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# Theoretical/methodological foundations of fostering in college students values-based attitude toward their future professional activity

Fundamentos teóricos-metodológicos para el fomento de una actitud basada en valores en estudiantes universitarios enfocado a sus futuras profesiones

Nataliya Vladimirovna VYSOTSKAYA 1; Valentina Nikolaevna SIDORENKO 2; Elena Ivanovna SUKHOVA 3; ,Ekaterina Alexandrovna POGREBINSKAYA 4; Irina Vladimirovna NIKISHINA 5

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The young generation is a strategic resource in any nation, with significant workforce and intellectual capital concentrated in student youth communities. College graduates are directly involved in modernizing the economic and social sectors and engaged in implementing reforms initiated by the government and civil society institutions. Constantly changing conditions of life are forcing young people to adapt to new realities, search for new forms of identity, cultivate a personal life stance, and build their spiritual world. With this in mind, the authors undertake to explore via this paper some of the topical issues associated with the theoretical/methodological foundations of the professional worth of future specialists who will work within the nation's economic sector. The paper provides an insight into the essence of core professional values and examines some of the theoretical foundations of fostering them in future specialists. The authors show that one of the most significant professional qualities and characteristics of

### **RESUMEN:**

La generación joven es un recurso estratégico en cualquier nación, con fuerza de trabajo significativa y capital intelectual concentrado en comunidades de jóvenes estudiantes. Los graduados universitarios participan directamente en la modernización de los sectores económico y social y participan en la implementación de las reformas iniciadas por el gobierno y las instituciones de la sociedad civil. Las condiciones de vida constantemente cambiantes están obligando a los jóvenes a adaptarse a las nuevas realidades, a buscar nuevas formas de identidad, a cultivar una postura de vida personal y a construir su mundo espiritual. Con esto en mente, los autores se comprometen a explorar a través de este documento algunos de los temas actuales relacionados con los fundamentos teóricos / metodológicos del valor profesional de los futuros especialistas que trabajarán dentro del sector económico de la nación. El documento proporciona una idea de la esencia de los valores profesionales básicos y examina algunos de los fundamentos teóricos de fomentarlos en futuros

future specialists is the values-based attitude toward one's future profession, which, structurally speaking, may be seen as an integral unity of three major components - cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The study subject is student youth (residing predominantly in the capital region) aged 17 to 29. Findings. The authors propose a model for the stageby-stage cultivation in college students of the valuesbased attitude toward their future professional activity, which is predicated on the unity of three major stages: orientational, praxeological, and communicative/creative. The work's theoretical and practical significance lies in that its key tenets may help expand one's notions of the special nature of the student community as a social group, students' life values and orientations, and the dynamics of the formation of student youth's spiritual world. The study's key tenets and conclusions may help expand and deepen one's understanding of the process of the formation of students' spiritual culture and expose the significant contradictions inherent in social influence on youth consciousness and behavior.

**Keywords:** education, agrarian professions, professional values, values-based attitude

especialistas. Los autores muestran que una de las cualidades y características profesionales más importantes de los futuros especialistas es la actitud basada en valores hacia la profesión futura, que, estructuralmente, puede verse como una unidad integral de tres componentes principales: cognitiva, emocional y conductual . El sujeto de estudio es un estudiante joven (que reside predominantemente en la región de la capital) de 17 a 29 años. Hallazgos. Los autores proponen un modelo para el cultivo etapa por etapa en estudiantes universitarios de la actitud basada en valores hacia su futura actividad profesional, que se basa en la unidad de tres etapas principales: orientacional, praxeológico y comunicativo / creativo. El significado teórico y práctico de la obra radica en que sus principios clave pueden ayudar a ampliar las nociones de la naturaleza especial de la comunidad estudiantil como un grupo social, los valores y orientaciones de la vida de los estudiantes y la dinámica de la formación del mundo espiritual de los jóvenes estudiantes. Los principios y conclusiones clave del estudio pueden ayudar a ampliar y profundizar la comprensión del proceso de formación de la cultura espiritual de los estudiantes y exponer las contradicciones significativas inherentes a la influencia social en la conciencia y el comportamiento de los jóvenes.

**Palabras clave:** educación, profesiones agrarias, valores profesionales, actitud basada en valores

# 1. Introduction

At present, the global community is entering a new era in its development, which implies a shift to a new economic cycle and a change of technological paradigm. Knowledge is becoming a new paradigm for the evolutionary, progressive development of social/economic systems, as some of the nation's top resources for growth are currently concentrated within the intellectual sphere, and the current period may be seen as an innovation-focused transformation. Managing this kind of innovation-focused transformation is, in turn, an objective that requires taking novel, nontrivial approaches that, among other things, are predicated on the use of sets of organizational, economic/mathematical, functional, and other methods which help analyze data and synthesize solutions oriented toward the accumulation of knowledge-based (cognitive) potential within the youth environment and, above all, among college students and graduates.

A key component in Russia's higher education system is education that is capable of restoring the workforce potential of national economy sectors, ensuring high quality specialist training, and having a direct effect toward the optimum resolution of many of the nation's economic issues. Boosts in the caliber of professional training for future specialists are largely dependent on the degree to which they master and assimilate a set of core values-based orientations and the degree to which they develop a set of professional convictions based on the axiological approach (Goncharov 2016). The objective for institutions of higher learning is to nurture highly qualified, competitive, and proactive specialists with sustainable moral and legal convictions. Today's reality is signaling the need to develop new trends and principles that will form the basis of the modern-day education-and-nurturing system.

Over the past 100 years, the structural composition of the portion of Russia's population classified under the 'youth' category has changed significantly. In the early 20th century, this group was mainly composed of individuals aged 15 to 19, while in the first decade of the 21st century the figure was 20 to 24 years and older. This is associated with the characteristics of demographic development in the nation and the objective aging of its population (both in Russia and internationally). Further, the authors are of the view that the 'student youth' category is to be represented by young people aged 17 to 24 inclusive. This is due to the fact that the age of most young people who are about to finish high school is 17 to 18 years, while at the age of 20 to 24 years most young people finish vocational

school and college. For this reason, the authors are using the findings from sociological surveys that are focused on students in this age group specifically.

A set of sociological surveys have detected a recent trend toward declines in youth interest in the values-based aspect of future professional activity that college graduates are going to engage in, with the greater focus being on taking a pragmatic and rational approach with regard to one's future professional activity (Dukhina 2011).

Therefore, a crucial objective for the education system is to foster in students a set of professional values which subsequently will be extrapolated to the realization that they ought to take responsibility for the outcomes of their professional activity. In cultivating these values, a leading role is played by education, which not only generates them but, as a value in itself, also helps guide an individual in their choice and prioritizing of various values-based orientations (Branch 2015).

It is worth noting that the main thing about getting higher education is that this process provides a relevant system of knowledge, and the mechanism underlying the process of bringing this knowledge into action and mapping it onto real-life practice appears to be crucial to cultivating core cultural values in students.

Common to the various areas for the development of learning and personal development in pedagogical systems, as per scholar E.D. Gryaznova (Gryaznova 2016), is the focus on the humanistic, ethical, and intellectual image of life, which is closely linked to the characteristics of major values-based orientations.

An analysis of relevant scholarly/pedagogical research (Gordienko & Shevchenko 2016, Elliott 2017, Ye et al. 2017) has helped identify a set of discrepancies between traditional approaches to professional training and the needs of today's society, associated with the search for innovative ways to foster the professional making of students majoring in certain fields; today's requirements with respect to professional values for future specialists and the actual degree to which these values have been cultivated in them; students' knowledge of core norms and values and how well these norms and values are brought into action in professional/practical activity; the necessity of employing axiological components in the professional activity of present-day specialists and the insufficient degree to which the topic has been investigated in pedagogical science.

Today, scholars are discussing a new system of objectives for education, with a focus on reviving the tradition of treating personality as the greatest of values. These trends are pointing to that at this time one of the key methods for designing the education-and-nurturing system is the values-based approach, which is aimed at interacting with the learner as the subject of the educational/nurturing process who is capable of self-development and self-fulfillment based on certain values-based orientations (Gordienko 2013).

An analysis of the literature (Dudin et al. 2017a, Hjelle & Ziegler 1992, Rubinshtein 1999) has helped retrieve the following definitions: a value is a subject-object relationship that links man to the content of phenomena; values-based attitude is a person's internal stance that reflects the interrelationship between personal and social significations.

Building a new system of values that will provide one with the life guideposts that match one's individuality is quite hard work on oneself (Yakovlev 2007). A study by A.V. Kir'yakova has established that an individual's values-based priorities are formed under the influence of various external and internal factors. A decisive role in this process is played by educational institutions, which are a crucial hotbed for youth socialization (Kir'yakova 1996). During the period of going to college, young people experience a change of age status to an adult state and transit into the phase of growth in human freedom within the social dimension.

Today's social/economic changes are prompting the need for upgraded approaches to streamlining the system of workforce training, with requirements changing for present-day specialists, including their qualifications, knowledge, and capacity to promptly adapt to new economic conditions and their ability to effectively manage a company. Professional values make up the basis of an insightful approach to the professional training of specialists in any field (Boroel et al. 2017, 16. Popa et al. 2013, Weis & Schank 2002, Dudin et al. 2016,

2017b).

Further, one of the key elements in the structure of professional values for future specialists is the values-based attitude toward one's future profession. The values-based attitude as an element of one's consciousness has a complex internal structure, which is comprised of the following three major components – *cognitive*, *emotional*, and *behavioral* (Gromkova 2003).

The cognitive component of values-based attitude toward a future specialist's professional activity, its content and essence, serves as the conceptual foundation of professional activity.

The emotional component of values-based attitude, which reflects a student's acceptance of professional values, the power of their emotional experiences, their emotionally evaluative attitude toward professional knowledge and the objectives, content, and principles of agrarian activity, and their emotional perception of their own professional actions, is a key component of values-based attitude.

The behavioral component is predicated on professional, personally significant narratives and objectives, when the specialist becomes a real subject of professional activity, which their values-based attitude is actually materialized in.

Consequently, it may be stated that a student's or a college graduate's values-based attitude toward their future professional activity is possible only on condition that they become aware of the very value (in the context of the national economy sphere) which will be formed as a result of their work activity.

### 2. Methods

One of the key decisions in building one's track record is making the professional choice, the choice of education. For a student, school is a key type of activity, which makes education a key block in the classification of phenomena in student youth's spiritual world. The youth self-organization process is a multistaged, complex phenomenon that cannot be construed adequately outside of the issue of sociocultural reflexion, which is the process of young students conceptualizing social reality during the process of accumulating their life experience. Based on the above, the authors undertake to present in this paper the findings from an empirical study of the characteristics of college graduates' values-based attitude toward their future profession within the structure of the terminal life values of future specialists. The study's sample featured 68 students in Years 1, 2, and 3 from different colleges across Moscow. Its diagnostic instrumentarium was grounded in the Morphological Test for Life Values (MTLV) (Sopov & Karpushina 2001), designed to determine the motivational/values-based structure of personality based on various terminal life values and life spheres.

For the purposes of this study, based on the findings from a preliminary theoretical analysis of the issue, the authors grouped the MTLV life values they were interested in into three major blocks in accordance with the following key components of one's values-based attitude: cognitive (C) (self-development and creativity), emotional (E) (spiritual satisfaction and prestige), and behavioral (B) (active social contact and achievements). The resulting initial array of data was subjected to statistical analysis (Student's *t*-test), followed by indepth interpretation and summarization.

# 3. Findings

Below are the findings from the authors' testing of students using the MTLV instrumentarium. To start with, here are the results from a comparative analysis of life values as the average figures across the sample:

- students in Year 1 demonstrated the average indicators across the sample in the following way: self-development and creativity (the cognitive block) – 43.25 and 37.25, respectively; spiritual satisfaction and prestige (the emotional block) – 45 and 41.35, respectively; social contact and achievements (the behavioral block) – 43.4 and 48, respectively;
- students in Year 2 demonstrated the average indicators across the sample in the following way: self-development and creativity (the cognitive block) – 40.9 and 34.85, respectively; spiritual satisfaction and prestige (the emotional block) – 41.8 and 39.8, respectively; social contact and

achievements (the behavioral block) – 42.75 and 44.05, respectively;

 students in Year 3 demonstrated the average indicators across the sample in the following way: self-development and creativity (the cognitive block) – 37.55 and 33.8, respectively; spiritual satisfaction and prestige (the emotional block) – 39.55 and 35.05, respectively; social contact and achievements (the behavioral block) – 36.85 and 43.55, respectively.

Next, here are the results from the authors' testing of students with regard to their perception of the life spheres (the average indicator across the sample):

- students in Year 1 demonstrated the following indicators of perception: professional life 60.9; learning and education – 60.2; family life – 54.6; social life – 57.45; hobbies – 56.7; physical activity – 62;
- students in Year 2 demonstrated the following indicators of perception: professional life 58.3; learning and education 57.9; family life 56.1; social life 50.45; hobbies 53.45; physical activity 57.2;
- students in Year 3 demonstrated the following indicators of perception: professional life 54.7; learning and education 53.95; family life 50.8; social life 47.35; hobbies 48.85; physical activity 49.2.

Based on the MTLV results, in Years 1 to 3 the greatest weight across the scales for life values was posted by values within the behavioral block – the value of achievement led the way in all the age categories. Based on the findings from mathematical processing of results using Student's t-test, there were significant differences between students in Years 1 and 2 in the value of achievement (t = 2.41, p < 0.05); between students in Years 2 and 3 - in values related to self-development (t = 1.78, p < 0.1), social contact (t = 3.43, p < 0.01), and prestige (t = 2.33, p < 0.05); between students in Years 1 and 3 - across the entire range of values, except for creativity.

As had been evidenced by the MTLV results, in Years 1 to 3 the greatest weight across the life sphere scales was, by Years 2 and 3 already, demonstrated by the spheres of professional life and learning and education. Through the lens of the spheres of professional life and learning and education which had been of interest for the purposes of this study, significant differences were recorded between students in Years 2 and 3 in the professional life sphere (t = 1.87, p < 0.1) and between students in Years 1 and 3 both in the professional life sphere (t = 2.85, p < 0.01) and in the learning and education sphere (t = 2.94, p < 0.01).

# 4. Discussion

Based on the findings from this study, during the youth period as one grows up there occurs partial change in the values-based sphere subsequent to one's finishing of Year 1. Further, the way is always led by values within the behavioral block, which are ahead of those within the cognitive one. There are also significant differences between students in different years in terms of values and life spheres they prefer. Notably, these values and life spheres matter more to students in their junior years, despite the fact that as one grows up the greater focus is on values associated with the professional and educational sphere.

Determining the structure of students' values-based attitude toward their future professional activity (the cognitive, emotional, and activity-based components), as well as the findings from the authors' empirical study, helped them put together a special model for cultivating in college students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity.

The authors' model, which is aimed at cultivating in agrarian college students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity, incorporates the following interrelated components:

- the components of values-based attitude (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral);
- the pedagogical conditions for cultivating in students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity;
- the stages in the process of cultivating the values-based attitude and a set of relevant methods and activities.

As was shown above, the structure of values-based attitude is comprised of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Under the proposed model, indicators of:

- the cognitive component are motives for the choice of profession and registration of the characteristics of one's future professional activity; positive motivation inducing learning activity; the need for professional self-fulfillment; the adequacy of one's self-concept.
- the emotional component are self-control; being organized; being goal-oriented; being responsible; optimism; empathy.
- the behavioral component are being creatively proactive; an active attitude toward life; self-reliance; cognitive activity.

The pedagogical conditions for cultivating in college students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity incorporate:

- securing the values-based strand of the content of professional training;
- introducing students to professional/values-based activity within the system of educational/nurturing and extracurricular work;
- fostering dialogical/communicative interaction within the professional/values-based environment.

Cultivating the values-based attitude toward professional activity in college students incorporates various forms and methods of nurturing students and is expected to be implemented in three stages: orientational, praxeological, and communicative.

The purpose of the *orientational* stage is to organize influence on cognitive and emotional spheres, which implies work aimed at providing students with an insight into the significance of their future professional activity. This substantive work ought to be aimed at getting students to realize that professional activity is a socially and personally significant need and a factor that helps cultivate material and spiritual potential and drive personal growth. The pedagogical condition in this stage is to secure the values-based strand of the content of professional training.

The above stage implies the use of relevant pedagogical methods (talk, narration, illustration, demonstrating a problem situation, business simulation games, and round tables) and activities such as thematic tours, theoretical trivia quizzes, curatorial-hour series (e.g., 'A Path into the Trade', 'A Modern Engineer', 'Occupation: Psychologist (Manager, etc.)', 'Your Specialty', 'The World of Professions', etc.), roleplay and business simulation games, knowledge fairs, team table quizzes on the history of a specialty or of an educational institution, designing a stand devoted to the history of a college and its departments, thematic talk, individual talk, and exercises.

The second, *praxeological*, stage implies continuing work on cultivating in students the values-based attitude based on acquired practical knowledge and developing in them the personally and professionally significant qualities of future specialists. The key purpose of this stage is to cultivate in students relevant views and convictions through introducing them to a system of professional values which reflect the richness of professional culture and transforming assimilated norms into a personal asset. The pedagogical condition in this stage is to introduce students to professional/values-based activity within the system of educational/nurturing and extracurricular work.

This stage implies using the following methods: problem-based situations, pedagogical directives, control, correction, modeling, and introducing future specialists to such activities as presentations of specialties, various public activities (e.g., 'Engineer', 'Psychologist', 'Instructor'. 'Ecology and Production', etc.), disputes, creative work contests, meetings with representatives of sought-after professions, doors-open days, mission-critical assignments (individual and collective), exercises, club activities, and training in adjacent professions.

The final third, *communicative/creative*, stage ought to be aimed at bringing a creative initiative into action in professional activity, developing an adequate self-concept, and fostering optimism in performing assignments of a practical nature. There takes place a transformation of one's situational perception of values related to professional knowledge, abilities, and skills into a proactive professional and life stance. In this stage, the system of values-oriented actions and deeds verges into a specific quality of the person – the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity.

The organizational methods employed in this stage include the partially-exploratory method, the research method, modeling, evaluation, and individual and group work. The stage

utilizes the following activities: professional discussions, professional modeling, professional contests, business simulation games related to project development, working out and defending a business plan or a project, professional mastery contests, specialist days and weeks, trainings, and exercises.

Values-based attitude toward professional activity may be defined as one's sustainable attitude. This kind of attitude is formed under the influence of verbal methods. During the process of socializing with those around us, fulfilling successfully our professional/social role requires dialogical/communicative interaction, as the process of employing our personal and professional experience. To foster dialogical/communicative interaction as part of cultivating the values-based attitude toward one's profession, the proposed model suggests using a system of social/psychological technologies (trainings).

These classes perform a set of relevant functions: educating, nurturing, developing, and diagnostic. The core content of the class series 'Fostering Dialogical/Communicative Interaction among Students Based on Cultivating the Values-Based Attitude toward Professional Activity' implies exploring: a methodology for raising a question; a methodology for active listening; a methodology for developing communicative competence based on voicing one's feelings in pairs.

The expected outcome of implementing a model for fostering in college students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity is positive dynamics with respect to the degree to which this values-based attitude is formed in them. The cultivation of values is linked to the characteristics of one's needs and the way one's interests are met. The values entering a young specialist's consciousness will govern the way they go about their "life programs", incorporating their career-related plans related to their professional activity, which will facilitate self-fulfillment in various areas of life.

Thus, during the process of getting higher education a future specialist comes to realize that the principle of the priority of common human values is laid down into strategies and tactics for modernizing the education system and implies reconsidering the traditional view of institutions of higher learning as social institutions for the mass reproduction of specialists to be employed within the nation's economic sector.

## 5. Conclusion

The choice of higher education among school leavers and other groups of youth is not accidental. One of the major subjective reasons behind the choice of higher education, as a key form and model of continuing the individual educational process, is the willingness to get a well-paid job upon graduation. Notice that a majority of college entrants and graduates have stated that, after getting higher education, it is possible to both get a job that is related to one's college major and get employed in other areas as well (What lies ahead for Russian higher learning 2011).

This study represents an attempt to identify a mechanism that underlies the cultivation of the values-based attitude toward the professional values in student youth. The period of life during which representatives of the young generation choose their future profession and decide on which college to attend to pursue a specialty of their choice, is a time when they start striving for individualization. Notice that college students and graduates are involved in the individualization process to a greater extent than representatives of other groups of youth. Therefore, it is especially important to get a student to realize the value of their future professional activity during this period specifically.

The values-based strand of the content of professional training may be seen as an integrated characteristic of various components of the nurturing-and-education system which is initiated based on the objectives of this training being directed toward helping students master the fundamentals of professionalism and is carried into effect using competently selected methods and means that help foster in students the values-based attitude toward their future professional activity.

Most importantly, it will help to have fostered in college graduates the values-based attitude toward such core professional values as the willingness to contribute to world science and

practice, love for one's homeland, being a trustworthy and fair business partner, caring attitude toward the environment, viewing professional activity as a socially and personally significant need, and an aspiration to acquire relevant professional knowledge, competencies, and skills.

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- 1. Moscow Metropolitan Governance University, 28 Sretenka St., Moscow, 107045, Russian Federation. E-mail: vyssotsk@infoline.su
- 2. Moscow City Pedagogics University, 4, 2nd Sel'skokhozyaistvennyi Proezd St., Moscow, 129226, Russian Federation
- 3. Moscow City Pedagogics University, 4, 2nd Sel'skokhozyaistvennyi Proezd St., Moscow, 129226, Russian Federation
- 4. I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, 2 Bolshaya Pirogovskaya St., Bldg. 4, Moscow, 119991, Russian Federation
- 5. Moscow Institute of Economics, Politics, and Law, 1 Klimentovsky Ln., Bldg. 1, Moscow, 115184, Russian Federation

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