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Professional and Personal Undergraduates’ Development in the Educational Process from the Perspective of Competency-Based Approach

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Abstract

The article describes higher education objectives, namely students’ professional and personal development. The role of moral development in personal development is revealed. The authors analyze the content of educational standards requirements to formation of undergraduates’ general cultural competences as a mechanism of students’ personal development while studying in higher education institutions. The article describes the results of empiric study on professional and personal undergraduates’ development upon realization of educational process from the perspective of competency-based approach. The author defines the character of the link between students’ performance as a reflection of their professional development and the level of their moral development as a reflection of their personal development.

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1. Introduction

The current Russian higher education system is characterized by its dynamic changes, aimed at continual improvement of the quality to train competitive specialists, who are able to meet external challenges and trends that will allow increasing significantly the competitiveness of the economy and the state. Significant changes in the Russian higher education system occurred thanks to the competency-based approach implementation in the training

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process. Federal state educational standards of higher professional education (FSES HPE) impose requirements to the learning outcomes of educational programs, which are represented by the competences: general cultural and professional.

M.A. Andreeva (2012) has grounds to state that “division into general cultural competences and professional ones complies with two higher education components – academic and professional. The purpose of academic education is personal development of a student”. The purpose of professional education is to train a specialist, who will be able to cope with job tasks, to carry out professional activity. The adopted Concept of the Federal Target Program of Education Development for 2016-2020 points out the relevance and reasonability of a new image of the education system positioning it as a system that creates conditions, opportunities and options for personal and professional development with the guarantee of their quality. A university’s graduate should not be only a professional, he or she should be able to work in team, to take decisions and be responsible for them and also to demonstrate other personal qualities, necessary for fruitful professional activity in long-term perspective. Thus, the student should develop as a personality.

A. Derkach (2004) defines the concepts of personal and professional development as follows: personal development in a narrow sense is a currently achieved level of intensity of relevant personal qualities as an integral comprehensive formation. Moreover, personal qualities that are different in their generality and the level prove relevant for different practical tasks. In a wide sense, personal development is dynamics of relevant personal qualities change in different time perspective. Methodically, in order to research personal development in a wide sense the procedure on personal development is commonly used.

Professional development – in a narrow sense – is a currently achieved level of intensity of personal qualities, closely related to a person’s professional success; in a wide sense – it is a change in personal qualities, linked with professional success, within a certain period (for example, between two attestations).

A.A. Bodalev (1998), an acmeological scientist, states that another most important condition for achievement of high professionalism level is a profound development of general skills and transformation of universal human values into personal values that means personal morality. Many scientists: E. Fromm, V. Frankl, S.L. Rubinstein, K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, B.S. Bratus’, M.I. Volovikova, - pointed out the significance of moral development for personality formation. Personality’s moral development presupposes prevailing of:

- principle of moral reciprocity that means the development of specific skills – to apply the same assessment criteria to yourself as to other people;
- the use of general principles as the basis for moral behavior and for assessment of both yourself and other people;
- ability to consider the needs and interests of other people as your own (Gamezo, Petrova, Orlova, 2003).

Moral development assumes the development of ability to distinguish good and bad. Recent years the scientists have shown increased interest to the issue of moral personal development with the choice between good and bad as a core concept. The understanding that psychology should look for the methods to fight for a person in the person him- or herself. Psychology “itself steps in the field of this opposition as its instrument, tool, and here the reversal occurs: psychology that consider moral development as a special case, where it is applicable, transforms into moral psychology, acting and viewing the world from the inside of the moral space, moral understanding of a person” (Bratus’, 1997).

Society expects a high university degree specialist to behave morally on the basis of moral values, to display a high level of cultural background, citizens’ qualities and active citizenship (Ovsyannikova, 2012).

Up to date many works of Russian scientists, devoted to the analysis of undergraduates’ professional development, have been published. These works cover positive experience, difficulties and discrepancies of this process. But upon the whole, it can be concluded that the competency-based approach gives good outcomes in development of professional skills, gaining experience, better acquisition of knowledge that is checked and confirmed through its practical application. The article is mainly focused on undergraduates’ personal development and its link with professional development.

The analysis of competences, included into FSES HPE, demonstrated that there is a list of professional and general cultural competences, divided into:

- instrumental ones, including cognitive, methodologic abilities, technological and linguistic skills;
- interpersonal competences, linked with the ability to express feelings and the capacity for criticism and self-criticism;
• social skills such as teamwork skills, etc.;
• systematic competences such as skills and abilities, related to the whole integral systems (development of skills to organize and to improve activities, to keep a healthy lifestyle) (Rybakova, Zernova, Matraeva, 2014), (Ignat’eva, 2011).

As we can see from the list, there are no competences that reflect moral development of a future specialist’s personality. Competences, aimed at students’ developing moral qualities, patriotism, civic consciousness, humanistic values are included in bachelor’s standards only for the programs, which prepare for professional activity in “man-man” system. These competences are not included in the standards of technical and master’s programs. Comprehensive analysis of the mentioned general cultural competences indicates that some of them need specification (for example, “readiness to undertake moral obligations”), others by “acquisition of moral values” mean “ethic values acquisition” (“respect for human dignity, openness, fairness, decency, benevolence, tolerance”) as a part of professional culture. Therefore, we can see, that these competences do not set the most difficult objective of moral personality’s development or set them not clear enough.

By 2014 FSES HPE standards had been revised in accordance with this law and replaced by Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education (FSES HE). General cultural competences (GCC) have become universal, equal for all the educational programs within the stages of professional education (9 competences for bachelor’s programs, 3 – for master’s programs).

As for general cultural competences in new standards for master’s programs, they are similar to general cultural competences in the previous standards for bachelor’s programs (FSES HPE):
• the capacity for abstract thinking, analysis, synthesis (GCC-1);
• the readiness to act in extraordinary situations, to bear social and ethic responsibility for decisions made (GCC-2);
• the readiness to self-development, self-realization, to use creative potential (GCC-3).

General cultural competences for bachelor’s programs have more generic and subject-oriented character. They state a final goal of learning a subject, and each of these competences is developed while learning one of the subjects: Philosophy, History, Economics, Law, Physical Training, Health and Safety. Therefore, competences are defined with less details, their content became more capacious and presupposes that in order to develop a main competence it is necessary to learn many subcompetences. Implementation of a new list of competences does not expel or annul the previous one, but conversely gives the opportunity to learn necessary competences. We think that it will provide more comprehensive learning of subjects, relieve fragmentarity problem, when the role of others, not less important for training of a personally developed specialist, is faded or diminished, while fixing the results of one subject learning.

Besides, the new standards include the requirements to development of interpersonal and social general cultural competences, capacity for self-organization and self-development. Thus, we can see that the standards of a new generation also do not actualize the necessity of students’ moral development.

Each of the subjects, forming general cultural competences, can contribute to the solving of the most difficult problem – moral development of a person and transition of universal human values into personal values. However the scope of attention to be paid to this problem while educational process depends on a professor, his/her value system and his/her level of personal qualities development (Agafonova, 2014). The fact is that personal moral development means first of all gradual learning and acquisition of models, represented by moral rules, ideas, principles, and their implementation in appropriate behavior. Performance of actions in accordance with personal moral principles is a criterion of moral models’ acquisition (Bryukhova, 2014).

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

The research goal: the study of personal undergraduates’ development in the context of their personal development and in connection with professional formation upon realization of educational process from the perspective of competency-based approach.

The research objectives:
• to define the character of the link between students’ performance as a reflection of their professional development and the level of their moral development as a significant characteristic of their personal development;
• to consider the performance of the students with different levels of moral development;
• to analyze the level of personal development of the students with different types of performance (excellent, good, satisfactory, mean).

The research was carried out with a help of a complex research method that included the following techniques: observation, conversation, analysis and document materials collation (gradebook, the results of students’ practical tasks performance), application of a projective technique “Friend-adviser-2” of E.K. Veselova and S.A. Chernyaeva (2003), the use of Pearson's linear correlation coefficient.

The observation and the conversation with the students, held in small groups and individually, allowed to make a qualitative analysis of the research results, to understand the existing interconnections between the phenomena under study and to make conclusions on cause and effect relationship between them.

Analysis and document materials collation. Thanks to this method, the following was carried out:
• the students’ professional development evaluation through the analysis and assessment of the quality of the results of the students’ performance of the practical tasks, aimed at professional competences development, and also through the gradebook records analysis;
• the students’ personal development evaluation through the analysis and assessment of the results of the students’ performance of the practical tasks, aimed at general cultural competences development and also the analysis of the peculiarities of the students’ personalities functioning while studying (self-organization, self-discipline, the lessons attendance, timeliness of the tasks performance) with the help of the gradebook records analysis.

The technique “Friend-adviser-2” of E.K. Veselova and S.A. Chernyaeva. This technique of immersion in the situation of moral choice is aimed at the personal moral development study. The point of the technique is that respondents are offered to solve some situations, each of them shall be considered as the situation of a moral choice. It is as if the respondent immerse into a certain situation that is a rather real-life one. Each situation is based on the moral choice – between the opportunities to break or to follow a common moral rule. The respondent is asked to give advice to a friend through an expanded answer in the form of the text of any length and of free content on each of the offered situations. The analogues of real-life situations with a moral choice, related to common moral rules, were chosen to be included in the questionnaire. The respondents’ answers shall be assessed as follows: a positive moral choice – 2 credit points, a negative moral choice – 0 credit points, interim options – 1 credit point. The technique includes 31 situations and is designated for the respondents aged from 18 to 45.

Therefore, professional development study was based on the students’ performance results, which reflect their professional competences development. The students’ personal development was evaluated on the basis of their general cultural competences development, the peculiarities of the educational process requirements fulfilment, moral development level.

The research was made in 2014 while giving lessons on Personality psychology for students of Personnel management program. The work program of Personality psychology presupposes development of the following general cultural competences, besides professional ones:
• the drive to personal and professional self-development, the ability to set priorities and personal goals, capacity to learn by own and other people’s experience;
• the capacity for critical assessment of personal merits and demerits, for handling criticism constructively.

32 people participated in the research, 7 of them – boys, 25 girls.

3. Discussion of the research outcomes

The quantitative and qualitative analyses were made on the basis of the research results. First of all, the test for correlational connection between a rating (performance) and an average grade under the technique “Friend-adviser” (morality level) with the application of Pearson's linear correlation coefficient was made. The test showed the absence of a considerable correlation between the two parameters under study.

Then we divided the students into 4 groups in accordance with their performance under European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS):
A group – students with excellent performance, who had 90-100 credit points – 8 people;
B.C group – students with good performance, who had 75-89 credit points – 5 people;
D group – students with satisfactory performance, who had 65-74 credit points – 5 people;
E group – students with mean performance, who had 60-64 credit points – 14 people.

The results of the technique “Friend-adviser” were analyzed in accordance with the average grade. We should remind that the positive moral choice gives 2 credit points, the negative moral choice – 0 credit points, interim options – 1 credit point. In the students’ sampling under consideration the students’ average grade under the technique “Friend-adviser-2” was from 0.9 to 2 credit points, so the results distributed mainly at the pole between the neutral moral choice and the positive one. Only one student had the average grade of 0.9 under the technique “Friend-adviser-2” that indicates the propensity to a negative moral choice. This student has excellent performance – he or she refers to A group.

Moral development level was assessed in accordance with the grades under the technique “Friend-adviser-2” as follows:
1.9-2.0 – high level of moral development
1.7-1.8 – upper-intermediate level of moral development
1.5-1.6 – intermediate level of moral development
1.3-1.4 – pre-intermediate level of moral development
0.9-1.1 – low level of moral development

An average grade of moral development under the technique “Friend-adviser-2” for the whole sampling was 1.56 that indicates the intermediate level of moral development of the students group under study.

The students’ division into groups under their performance and the level of moral development is demonstrated in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The type of performance</th>
<th>The level of moral development (the students’ quantity)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high</td>
<td>upper-intermediate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (excellent)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C (good)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (satisfactory)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (mean)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then we analyzed the performance of the students with different levels of moral development. High level of moral development is rather rare; there are only 9.38% of such students. In every group, with exception of E group (mean performance), there are students with high moral level. In A group there are 12.5% of such students, in B.C and D groups – 20% per each group, so they represent a rather big part of their groups’ students. The students with mean performance do not achieve high level of moral development.

There are 21.88% of the students with upper-intermediate level of moral development. In every group there are such students: in A group – 25%, in B.C and D groups – 40% per each of them. Thus, such students represent a considerable part of the groups almost up to a half of the group. But in E group there are only 7% of them that is a small part. Consequently, the students with mean performance can rare achieve upper-intermediate level of moral development.

The students with intermediate level of moral development represent the majority in the sampling, almost a half – 43.75%. In every group there are such students, as the students with upper-intermediate level: in A group – 37.5%, in B.C and D groups – 40% per each of them, in E group – 50%. Thus, almost half of each group is represented by the students with intermediate level of moral development.
There are 18.75% of the students with pre-intermediate level of moral development. Only A and E groups have such students – 12.5% and 36% relevantly. It is apparent, that the quantity of such students in E group is three times as much as in A group. There are no such students in B.C and D groups that confirms that these groups’ students do not have serious personal development disorders.

The students with low level of moral development are uncommon – 6.25%. Rare students of this category were found in A group – 12.5% and in E group – 7%. There are no such students in B.C and D groups.

The average grade under the technique “Friend-adviser” is: in A group – 1.5, in B.C. and D groups – 1.7, in E group – 1.45. Consequently, in general the students with good (75-89 credit points) and satisfactory (65-74 credit points) performance have upper-intermediate level of moral development, while the students with excellent performance (90-100 credit points) – intermediate, the students with mean performance (60-64 credit points) – pre-intermediate.

The students with excellent performance (A group) show instability in the level of moral development. It ranges from a low level to a high one with a small margin in favor of intermediate and upper-intermediate levels. The students with excellent performance and high and upper-intermediate morality levels (37.5%) express opinions that are not aimed at mechanical observance of moral rules. Their choice and attitude with regard to different life situations are supported by a rational explanation that unveils the essence of the situation and reasons the necessity of a positive moral choice by the fact that this choice is the most effective, constructive and will give the best result in long-term conditions. The observation indicates that these students are guided mostly by their personal beliefs and principles. Besides, during conversation with these students it was revealed that they have wide connections with the world, positive social experience and the worldview, full enough for their age. Thus, professional and personal development of this category’s students is balanced and successful.

Other A group students may be divided into 2 categories. The least part of the students’ (25%) intermediate or low morality levels are reasoned by the fact that while taking an active part and aiming to get high grades, these students compete with others, seizing the initiative from more concessive students. When other students are asked to answer the professor’s question, these students feel negative emotions (disappointment, annoyance, offence etc.). These emotions may be expressed both verbally and non-verbally, and they may also be expressed through behavior. But this very feature of compliance in favor of another person is moral, while active competing for your own benefits at the expense of another person is a display of egoism. High activeness of such students arises from the fact that their academic progress is the way of self-affirmation, confirmation of their personal effectiveness.

The other part of A group students with intermediate and pre-intermediate morality levels (37.5%) are not too active, they will answer only if nobody else does it or nobody shows his or her readiness to do it and is waiting for his or her turn. The intermediate morality level of this students’ category is reasoned by insufficient understanding of personal meaning of the situations considered in the test technique. Apparently, it is linked with insufficient social experience and incomplete for their age worldview.

Accordingly, the first part of the students with the best grades, high and upper-intermediate morality levels (37.5%) have high level of both personal and professional development. The rest of excellent students (with intermediate, pre-intermediate and low morality levels) professional development is ahead of personal one, that is a display of developmental disbalance (62.5%). Such results can be explained by the fact that they manage to achieve good results in studying with less efforts than other students due to A group students’ high aptitude. But it influences negatively on personal development that stays behind the professional one. That means that both talented and untalented students should take efforts to achieve a goal. Because the achievements of a young person are determined by the product of knowledge and efforts. Comprehensive development of a more talented person takes much more efforts. Therefore, moral development is a factor of the most complete fulfilment of potential.

The results of analysis of the performance of the students with different moral development levels characterize the groups of the students with good performance (B.C group) and satisfactory performance (D group) as the most successful in a personal view. These students have the levels of moral development from intermediate to a high one. Among them there are no students with low and pre-intermediate moral levels. Professional development of the students of this category is in balance with personal development – both of them comply mainly with upper-intermediate level. These students may be characterized in the same way as the students with excellent performance and high level of moral development. But in addition to it, they are characterized by such a feature as compliance.
These students’ compliance is supplemented with the absence of the drive to social approval and to outer confirmation of their personal effectiveness.

The situation with the students with mean performance (E group) is the least favourable. Their moral development level covers almost the whole range, with exception of a high one. There are rare students with upper-intermediate and low levels. E group mainly consists of the students with intermediate and pre-intermediate levels of moral development. It should be mentioned, that this group contained almost all the boys from the sampling under consideration (6 people). Upon the whole, these students’ professional and personal development is simultaneous and conforms to intermediate level. The reasons for satisfactory performance are linked with the lack of self-discipline, self-organization and responsibility: absences from the university, unsystematical preparation to lessons, incomplete or delayed preparation. So the reasons for satisfactory performance are determined by insufficient personal development that is proved by their low results in moral development. These students’ opinions on solving real-life situations are characterized by immaturity, low prognosticating abilities, groundlessness, monosyllabic nature that indicates their dim understanding, low level of evaluation. So the students’ insufficient moral development is linked not only with weak personal development but also with weak professional development.

The analysis of research results showed that there is a link between the students’ performance and their moral development level, but this link does not have strict linear character. That is why it was revealed not through correlational method but through qualitative analysis.

4. Conclusion

Modernization of Russian education under the competency-based approach allowed to improve the quality of the specialists’ training. However, the modern world that develops rapidly requires further improvement of these activities. High professional development is impossible without personal development that is based on moral development of a person. But the Russian federal state educational standards of higher professional education are not included in the list of requirements to moral development of future specialists. Therefore, this direction is not addressed at all or is addressed unsystematically by individual professors.

There is the link between students’ performance as a reflection of their professional development and the level of their moral development as a reflection of their personal development and this link doesn’t have strictly linear character. The students with excellent performance are characterized with instable moral and personal development. It is reasoned by the fact that comprehensive development of a more talented person takes much more efforts. Insufficient personal development of some of these students is determined by their insufficient efforts.

Students with good and satisfactory performance are characterized as the most successful from personal view. Their personal and professional development rates aren’t the highest, but are at upper-intermediate level. Parallel and simultaneous development provides stability, allows the students to manage effectively the activities, intrinsic to the period of early maturity.

The students with mean performance are characterized by weak personal and professional development. A special feature of these students is insufficient moral development, the absence of students with high level of moral development and rare cases of upper-intermediate moral development. It results in conclusion that namely moral development is a factor for personal potential fulfilment and development of a person.

We suppose that one of the key directions of higher education further development is the incorporation of the objectives of future specialists’ moral development in the requirements to the results of educational programs learning. Solving of these tasks during the educational process will allow to improve considerably the quality of the graduates’ training.

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