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COMMUNICATIVE INFLUENCE ON CAREER CHOICE AS A PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT FACTOR

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Abstract

The article focuses on a particular professional burnout factor: communicative influence on career choices. In the introduction the authors point to sociocultural reformation as a civilizational process leading to large-scale reforms and creating conditions for human development. The authors analyze the major tendencies of contemporary social reality cognition that are explicitly present in career choice studies. A career choice is supposed to give meaning to a human social life. The researchers bring arguments in favor of the following hypothesis: if intersubjective factors of human communication dominate over the personal ones in a career choice, it leads to self-alienation which manifests itself in a professional burnout. The study is carried out by traditional analytical methods as well as existential phenomenology methods. Conclusions: a person in the process of a professional choice is constantly and unwillingly influenced by interpersonal communication which forms a thesaurus of professional self-determination; received information forms the basis of an ideal professional image – it becomes a project of the future ideal self; however, the real self clashes with this ideal image because it prevents self-actualization – it leads to a professional burnout.

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Keywords: Communication, career choice, intersubjectivity, professional burnout, self.



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1. Introduction

The contemporary world evokes the necessity to rebuild the system of human knowledge in accordance with new ideas, values, technologies and social relations. These changes encompass all spheres of human life and can be expressed in the concept of a socio-cultural reformation.

This is not a revolutionary process, but a number of large-scale reforms. Sociocultural reformation is an evolutionary civilizational process which makes the continuity of human history possible. It brings about the opportunity of multidimensional human nature development (Chaplinskaya, 2017a). “Each citizen should have an opportunity to live as they see fit, if it doesn’t break universal ethical principles or infringe other people’s freedom and rights, given to all people in a civilized society” (Bauman, 1991, pp. 28-48).

The tendencies towards individualization come along with stronger communicative influence of individuals on each other and more active communication (partly due to modern technologies) (Gashkova, Berezovskaya, & Shipunova, 2017; Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin, & Anosova, 2017). The very essence of communication changes: there is a shift from subject-object to subject-subject communication (Bylieva, Lobatyuk, & Rubtsova, 2018). This makes it relevant to analyze human development in light of a dialectical contradiction of freedom and dependence.

These tendencies are very obvious in a process of a career choice (closely connected to sociality itself). For modern people this choice is a continuous life-long process (Zeer, 2005). It is more than a question of economic wellbeing or “doing good for the humanity and our own development” (Marx & Engels, 1956, p.4) – it is “a way to give meaning to one’s own social life” (Kroll & Kudashov, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

The starting point of our study is the following thesis: a career choice is a way to find meaning in one’s social existence. The primary driving forces in this choice are subjective. However, these subjective inclinations undergo a constant influence of interpersonal communication. To be more exact, they are influenced by the meanings emerging in the process of communication. Thus, initial dominating intersubjective communicative influence can later lead to a professional burnout.

3. Research Questions

In order to understand the role of the communicative influence in a professional burnout it is necessary to solve the following questions:

1. To define the notion of “communicative influence” in case of the unintentional influence of one individual on another
2. Explicate the existential structure of a career choice, its subjective and intersubjective aspects
3. Explain the phenomenon of a professional burnout as a phenomenon of false existence.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to give a descriptive scheme of a professional burnout process resulting from intersubjective influence on a subjective career choice.

5. Research Methods

To describe the essence of communicative influence we analyzed contemporary philosophical theories of communication and found a new theoretical focus – it prioritizes communication and views the whole society as a system of communications. We produced an existential scheme of a career choice according to the phenomenological tradition. We used J. Habermas's theory of communicative action. It postulates that communicative rationality makes it possible for intersubjective norms, meanings and values to influence personal subjective processes. Professional burnout is linked to the problem of true and false existence. Hence, some elements of existential phenomenology are used in this work.

6. Findings

According to Nazarchuk (2011, p.157), “the emergence of the philosophical communication theory became one of the most significant events in XX century philosophy”. Starting from the linguistic turn philosophy is moving from a “non-communicating mind” towards the axioms of a communicating mind. Among those who made a contribution to the development of philosophy of communication are E. Husserl, existentialists (S. Kierkegaard, M. Heidegger, J-P. Sartre, A. Camus, M. Buber) and post-modernists (G. Deleuze, F. Guattari). Nowadays, social communication and interaction are a major factor in human social life, they shape a modern lifestyle. They are the consequences of a revolution in data management (Preobrazhenskaya, 2017).

In the humanities the notion of communicative influence is often reduced to that of communicative violence and intentional manipulation. Such manipulation is, of course, quite common in modern media-reality. However, in this research we use the term “communicative influence” to denote unintentional influence. Under the term “unintentional” in this case we understand the absence of a clear intention in the process of various information exchange: opinions, assessments, emotions. “Any incoming information influences human behavior, opinions, dispositions and feelings. Communication is always influence” (Latynov, 2012, p. 16). Thus, communicative influence on a career choice process is a thesaurus of a professional identity.

Many researchers recognize socialization as a major factor in a career choice linking it to gaining social experience (Baklanov, 2014). In “Reflections of a young man on the choice of a profession” (1835) Marx wrote: “...we cannot always choose the profession we feel a calling to. Our social relations are already forming even before we are capable of directing them” (Marx, Engels, 1956, p.3).

According to Zeer's (2005) psychological studies, an individual is storing data on professions, their social rating and personal professional opportunities during all their life on a situational, day-to-day basis. This data forms a foundation for a gradual development of a subjectively important ideal image of professional activity (Kuntz, 2012). An attempt to make it real drives a person through an existential crisis which manifests itself in a crisis of identity. Socialization and communication are a necessary background for the realization of one's existence.

In a continuous process of a career choice there are subjective and intersubjective aspects. The latter ones are connected to gaining information on profession symbols through comparison of oneself with the Other as long as gaining social assessment of professional activity ideal image. The subjective element in this scheme is the operation of comparison. It explicates the qualities and opportunities of a personality

required for a given profession and compares them with the qualities that are attributes of a desired professional role. This operation also takes part in the existential formation of a subjectively important ideal image of a professional activity.

Habermas speaks of “communicative rationality” and this rationality makes it possible for people to collectively work out new cultural meanings, values and goals “that could become new waymarks for the development of society and the people themselves” (Farman, 1999, p.86). Thus, all information gathered in the process of a career choice against the background of intersubjective cooperation creates a foundation for a subjective professional activity ideal image. It is through the actualization of this image that self-affirmation of a personality takes place. It is worth noting that although intersubjective information is important, it is but a “raw material” for subjective “refining”.

According to Plato (2007), the essence of a human is his soul, his self-propulsion – autokineton. The loss of this autokineton (to be more exact, its alienation from a person) leads to a great inner disorder. The dependence on the outer world is enslavement of a living and self-propelling soul by static and passive matter. A soul complements matter with movement and life, but in this process it loses itself in matter, alienating from itself, taking on the properties of matter (Plato, 2007).

Professional burnout was first described in 1974 in the works of an American psychiatrist H. Freudenberg. People who worked with total devotion after a while developed common symptoms: lack of motivation towards work, cynicism, irritability (Freudenger, 1974). These symptoms were labeled “professional burnout syndrome”. Such a burnout is a result of a continuous influence of interpersonal and work stressors in professional life. It provokes changes on both outer and inner level which result in alienation from professional activity (Leiter, 1992). A person experiencing professional burnout becomes estranged from his work, his inner and outer life (Chaplinskaya, 2017b). It allows to perceive professional burnout as an existential problem, a problem of self-actualization.

By 1982, Maslach widens the understanding of this syndrome. She highlights the fact that people in “helping professions” are more susceptible to the burnout. Maslach was first to single out the levels of a professional burnout: a decline in personal efficiency, depersonalization, emotional exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leite, 2001).

Existentialism postulates that a human life is a project. A person is constantly alienating himself for the sake of his future. During this project a person is creating himself and the world around, i.e. he is self-actualizing (Sartre, 2017).

Self-actualization can be either true or false. In “History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena” M. Heidegger speaks of true and false being as of two polar points. Human being is defined by its location between true and false being. Human being is a dynamic process full of real actions and choices towards either true or false being. In Dasein true and false beings are equal. According to M. Heidegger one type of being doesn’t automatically eliminate the other. False being for true being is Dasein’s understanding of its choice between the “strategy of determination” and “the strategy of degradation”. False being does not exclude true being, false being is a situation when Dasein forgets that there is a choice. It is necessary to understand false being, because it is impossible to abandon one’s own ontology. The actualization of false being in one’s own horizon and, using M. Heidegger’s expression, “temporality realization”, is liberation from oppressing traditions and projects, and an emerging opportunity to create one’s own project

(Heidegger, 1998). However, one has to live through false being, realize it and then consciously refuse from it.

In “The Education of a Successful Person: Socio-Cultural Analysis” Mikhajlova (2009) shows the essence of false existence. False self-actualization is following a narrow path of social norms. True self-actualization is living a life with no guarantees. Such a life is full of prospects, a person is actively engaged in designing their own life. The basis of true existence is determination that gives the strength to live in constant uncertainty of a modern world and the ability to make an everyday existential choice.

Professional burnout is false self-actualization. It is a personal orientation towards the outer criteria of existence and dependence on social confirmation of one’s actions. This makes it impossible to create one’s own project.

7. Conclusion

We have found that communication theory is gaining influence in modern philosophy. We also think it necessary to analyze social processes as intersubjective phenomena. In the context of a career choice unintentional communicative influence forms the thesaurus of a professional identity.

In its turn, all significant data gathered in the process of intersubjective communication becomes the foundation for a subjective ideal image of professional activity. From the existentialist point of view this is the creation of the project of one’s self.

However, when the subject follows the outer criteria of existence, in other words, when he is dominated by intersubjective influence, he doesn’t actualize his real self. The impossibility to actualize the project of one’s self leads to a professional burnout syndrome.

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