identity in professional activity is one of the important neoplasms during adolescence and early adulthood. The purpose of identity formation at this age is to realize a certain productivity of life (Erikson, 1968).

Factors and conditions of development and functioning of personal and professional identity have been examined on the basis of numerous surveys of students and adult professionals (Barbour & Lammers, 2015; Vough, 2012; Shim & Hwang, 2009; Furness, 2007; Pratt et al., 2006; Cohen-Scale, 2003; Eisen, 2002). The approaches to their formation are analyzed (Blomgren & Waks, 2015; International Handbook of Research..., 2014; Handbook of Research..., 2016; Wiles, 2013; Weick et al., 2005), the features of professional identity in representatives of certain professions are studied (Clarke et al., 2017; Levy et al., 2014; Larrivee, 2003; Payne, 2006). That is, most empirical factors are based on the study materials of students and professionals.

The presented study examines the problem of professional self-identity formation of future psychologists, factors influencing its formation and conditions of its development.

The most important stage of mastering the profession occurs during training in HEI, as well as the beginning of professional development, which is expressed in the acquisition of professional identity and self-identity.

Thus, in the process of professional training, professional identity is the subject of formation

and, consequently, part of the concept of personal training process in educational institutions. During this period, not only knowledge is acquired, skills and abilities are formed, but also professional genesis is carried out, which involves the formation of professional identity and self-identity. Namely, through the acceptance of goals, functions, roles and methods of professional realization, a system of ideas about one's future profession, about oneself, one's place in the profession, personally significant value of one's profession, readiness to master the profession and improve it, professional self-knowledge is formed. Such an important and necessary type of professional support as mentoring of a professional teacher contributes to the effective formation of professional identity.

Therefore, the formation of professional self-identity future psychologist is an important task of HEI, as society's need for the services of competent, highly qualified representatives of this branch is growing every year. Subsequently, the possibility of realization in the profession for future specialists is increasing. In fact, professional self-realization is achieved under the condition of developed professional components of the specialist's identity.

Thus, the formed professional self-identity of the future psychologist is the key to his/her effective self-realization in the future.

Professional identity is defined as one of the main criteria for the formation of a specialist's personality, which is closely interrelated with such categories as professional development, professional self-awareness and professional self-determination (Osiodlo, 2012).

Professional identity is also one of the leading criteria for becoming a professional (Lozhkin & Volyanyuk, 2008). In a narrow sense, professional identity is considered by the authors as self-awareness, a system of human ideas about themselves as a subject of life. In a broad sense, it refers to concepts that reveal a person's conceptual ideas about his/her place in a professional group or community. Realizing the need to form a professional identity, the specialist decides himself/herself to what extent it is necessary to take a certain form of activity, a certain way of professional interaction and himself/herself as a professional. Only professionals with transformative psychological potential can be considered identical.

Therefore, professional self-identity is an active personal manifestation of a conscious attitude to the chosen profession, as the assessment of professional self-identity is based on subjective indicators, including professional self-esteem, professional self-determination, job satisfaction, profession, career, self, etc. (Povarenkov, 1991).

In the process of professional training of psychologists in HEI it is important to pay attention to personal, emotional development, positive attitude, as the processes of cognitive and individual development as a unity create the basis for the formation of professional identity, which is a part of self-awareness and self-determination (Druzhinina, 2009). The professional identity of a practical psychologist is characterized by the individual's acceptance of the leading professional roles, values and norms, contributes to the construction of his/her professional future and appears as a multi-component and multilevel formation. Its structure unites three components:

a) cognitive component, that combines the ideas of the individual about the characteristics of a particular professional group and self-awareness of its member on the basis of differentiated professional characteristics. The elements of this component are: the perception of the individual about himself/herself, forming the image of "I", professional knowledge and beliefs that form the image of the profession;

b) emotional and evaluative component, in the structure of which we can distinguish self-assessment of their professional qualities, attitude to professional knowledge, self-esteem of the individual as a professional;

c) behavioral component of professional identity, that is a real mechanism of active oneself expression as a member of a professional group, assimilation of relevant professional ideas, norms, values, professional behavior patterns, building a system of goals and prospects, attitude to professional development in the common sense context.

The professional identity of the future psychologist is defined as a result of experiencing self-identification based on the emotional and cognitive connections (consistency of the "I-image" components) (Voloshina, 2016).

Mentoring is a psychological and pedagogical tool for the effective formation of the professional identity of future psychologists.

Pedagogical support for the professional activities of young teachers in the United States is provided through the implementation of individual support programs for young teachers during their “entry into the profession” (induction), mentoring programs (mentoring), orientation programs, mutual learning of colleagues (peer coaching), personnel performance management systems (performance management systems), supervision (Zembitskaya, 2014).

Depending on how regulated and controlled the interaction of the mentor with the ward is, there are two types of mentoring: formal and informal. In the United States, formal mentoring is part of support programs for young teachers, which are approved by the school administration or school district and usually require mentors to report results to the school administration.

The peculiarity of informal mentoring is its latency. That is, for a young teacher, communication with the mentor can be realized imperceptibly, in the process of informal communication in the form of advice, instructions, explanations, guidelines, psychological assistance, training materials, etc. Informal mentoring takes place in any form and is not regulated by the school administration. The absence of administrative pressure contributes to the establishment of a trusting relationship “mentor-ward”, which makes it possible to implement the psychosocial function of mentoring.

Conclusions

The research of domestic and foreign scholars showed that professional self-identity, as a part of personal identity, appears as a systemic, dynamic, level phenomenon that characterizes the adoption of professional values. To sum up, the assessment of professional identity is based on subjective indicators, including professional self-esteem, value and satisfaction with work, profession, career, self, etc. In addition, professional self-identity is an active personal manifestation of a conscious attitude to the chosen profession. Mentoring has a positive effect on the level of development of these personal indicators.

References

- Aliushina, N. A. (2014). Institute of Competence Mentoring – one of the priorities of state personnel policy. <http://visnyk.academy.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/2014-4-10.pdf>
- Barbour, J., & Lammers, J. (2015). Measuring professional identity: A review of the literature and a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis of professional identity constructs. *Journal of Professions and Organization*, 2(1), 38–60. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/jou009>
- Cohen-Scale, V. (2003). The influence of family, social, and work socialization on the construction of the professional identity of young adults. *Journal of Career Development*, 29(4), 237–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089484530302900402>
- Druzhynina, I. A. (2009). Psychological factors of professional identity development in future practical psychologists. Extended abstract of Candidate’s thesis. Kyiv.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Norton.
- Havryliv, N. (2009). Mentoring as an instrument of modern education. In *Humanities and social sciences: Materials of the I International conference of young scientists HSS-2009 (May 14-16, 2009, Lviv, Ukraine)*. Lviv Polytechnic National University Publishing House.
- Larrivee, B. (2003). Transforming teaching practice: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*, 1(3), 293–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713693162>
- Law of Ukraine dated 05.09.2017 No. 2145-VIII (2017). About education [Kindle Version]. <http://zakon0.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2145-19>
- Lozhkin, H. (2008). Professional identity in the context of the marginal subject behavior. *Social Psychology*, 3(29), 123–130.
- Neary, S. (2014). Professional identity: What I call myself defines who I am. *Career Matters*, 2(3), 14–15. <https://derby.openrepository.com/handle/10545/324124>
- Osodlo, V. I. (2012). Psychology of professional formation an officer. PE “Golden Gate”.

- Povarenkov, Iu.V. (1991). Psychology of professional personality formation: The basis of the psychological professionalization concept. KSPI Publishing House.
- Pratt, M., Rockmann, K., & Kaufmann, J. (2006). Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of identity among medical residents. *Academy Of Management Journal*, 49(2), 235–262. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159762>
- Shim, W., & Hwang, M. (2009). Professional identity, job satisfaction, and retention of licensed social workers in Korea. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work*, 19(1), 82–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21650993.2009.9756055>
- Tavrovetska, N. (2011). Different approaches to the study of the components self-image. *Practical Psychology and Social Work*, 10, 74–79.
- Varban, M. (1998). Reflection of professional development in adolescence. *Practical Psychology and Social Work*, 6–7, 80–83.
- Voloshyna, V. V. (2016). Psychological technologies of training a future psychologist. Extended abstract of Candidate's thesis. Kyiv.
- Vough, H. (2012). Not all identifications are created equal: Exploring employee accounts for workgroup, organizational, and professional identification. *Organization Science*, 23(3), 597-906. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1110.0654>
- Waterman, A. S. (1982). Identity development from adolescence to adulthood: An extension of theory and a review of research. *Developmental Psychology*, 18(3), 341–358. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.18.3.341>
- Zembytska, M. (2014). Modern forms and types of mentoring of young teachers in the United States. *Pedagogical Education: Theory and Practice*, 17, 43–48.

Received: *September 12, 2020*

Accepted: *December 05, 2020*

Cite as: Boychenko, I. (2020). The influence of mentoring on the professional self-identity formation of a psychologist. *Problems of Psychology in the 21st Century*, 14(2), 93-101. <https://doi.org/10.33225/ppc/20.14.93>