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AESTHETICAL EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM AND THE PROFESSIONALISM OF A SPECIALIST OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract

The main problem for the education in general and for the vocational education in particular is the creation of efficient models that enable a specialist to solve his life challenges and professional tasks in the situations of “digital” society. One of the manifestations of this multifaceted problem is the necessity to change professions while preserving the basic capability of a specialist (general professional and special professional skills) to different types of activities. The Aesthetical Paradigm of Education (hereinafter the AestPE) is a model that enables the professional education to form such a base with the help of human abilities and behavioral qualities. Based on the importance of a broader sense of the aesthetic experience and the principles of the humanitarian thinking (hereinafter the HTh) in professional activity, we are justifying here the creation of an AestPE the model for the vocational education through an appeal to qualitative and combined methods of research and of modeling.

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Keywords: Aesthetic, universality, abilities, professionalism, humanities, thinking.



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1. Introduction

1.1. Professionalism, as knowledge and skills of the highest quality, achieved by the long-term, specialized training and implemented mainly in higher educational institutions, is determined not only by the tasks of the economic sphere of society but also by human abilities and behavioral qualities that are part of the structural scheme of professional ethics, vocational and value education. In addition to professional knowledge, the subject also concerns ethics (Greek ήθικός as “moral” or ethos as “spirit”), motivation of the profession and devotion to the profession.

Aesthetic characteristics also take their place in the understanding of professionalism. So, they talk about the excellence of the possession of a profession, appealing to the universalism of such categories as measure, harmony, style and constructiveness. Expressing the perfection achieved by the person in the profession, the profession is put on a par with art. In some professions, special aesthetic norms (imposed on appearance and workplace, logo, design and packaging) are a requirement of professional standard.

However, here we will talk about the significance of a broader concept of the aesthetic experience of the professional activity with its non-utilitarian and universal attitude. The general category of aesthetics (Greek αίστητικός, sensual) in this context determines the evident irreducibility of professional education of the specialist of the future, of the professional culture in general, to only economic, technological, authoritative or information-digital expediencies alone modified by professional standards.

1.2. An appeal to the general concept of aesthetics one can be found in the social theory of occupations (professions). Here, with the help of this concept and from the point of view of the product of labor, only a certain (one) part of the content of the concept of professionalism is specified (and then with a certain irony in relation to the “usefulness” of the cloak in the Sahara desert).

Although what the aesthetic characteristics of the profession and professionalism are related to above all, is a living person, the personality of a specialist-professional who has motives and who is forced to live and work today in the situations of “multitasking” and “uncertainty”. In this sense, virtually any profession and the most diverse areas of business are associated with the universalism of the aesthetic principle. Sensual aesthetics together with the empirical observation and with receiving the “sensual data”, as an element of commercial instinct, acts not only as the ability of a specialist to understand the needs, tastes and preferences of people, but rather not like the Greek "kalokagatia", or, as M. McLuhan said: “Once we have surrendered our senses and nervous systems to the private manipulation of those who would try to benefit from taking a lease on our eyes and ears and nerves” (as cited in Pedwell, 2019, p. 126).

I believe real aesthetics, neither in business nor in education, is not only “naked” psychological manipulation in the sense of causing a desired behavior but one of the humanly important conditions of the professional sphere, a “point of convergence” of the interests of producers (goods and services) and buyers. On the one hand the need to understand this as the key business strategy elevates the practice of business relations to the level of philosophical generalizations (reflection) embodied into reality for the benefit of brands. The importance of this for the society as a whole is increasing given the fact that theaters, museums and educational institutions are included into this process. On the other hand, the professional activity requires a certain level of aesthetic development of people performing it. They need rather intuition and imagination than submission to rigid algorithms.

With the expansion of the scope of aesthetics, the researchers raise issues about: a) more intuitive way of behavior of the so called "Millennials" (Kerruish, 2019; Pedwell, 2019); b) how does aesthetics react, for example, to the increasing pervasiveness of AI ("artificial intellect"); c) how to distribute the vast knowledge of philosophical aesthetics to practices which could have more use of aesthetic theory? (Kurenkova & Semenovich, 2018; Matteucci, 2018, pp. 400-402).

All that taken together causes new tasks of vocational education, makes urgent in its kind the question of "aesthetics of education".

The universalism of the aesthetic beginning of a profession becomes a part of designing of the educational models. For the vocational education, the joint amount of its aesthetic and anthropological understanding means the ability to think not only in the "nearest terms", but also in distant "socio-cultural" contexts (it is the subject of modern cultural studies and of discussions, as for example Andrew, 2019, reported), to preserve the constants of professionalism and professional culture, to spread and deepen the idea of professionalism.

Vocational education in the aesthetic paradigm emphasizes the universalism of the specialist's abilities, allowing the specialist (forced by the modern conditions to change the employment and complex action patterns in his career) to go beyond the circle of once-and-forever requested, narrowly focused certain "competencies". The concept of universal abilities in the framework of the AestPE may become an alternative to that reduction of the complex nature of the professional culture of a specialist to certain competencies that has become dominant today.

The AestPE is that universal educational model, which practically embodies the interaction of the professionalism and the universalism of abilities. We are talking about the place of universal abilities as a part of professional skills and their relations with precise and specific labor skills. It is qualitative methods of research and modeling that make it obvious or, in other words, the prerequisites of improving "the human resource management in development of the information economy which creates a demand for knowledge and professionalism in a wide range of types of work" (Moskovskaya, 2009, p. 161). The aesthetic attitude in the professional education of any field is one of the most important general conditions for that.

1.3. In my research I sought to show that the value of the AestPE (as a universal educational model built on the basis of "principles of the humanitarian thinking") for the professional culture is something what makes possible an effective alignment of the "chain" (composed of such "links" as business/management/production plus universalism plus the accuracy of labor skills, and which actually are the essential components of the "professional culture") provided that these should be supported by methods of research, modeling, designing and expert evaluation adequate to the nature of education in general.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The problems generated by the new features of cultural and educational type with the characteristics of increasing the influence of the AI in present life and which are in line with the value shift in culture (there are also some contradictions apart from the AI) make of the AestPE a relevant method.

The knowledge of the professional culture of the future is closely connected with the definition of what culture, modern culture, values, etc. are.

The cumulative effect of the modern culture is clearly manifested in the influence of these changing relations of ideas within culture, the relations themselves between culture and individual, their essence and novelty under conditions of uncertainty. But in existing educational practices the norms and values of culture are considered as something well-known and constant by default. The problem of how much the value generation has changed is being ignored. Such changes cannot be attributed to as "cultural truism" (Sciulli, 2009, pp. 185, 186, 193). The causes of the profound transformations of the "invariant" professional scheme lie behind these changes.

2.2. The conceptualizations of the process of changing the values (offered by the theories: Stozhko, 2018; Khaydarova, 2017; Kazantseva, Klimova, & Chernyshev, 2018; and there is an interesting article about the specific nature of the Bakhtine's concept of ambivalent culture in regard to education: Brandst, Gardiner, White, & Mika, 2017) did not acquire a decisive influence on the processes of modeling in the vocational education. Due to the unexplained status of this kind of problems the necessary parameters of new educational models of vocational education do not give the impression of being matched well as far as the real professional activity of a person is concerned. That does not allow to keep the required balance between vocational education, the real value of culture and its specificity in the context of "modernity".

"The vehicle" of the complicated influence of values and of the culture in general, does not work for the motivational sphere of an individual and of a professional in the process of education of a specialist. Without real understanding of the culture the role of universal competences in modeling is naturally decreased resulting in losses to the content of the concept. And together with that the content of the concepts of "professionalism" and "professional culture" is impoverished too. Just as many other relations (concepts of competencies and labor skills) all together complicate the goal-setting for the modern professional education.

Being a model that could compensate the one-sidedness of the practices, the AestPE is considered here as the basis for the professional education of a future specialist that is addressing the issue on relations between universalism and professionalism.

3. Research Questions

Designing the AestPE for vocational education involves the idea of a certain connection between concepts. Here it is a question of relations between professionalism and universalism in the professions of the future and in the professional culture in general. The search for solutions to the practical tasks of education of the specialist of the future, the tasks of construction of an adequate educational model requires:

- a) a study of a number of qualitative characteristics of the demanded educational models that use aesthetic categories as universally applicable;
- b) selection of models, choices of strategies and methods for constructing educational models that will keep the link between the education of a specialist of the future and the categories of "humanitarian thinking" ("dialogue", "understanding", "personal growth", etc.).

Within the conceptual framework of the universal educational model (the AestPE is presented here in this regard), the question of the method takes the following form: what methods of research, modeling

and argumentation help to combine the principles of humanitarian thinking with the unity of universal abilities and professionalism and make them part of the AestPE? What determines their choice in designing an educational model?

A detailed elaboration of these methods are “markers” or “basic concepts” (basic words), reflecting the axiological, cognitive-technical and activity-behavioral parameters of the specifics of professional activity. These are such “basic concepts” by which motivation, communication and other attitudes and the results of vocational education are evaluated.

4. Purpose of the Study

The action, the “effect” of the general categories of aesthetics, the principles of the HTh is implemented through certain methods. The goal is to find these methods, to show an example and the result of their work.

4.1. One of the difficult problems in the construction of educational models is the implementation of principles in it, determining their place in educational processes and procedures (and it is practically important to know also where the modeling should stop). This is significant not only for research but also for the launch of the educational model of a specialist of the future. Methods for investigating this problem are something without which the model cannot take place. In the AestPE, as a universal educational model, approaches and methods have a flexible modeling framework, a method that helps solve the problems of algorithmic thinking, or the contradictions of its tasks (“multitasking”) with those of creative thinking.

4.2. When it comes to the qualitative characteristics of the desired model, the qualitative methods are chosen. The AestPE is focused on general concepts about humanitarian thinking and the aesthetics of education. In the conceptual framework of the AestPE, their expression gets further sustainable development in the practice of creating a model, in the procedures for assessment and expert evaluation of the operating educational systems.

From this point of view, the study aims to consider and identify the importance of general principles and categories of the AestPE for the education of a future specialist and to find out how they can be associated with the operational mechanisms of this model. In particular, with the creation of a general algorithm, a scheme of basic markers capable of reflecting the principles and specifics of the methods that make it possible to study and design real educational processes, systems and procedures. In this sense, AestPE as a flexible frame opens up the prospect of modeling techniques in vocational education.

5. Research Methods

The choice of methods in the undertaken research was determined by the problem situation, the root of which is expressed by the notion “humanitarian thinking”, which in its turn emphasizes the humanitarian content of the phenomenon of education, its idea and specificity, human abilities, development and subjectivity. For professional culture in general, this means the need to preserve humanitarian constants of the professional activities, its “ethos” and “aesthesia”, – in the processes of learning specialized knowledge and labor skills.

5.1. All that gives impetus to the understanding of general scientific methods in the undertaken research:
• Mental modeling based on theoretical generalization;

- Generalization of own practice and data of empirical sciences in the field of sociology and psychology of art (research “the beauty and the brain”), sociology and psychology of professions, their analysis and synthesis;
- Comparison of methodological approaches offered by modern philosophy of education: humanity-analysis, aesthetics of education, dialogue and humanitarian thinking.

5.2. The result of the principles of humanitarian thinking of education concerns the process of studying the use of these methods, which manifest themselves in the fact that educational models in general and in professional education were accepted as organically related to the humanistic nature (quality) of culture as a whole. This required: a) to shift the focus of attention to the qualitative methods of research and evaluation of real educational processes and procedures, but not for the sake of giving up the quantitative approaches, not just to criticize them but in view of creating a more detailed picture of the humanitarian specificity of vocational education (in any professional field), in view of the more flexible application of widely used quantitative methods; b) to show the potential that is characteristic of vocational education when it relies on the universalism of abilities; c) to reveal and emphasize (logically and practically) the meaning of the category of aesthetics as a principle in relation to vocational education (that is, in relation to the whole variety of working career forms materialized in labor skills). These areas of attention increase the significance of a broader sense of aesthetics in the educational model, as a way to make special professional knowledge and relevant labor skills more profound and meaningful in the process of acquiring vocational education.

5.3. Principal and at the same time “selective” meaning of the aesthetical in the model of the AestPE is focused on the priority of the aesthetical category form (sensual and mental). The focus on the form as a prerequisite for constructive thinking and as a condition for its algorithmization (in necessary amounts) is supported by the basic conditions for the exact execution of certain actions and operations by an expert, thereby achieving and maintaining communication with the sensual side of the view of life and action in the universe. The resolution of the “conflict” between universalism and professionalism rests upon the same basis; an opportunity to solve the educational problems of human reactions and the moral sphere is being given; and there is an understanding that prevents the dangers of reducing the creative nature of thinking. Ultimately, at the level of psychology and pedagogy of behavior, the AestPE creates an answer to the need of the digital society in creative and critical thinking, supports the so-called “Four K-algorithm”: communication, creativity, critical thinking.

What has been studied so far by methods of “ergonomics” and “synergy”, under the influence of artificial intelligence, becomes the subject of “aesthetics of education”. As a structure the AestPE includes not only private but also general meanings: aesthetical interpretation of universal abilities in the context of category “form” (mental and sensual) and cultural/educational/pedagogical principles of “humanitarian thinking” (with such “basic words” or guidelines as dialogue, understanding, “personal growth”).

5.4. The aesthetic nature of universal abilities is manifested in this as part of psychology, as the unity of sensory reactions with cognitive processes, rationality of thinking in unity with intuition, imagination, and creativity. The qualitative modeling methods aimed at this in the conceptual frame of the

AestPE permit to preserve the picture of the basic “sensual” reactions and perceptions in the professional behavior of the specialist, in his labor skills (mental, technical and technological).

The AestPE is not aimed at a momentary result and is not a preparation for this or that creative profession or any “Causal-Comparative Studies” but it does address the qualitative methods related to very different aspects of human behavior and research design (Creswell, 2009; Kalpokaite & Radivojevic, 2019). The AestPE model, as a model of vocational education, is based on the “combined” methods, mixed ones or the “consensual qualitative research (CQR)” that “borrow ideas from the grounded theory, which preceded it, as well as from other qualitative approaches” (Patten & Newhart, 1970/2017)

Some researchers show that the subjects of qualitative methods are intuition, emotional intellect, as well as critical and interpreting thinking with relevant cognitive skills and art-based practice (Brown, 2018). The methodology of humanitarian thinking within AestPE does not create a robotic “copy” of a person (or artificially created new “homunculus”) but an integral human person.

In the most general sense, the AestPE model appears as an essential prerequisite for the professional culture of the specialist of the future, the starting point for building of the vocational education as an organic part of the phenomenon of modern and future culture. The significance of the AestPE is found within a number of important professional areas, among which one of the most important, above all, is the “communications” area; therefore the AestPE as a project of universalism of abilities and personal growth is closely related to the project and the concept of “dialogue”. This connection makes the methodological principles of humanitarian thinking logical for the AestPE model.

6. Findings

6.1. The inclusion of common concepts and contexts into the modeling of the AestPE is important today not only for the professional success of a specialist, but for maintaining the human level of professional training and professional behavior as well, for developing new ways of “being human” in the profession and, as the consequence, for the whole professional culture of a specialist of the future.

My point of view is: the AestPE is not a kind of ready-made algorithm and practice for its application, but a model with flexible frameworks and the ability to search for ways (argumentation) to them. One of the features of this model is the inclusion of general concepts and contexts expressing cultural constants, sometimes implicitly present in educational models, not always sufficiently comprehended, taking into account the changes that take place, and the use of existing instruments of vocational training.

6.2. Using qualitative methods, an assessment and measurement scale is modeled. Markers for the scale are proposed in the form of such concepts as “aesthetical attitude”, “aesthetical form”, “communication” and “dialogue” etc. for measuring the interdependence of versatility and professionalism. (For example, measuring the motivational base of graduates of schools, students of colleges and universities, the results obtained at different stages of vocational training, in terms of the universalism of the acquired professional knowledge and skills; to make predictions of competencies, etc.). In the flexible framework of the universal model of the AestPE using the optimal performance of qualitative research and modeling methods, more efficiently functioning instruments for professional education are presented. In addition to the already known techniques, such instrument could become a scale for indicating and measuring of the corresponding parameters of the professional activity. Having defined as the subject of

research and modeling the unity of universal abilities and professionalism (on which the AestPE is working with the help of qualitative methods) and having established as the base value the principles of humanitarian thinking on which the AestPE is built, such a scale expresses professional labor skills that could be measured using the basic parameters: axiological, sensory, cognitive, sensory-technical.

6.3. The summation of these parameters represents the cultural level of the individual and is in line (in the well-known terminology of P. Bourdieu) with the concept of “cultural capital”. To our mind, this concept is not fully involved in sociological research of professions that give preference to the capital called “social”, often taking from the concept “cultural” only one parameter (originating from families with educated parents) in studying qualification status, social educational trajectories, the social composition of students and others. Work with a similar scale in the "frame" of the AestPE can be carried out with known tools. Solving the problem of analyzing the compatibility of universal abilities and professional qualities, the characteristics of natural mechanisms and cognitive resource are added to the scale structure in their individual representation, and in vocational education also with studies of the professionally important qualities (Bubnova, 2015; Kolennikova, 2018; Tihonova & Karavai, 2016), and with the addition of the response test for harmony of form (Kniazeva, 2015) you can get data to compare them with the aesthetic component of both cognitive resource and that of the psycho-physiological prerequisites. While creating new instruments the most important there remain the principles of universalism of the aesthetic categories and of the humanitarian thinking. The parameters are discussed by the community in accordance with the launch plan and with the level of formation of the existing project performer. Here we only determine possible approaches and a subject for such a discussion.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The main thing that the unique features of the AestPE provide the vocational education with is its connection with dialogue projects and concepts about universalism of abilities and personal growth, that is, with general categories aiming not at the momentary action, but at the need to value the universalism of abilities in educational practices and especially in vocational education. This is the essence of the application of qualitative methods of research, expert evaluation, modeling, etc. as part of the AestPE: being organic for the AestPE, they open up the possibilities of combining the principles of the humanitarian thinking (humanitarian specifics of education) and pedagogical actions in vocational training.

7.2. The prospect of professional culture under the conditions of a renewed cultural and educational type, when it becomes necessary to refer to such general categories and attitudes, requires the AestPE in vocational education. The undertaken here theoretical consideration of the general settings of the “aesthetic” and the HTh (as elements of the AestPE that are strategically important for the professional culture of a specialist of the future) gives those guidelines which open up only with the help of the qualitative methods and are able to create both new algorithms and, if necessary, new possibilities for a more complete “measurement” of the importance of the various elements of professional culture in general. The working “parameters” (scale) proposed in the article are suitable for applying quantitative methods (for example, measuring the motivational base of school graduates, college and university students, etc., the results obtained at different stages of vocational training), but first of all they respond to principles of the HTh in the very process of education of a specialist of the future. When building such a model in practice,

new parameters can also be defined for the various measurements in their quantitative terms. The terminology available at present makes it possible to create a scale. Important: the AestPE with its universal categories in their “application” to vocational education opens up a possibility for more wide inclusion of especially qualitative methods and approaches into the study of professional culture.

7.3. The essence of the matter is in the determination of “flexible” parameters applicable to the model of education of a specialist of the future, that takes into account the principles of the HTh in solving the tasks of combining professionalism and universalism of abilities (first of all, when fixing the results). The “scale” proposed in view of the principles of the humanitarian thinking, imposed on various parts of the statutory activities of an educational institution of vocational education also acts as a means of “verification” (we emphasize that verified “within a framework” of the Aesthetical Paradigm of Education could mean an ordinary statutory activity of an institution of vocational education (primary, secondary and higher), as well as practically applicable means of bringing the professional activities (for which the future specialist is being prepared), into a creative plan, into a variety of options and results and to the individual's ability to switch onto the new challenges of professional activities, it serves as a reference point in the ordinary teaching work.

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