

FaR 2021**International Forum “Freedom and responsibility in pivotal times”****ACMEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO EXAMINE PROFESSIONAL
SELF-DETERMINATION OF RURAL YOUTH**

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Abstract

The paper attempts to deal with professional self-determination of young people through an acmeological approach. Acmeology is a science that studies patterns and features of human development at the stage of maturity, as well as ways and means of reaching the pinnacle in this development. Since A.A. Derkach defines acmeological approach as a process of formation and consolidation of a real need for self-knowledge, self-development and self-realization in the human consciousness, it is quite possible to consider professional self-determination from an acmeological standpoint. The paper analyzes objective and subjective impacts that hinder a person to reach the “acme” and compares them with the process of achieving professional self-determination. The paper provides a novel rationale to the possibility of extrapolating the acmeological approach, its basic concepts and provisions to the process of professional self-determination. The authors show that considering professional self-determination in the context of life track, life philosophy, life script, life-purpose values and professional “acme” enables a holistic approach to be applied in a single set of all interdependent impacts and links. The authors describe continuous, discrete, divergent and ascending tracks of professional self-determination, correlate acmeological invariants of professionalism with soft and general professional competencies necessary for a professional to succeed in the digital economy. The results of sociological research conducted by the authors confirm the stated theoretical propositions.

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Keywords: Professional self-determination, acmeology, acmeological approach, rural young people



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1. Introduction

Professional self-determination is classically analyzed by psychologists, sociologists, teachers, philosophers, economists (Pryazhnikov, 2007; Razumov et al., 2020; Skosyreva et al., 2020a, 2020b; Skosyreva et al., 2021). Recently, a series of scientific papers have been published that update new interdisciplinary approaches to this phenomenon (Shumakova et al., 2021). The most relevant among such approaches is the acmeological approach. Acmeology is a fairly new branch of knowledge that emerged at the nexus of a number of humanities. It aims to establish patterns, features and mechanisms of human development in the maturity stage, as well as ways and means of reaching the pinnacle in this development. Since objective and subjective impacts on the way a person reaches the pinnacle of personal and professional development are viewed as the subject of acmeology, and a person – as the object, being an individual, individuality, personality and agent of professional activity, it is quite logical to consider professional self-determination, which is promoted by the same factors, in the context of personal movement towards one's "acme".

2. Problem Statement

In Russian science, professional self-determination of young people has been a carefully developed topic presented in numerous scientific publications. However, for many decades it has been increasingly becoming relevant. This is due to some new external implications of the socio-economic situation, and an ever-increasing need to harmonize the interests of society and individual making a professional choice and doing professional activity.

3. Research Questions

The subject is professional self-determination of rural youth as viewed by acmeology.

4. Purpose of the Study

The paper aims to discover the acmeological approach to professional self-determination of young people.

5. Research Methods

A theoretical and methodological toolkit is comprised of scientific papers that deal with the acmeological approach to personality development (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 2006; Ananiev, 2001; Bodalev & Rudkevich, 2003; Derkach, 2002, 2006, 2008; Derkach et al., 2004; Derkach & Selezneva, 2007; Derkach & Zazykin, 2003; Markova, 1996; Moskalenko, 2007). The following theoretical research methods were used including analysis, comparison, analogy, interpretation, extrapolation. The main empirical method was a sociological survey conducted in 2020 at Omsk State Agrarian University named after V.I. P.A. Stolypin. The survey involved 1,205 full- and part-time students of 1-5 years of study representing 7 departments.

6. Findings

Acmeology encourages people to understand who they are, what their abilities, capacity, needs, and how they can and should use their own personal qualities in order to fulfill as individuals, citizens, and professionals. According to Derkach and Zazykin (2003), one of the founders of modern domestic acmeological scientific school, the acmeological approach features “a comprehensive study of person’s integrity in the maturity stage, when his/her individual, personal and activity-driven qualities are viewed as a unity of interrelationships with an aim of helping them reach those summits that everyone can do”. Once defined as a process of developing and reinforcing an urgent need for self-knowledge, self-development and self-realization in the human consciousness, the acmeological approach is indispensable for exploring professional self-determination.

In this regard, professional self-determination need to be seen in the context of achieving the “acme” by a person. Hence, the paper considers the relationship between objective and subjective impacts that either promote or prevent a person from achieving the “acme” and successful professional self-determination and evaluates professional self-determination in the acmeological context of understanding the life journey, life script, the meaning of life.

The objective impacts on achieving the “acme” include current socio-economic, political, historical features of society being macro-environment, as well as specific features of micro-environment and individual as such.

The objective impacts that hamper the achievement of the “acme” are likely to involve situations, events disrupting people’s lives, disorganizing or simply terminating their activities.

The subjective impacts contributing to the achievement of the “acme” include the characteristics and personality traits like diverse interests, creative thinking, creativity, assimilated human values, ability to work hard, ability to make decisions and take responsibility, ability to foresee the chapter of possibilities, moral courage, vitality or energy potential, ability to remain calm and composed, ability to set life goals, some special abilities, self-confidence, key to success, positive mentality, some socialization traits and qualities.

The subjective impacts that hinder the achievement of the “acme” include low motivation, lack of understanding of one’s desires, lack of interest in knowledge, life without a plan and priorities, wrong choice of a profession, inability to manage time, inability to adapt to changes, lack of creative imagination, inability to work in a team, negative mentality.

It is clear that these same impacts can be viewed as objective and subjective conditions enabling professional self-determination of young people at some point during their life journey.

From an acmeological point of view, “life journey is an irreversible time-space condominium in a human life (from birth to death), in which an individual grows, develops and becomes self-fulfilled. It has such characteristics as purposefulness and expediency” (Derkach & Selezneva, 2007, p. 24). Life journey is composed of such elements as life philosophy, life track, life perspective, life strategy, life script and meaning of life.

Life philosophy resides in person’s attitudes to various life situations as per one’s values and principles. In a situation of professional choice, life philosophy is better unlocked.

The young people were asked a number of questions to find out what their life philosophy is. Answering the question “Why did you choose your profession,” 37.7% of the respondents said that they liked their future field of activity. The same 37.6% chose this university as it fosters academic excellence in the field selected, 46.1% of the respondents study to become a qualified specialist, 83.4% believe that the chosen profession is interesting and matches their ideas about it, 90.5% agree that their future profession is highly valued in modern society. Such confident responses indicate that the respondents have a certain life philosophy inspired by a system of values and principles to live by.

The next component of life journey is life track. The acmeological approach suggests the following life tracks:

Continuous, when one stage of life flows smoothly and consistently into the next.

Discrete, which is interrupted under various circumstances, success is replaced by failure.

Divergent, when person’s interests and activities get multiple and versatile development.

Ascending, in which both the individual and the very life are constantly and qualitatively developing and improving.

Extrapolating from the given approach to professional self-determination, the latter can also be considered as continuous, discrete, divergent and ascending.

A continuous track is characteristic of people who, due to their life experience, abilities and qualities, systematically plan their future life and profession and seek not to deviate from the track chosen. A discrete track means that a person, having gained success in his or her career, for some reason fails and his or her further career ladder can be both progressive and regressive. This often happens to athletes who achieve high results, and then, once retired from the sport, they feel lost and do not find themselves in other professions. A divergent track is more preferable in present-day conditions, when both the environment and the individual are changing rapidly. Thus, modern digitalization processes are transforming the world of professions, laying down new requirements for professionals. In this situation, a person should learn to quickly adapt to changing conditions, be ready for life-long learning, self-development, possible retraining and mastering new professions. An ascending track implies a constant successful movement an individual makes in profession, from making a choice to reaching the pinnacle of a professional career (“professional acme”). This is an ideal track, although rarely seen in real life but one that should be strived for.

Another extrapolation that can be applied to evaluate professional self-determination is about an acmeological concept of life perspective. Life perspective is an image of the future created by an individual. In acmeology, life perspectives are presented as cognitive, motivational, and merely life prospects.

When a person is constantly making plans, but does not always realize what he or she has planned, we speak of a cognitive life perspective. If a person does not have clear informed plans, but climbs to success due to high inspiration for achievement, we speak of a motivational life perspective. Basically, life perspective is peculiar to people whose future is predetermined by their entire previous lives including experience, abilities, personality traits. These people generally tend to systematically build their life strategy.

The sociological findings showed that nearly every third agricultural student chose a future profession based on their plans: 27.2% confidently responded that university years fully correspond to their life plans, and they plan to work within their specialty after graduation from the university, 55.4% answered

– “rather corresponds than not”. Among young people there is a fairly high proportion of those who design their future in an orderly manner and try to implement plans, build a life strategy and come up with tactics to accomplish it. The majority of those surveyed (80.4%) confidently responded that in order to realize their plans, they need education, improvement of abilities and personal qualities, the most important of which is diligence. This means that professional self-determination can be modelable and controlled.

The authors believe that it is reasonable to cite a theory of life script, which, according to E. Bern (Bern, 2020), is based on someone’s attitudes towards themselves and other people around. Subject to this, a person builds life, plans, relations with other people, etc. Based on the theory, a life script is set down in a child up to 2 years of age, from 2 to 18 years old the script is developed, from 18 to 45 years old it is put to practice, and after 45 years, the so-called “payback” is received. Drawing on this approach, from the earliest age, a child should be given information necessary to create conditions and patterns for both a successful future life and profession. The survey showed that 10.5% of the respondents first thought of choosing a profession before the age of 12. This means that career guidance must be provided from the earliest years. Making a life script by the age of 18 fully is the same as choosing a profession. It is at this age that the period of adolescence ends and the period of early maturity, as it is called in acmeology, starts. It is the period when professional self-determination turns into professional training and realization of personal potential in profession and career. This is the most productive age when the person reaches its “acme” in most professions. Although, there are some jobs in which the pinnacle can be reached in middle or late maturity (philosopher, writer, politician, etc.). Script analysis allows people to understand whether it is possible to change the influence of life scripts and how.

Life perspectives, scripts, professional choices would be incomplete if they are not correlated with life-purpose ideas made by young people.

The acmeological approach to understanding the meaning of life and the way it correlates with professional “acme” was formulated by Bodalev and Rudkevich (2003) in their work “How to Become Great or Outstanding”. Meanings, embodied in the goals people set, can reflect the basic life and cultural values that have become personally significant values of these people, but they can also be very far from these values in their substantive characteristics. Then, in the first case, people, through their actions and deeds, reach the topmost milestones in their development, which match the ideals created by a citizen, spouse, parent, expert, and in the second case, these milestones turn out to be inaccessible for them.

The stories of prominent people confirms the thesis that if the meaning of life is correlated with the societal and cultural values, realization of personal potential in profession and career is also positive and successful.

The sociological survey shows that 79.4% of the young people surveyed put family and love values first among all life-purpose values, second (52%) – work and career values, third (49.2%) – material values, and fourth (43, 2%) – education and self-development values. Moreover, in the dilemma “spiritual or material”, the majority of the young people (57.7%) tended towards the priority of material values.

It is possible to talk about successful professional self-determination when a person has self-fulfilled in the profession chosen, is satisfied with the choice and activity, and has made the greatest progress in it. From the acmeological point of view, we can say that a person has reached his/her “professional acme”. It is a state that implies “the highest level approached by a given person in his professional development,

maximum mobilization, realization of all professional abilities, capacities and reserves of a person at a particular stage of life” (Acmeologist of HR work, 2006, p. 1). Professional “acme” is “the point of the highest creativity and the greatest significance of human-created values” (Ananiev, 2001).

It can be argued that professional competency exactly results from successful professional self-determination of the individual.

Subsequent upon numerous observations and studies, the scholars established that professional competency among representatives of various occupations develops following similar patterns that create the same properties, qualities and skills referred to as acmeological invariants of professionalism, including moral courage, high level of self-regulation, mature anticipation, ability to make decisions and to take responsibility, creativity. In the survey, these invariants of professionalism were presented as soft and general professional skills that should be possessed in order to be competitive in new conditions of the digital economy. Most of the respondents ranked the need for these qualities at 5 points on a 5-point scale. Thus, moral courage as a necessary quality was rated 5 points out of 5 by 501 people out of 1,205 respondents, mature anticipation – 581, high level of self-regulation – 495, ability to make decisions – 630, creativity – 471. About 50% of the respondents are sure that these qualities must be possessed in order to become a winner in the competition. In this regard, the transition of education to a competence-based approach is quite reasonable, which embraces almost all the invariants of professionalism as universal competencies necessary for every specialist, regardless of the profession being acquired.

7. Conclusion

The acmeology provides a holistic approach to evaluate professional self-determination of a young person in a single set of all interdependent impacts and links enabling a person to reach the peaks of life and professional development. These peaks are commonly called “acme” in acmeology. Throughout his life, a person experiences the state of “acme” many times. This happens every time the goal is successfully achieved – an excellent mark received at school, successfully passed exams, admission to a university, obtaining a diploma, getting a desired job, promotion at work, etc.

Certain conditions are necessary for a person, being an individual, a citizen and a professional, to reach personally and socially significant “acme”. Acmeological conditions and factors of professional self-determination relate to each other as a whole and a part, therefore, being aware of them is very important when modeling any concepts of personality development.

Acmeology has developed a whole set of strategies for streamlining personality development, accumulated significant experience in acmeological simulation, developed algorithms for building a successful career, and technologies for personal and professional development (Acmeologist of HR work, 2006; Derkach, 2002; Derkach & Selezneva, 2007; Shiyan, 2005). Applying the acmeological approach to the target problem will result in an up-to-date model of professional self-determination of rural youth in the context of the digitalization of the economy, will identify emerging trends and outline a draft system to manage them.

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