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OPPORTUNITIES AND VALUES OF WORK ACTIVITY IN PERCEPTION OF MODERN STUDENTS

Kulikova Tatyana Ivanovna

PhD (Psychology), Associate Professor Department of Psychology and Pedagogics
Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University, 125 Lenin ave., Tula, Russia

Abstract

The article is devoted to the consideration of the problem of labor values and attitudes of students. The results of a study conducted among 1st and 4th year students aged 18 to 23 (n=112), majoring in Psychological and Pedagogical Education. These are young people just starting their professional training (the 1st and 2nd years) and having some work experience gained during their studies in the course of practical training (the 3rd and 4th years). Students were offered a survey with a ranking of “Opportunities and Values of Work Activities” contained two blocks. The first block included statements evaluating the rank of potential employment opportunities, the second block included statements requiring ranking by the values of labor activity. The study showed that work for modern students is the sphere of fulfillment of professional and personal interests, application of their knowledge and skills, which allows them to make a good living and live a full life. Article materials may be of interest to practical psychologists, as well as teachers of organizational psychology.

Key words: work values, professional activity, student youth.

Introduction

The reorientation of the value system in modern society has significantly affected the change in attitudes towards the work activities among the young generation. Consequently, the relevance of the problems associated with the study of work values of young students has increased. The work activity is one of the main human activities, which results not only in the production of goods, provision of services, creation of cultural values, but also in satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs of an individual. Labor allows a person to find the opportunities for self-expression and development of intellectual and creative abilities.

An objective of higher professional education is to prepare a specialist with a certain level of competence and shape a positive attitude towards professional activities and work in general among students. The essence of the modern students' attitude towards work is largely determined by the opportunities of fulfilling one's potential as a professional – knowledgeable, able, and intent on self-development [1, 3].

The opportunities may be conditioned by both external and internal factors. So, if the environment, as a set of conditions and circumstances under which a person grows, studies, and interacts with others, can act as an external factor, then the internal factors are directly related to personal qualities – needs, abilities, sense of purpose, and value system.

Many researchers of professional education problems (E.F. Zeer, E.A. Klimov, L.M. Mitina, etc.) note that in the process of training specialists of any profile, the main focus lies on the development of the axiological sphere of personality. The value-based orientations help a person distinguish the important and significant events and phenomena from non-significant ones. They act as peculiar regulators when a person defines their life and professional priorities, creating the meaningful and structured world views [2].

Based on the works by G.E. Zalessky, B.F. Lomov, V.A. Yadov, E.A. Klimov, and I.F. Isaev, we define three integrative components in the structure of work activity values: cognitive, emotional, and activity [4]. The cognitive component includes knowledge about the values of your profession, awareness of your role in professional activities, understanding of your professional

capabilities, etc. The emotional component determines an individual's attitude to their profession, to themselves as a professional, assessment of a professional self and satisfaction with their work. The activity component implies the availability of professional skills and abilities, willingness to show their abilities, transform motives, interests and knowledge into real actions, and the ability to analyze and assess their own activities.

Methods

To identify the degree of understanding of the opportunities and values of their future work, we conducted a survey among the first and fourth year students aged 18 to 23 (n=112), majoring in Psychological and Pedagogical Education. These are young people just starting their professional training (the 1st and 2nd years) and having some work experience gained during their studies in the course of practical training (the 3rd and 4th years). The ranking survey *Opportunities and values of professional activities* contained two blocks. The first block included statements evaluating the rank of potential opportunities in work activities, and the second block included statements requiring ranking by the values of the work activity. Using the scale of 1 to 10, the respondents were asked to rate the opportunities of their work activities and determine to what extent the key professional values are significant to them. Both opportunities and values were arranged into three groups according to the components – cognitive, emotional and activity.

Results

Analyzing the findings of the survey it should be noted that both opportunities and values were ranked differently by the 1st and 4th year students. The 1st year students tend to rather idealize their future work opportunities. Such opportunities as finding a job directly related to the major mastered at the university, getting good wages, acquiring high position in society, and achieving career advancement were ranked 9 and 10 by the overwhelming majority (87%) of the 1st year students. The more 'diverse' ranking of opportunities is seen among the 4th year students – from 3 to 9 points. The obtained results are quite understandable. The 4th year students have already gained some first-hand professional experience in the field of their studies across the curriculum. Many students have work experience (a part-time job) and combine work and study. They evaluate the same opportunities differently, for instance, finding a job directly related to the major mastered at the university was equally ranked 5 and 6 – each by 13.5% of respondents; getting good wages was equally ranked 5, 6, 8 and 10 – each by 8.1% of students; acquiring high position in society was ranked 5 and 6 by 16.2% and 10.8%, respectively; and achieving career advancement – 5 and 8 by 16.2% and 13.5%, respectively. It's worth noting that a decrease in the significance of such an opportunity as finding a job directly related to the major mastered at the university may imply the students' willingness to work with enthusiasm and commitment, but not necessarily in their degree field. We should particularly note the students' assessment of such an opportunity as continuous self-improvement. Among the 1st year students this opportunity was ranked 9 by 18.9% of respondents, and 8 and 10 – each by 10.8% of respondents. The 4th year students ranked it 9 and 10 (27% and 18.9%, respectively).

The key values of students were arranged by the components of the value structure as follows. The cognitive component found its maximum expression with 54% of the 1st year students and 72.9% of the 4th year students. The following values were ranked as the most significant: applying knowledge and experience at work – 21.6% among the 1st year students and 24.3% among the 4th year students; gaining new knowledge and continuous self-improvement – 10.8% among the 1st year students and 29.7% among the 4th year students.

The emotional component was expressed at most among the 1st year students (97.2%), and a little lower (78.3%) among the 4th year students. These findings may be indicative of a reflection of the situational attitude to certain professional duties. It should be said that emotions and feelings, imperceptibly to our consciousness, interfere strongly in the processes of perception and behavior. They distort perception depending on the emotion we are experiencing at the moment. The following values showed the greatest expression in the emotional component: interesting and

meaningful job (45.9% – the 1st year students and 51.3% – the 4th year students); success at work and respect (29.7% – the 1st year students and 32.4% – the 4th year students); overall satisfaction with life – 16.2% of respondents in each year. Students perceive work as a means to achieve success in life, recognition and respect of others, and a certain social status. For this very reason with the help of their future work the present-day students would like to receive high salaries and become self-fulfilled in their profession.

According to the results of the survey, the activity component is expressed at a lower level among the students of both years as compared to the cognitive and emotional ones – 43.2% with the 1st year students and 51.3% with the 4th year students. The students identified the importance of demonstrating their abilities and seeing the results of their work as the priority value of the activity component – 21.6% with the 1st year students and 24.3% with the 4th year students. Such values as the opportunity to teach, creative work and the opportunity to experiment turned out to be insignificant and found their expression with 21.6% of the 1st year students and 27% of the 4th year students. Such results may imply the dominance of the individualistic attitudes of modern youth towards work (labor as self-fulfillment, achievement of individual success and personal ambitions).

Conclusion

Over the past decades, Russian society has undergone significant changes that have affected not only all spheres of human life, but also their consciousness. The modern young generation has grown in a new, reformed society. In connection with the reorientation of the value system of society, the attitude towards work activity of the young generation has changed significantly. In this regard, the relevance of the problems related to the identification of the structure and hierarchy of labor values of student youth has also increased. The study showed that work for modern students is the sphere of fulfillment of professional and personal interests, application of their knowledge and skills, which allows them to make a good living and live a full life.

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