

## Professional Competence as the Level of Professionalism

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**Abstract:** Each profession, regardless of its specificity, requires a high level of professionalism from its employees. Researchers of the study propose to determine professionalism as an integral psychological characteristic of a work subject, reflecting and setting the level of a man's compliance with the occupation requirements. At that professionalism is composed of professional competence and operation success. Professional competence determines the level of main professional components knowledge and skills. The success of activity reflects the level of a meaningful goal achievement by an actor, a social recognition. The analysis of different approaches presented in the study concerning the determination of professional competence and its species suggest that professional competence being the part of a subject professionalism may also be the criterion of its development. The content and the types of professional competence are revealed on the basis of this analysis. The necessity of emotional and volitional competence identification and exploration is justified for socioeconomic occupations. The diagnostics of professional competence was carried out using various psychological techniques. The reliability of obtained results was provided by research and application procedure standardization concerning the modern methods of data statistical processing: correlation and factor analysis, student t-test and others. The factor analysis showed that emotional and volitional personality traits develop a single factor during the performance of professional activities by the representatives of socioeconomic professions. In the course of empirical research, the contents of the emotional-volitional competence is revealed for the professional activity subject, including: a strong will, self-control, flexibility, determination, self-sufficiency, attentiveness, patience, emotional stability, neuro-mental stability, self-motivation, the integrative level of emotional intelligence, programming, the overall level of self-regulation. The diagnosis of emotional and volitional competence allows to optimize the psychological support of activities for the socioeconomic profession representatives at the stage of adaptation and during their whole professional activities to perform the quality diagnosis of employees which will increase the level of professionalism.

**Key words:** Professionalism, successful career, competence, professional competence, special competence, social competence, personal competence, emotional and volitional competence

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### INTRODUCTION

Now a days, the Russian labor market needs professionals with the motivation and professional qualities necessary for successful completion of a professional activity and its effective implementation. Each profession has certain characteristics but regardless, it requires a high level of professionalism from employees. "Professionalism is an integrated psychological feature of a hard-working man, reflecting and fixing the level of a man's compliance with the requirements of his occupation". Professionalism in general, includes the certain personal qualities that contribute to the successful implementation of work. At that a standard professionalism involves the allocation of professional

requirements to a person's identity as a subject of professional activity and the real professionalism requires the necessary psychological qualities.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Psychologists repeatedly noted the importance of a person psychological characteristics study as a subject of activity. The development of a subject category in the national psychology is associated with B.G. Ananyev, D.N. Uznadze, S.L. Rubinstein, A.V. Brushlinsky, K.A. Abulkhanova, etc. During the activity a subject not only transforms its object in accordance with the purpose but also acts in various capacities during the process of its implementation. According to S.L. Rubenstein a

subject is described by his activities his ability for development and integration, self-determination, control development and improvement. It is assumed that a full analysis of a subject demands the revealing of several interrelated aspects: the consideration of a man as the subject of various activities; the disclosure of a subject as a basis for the implementation of various forms of mental activity (processes, properties, states); the analysis of a subject as a participant, an initiator and an organizer of interpersonal interactions with others; the study of a subject as the source, the important component and the reorganizer of new public and social relations (social situation of development), etc.

The consideration of a man as a subject leads to the study of a man's psychology fundamental problems. A subject in philosophical and psychological literature is determined as the source of activity aimed at an object. According to psychologist a subject must be active, independent, capable, skillful during the implementation of specific activities and first of all during its material and practical activities.

The functioning of an individual as a subject of activity is made up of natural, mental, personal conditions and the other components of such functioning (the latter include abilities, motives, will, etc.) on the one hand-the social conditions and activity requirements (regulatory and other aspects of labor), on the other-the ways of this activity organization by a hard-working man and finally a profession.

Let's change a little the above mentioned concept of professionalism, defining it as an integral psychological characteristics of a working subject, reflecting and retaining the level of a man's compliance with the occupation requirements. At that professionalism is composed of professional competence and activity success. The professional competence determines the level of main professional components development- knowledge and skills. Thus, a high level of professionalism is attained. The success of activity reflects the achievement level of meaningful goal, social recognition, the recognition of an individual by "important people".

The professional competence is the main criterion for the development of real professionalism as well as the condition for a professional activity. Professional competence is an important component and the indicator of high professionalism. Zeer (2008), Raven (1997), Derkach (2004), Markova (1996) and Zimnyaya (2005) and others consider professional competence as a developed, actual personal quality as a socio-professional characteristics of a professional activity subject, based on the knowledge, skills, conditioned intellectually and

personally. Such a concept of professional competence assumes its manifestation during the solution of various tasks and in different professional situations (Puchkova, 2012).

Competence, according to the supporters of cognitive psychology is based on the creation of large specialized banks and systematic knowledge. Knowledge is related to a specific area and is implemented due to the use of rules. This knowledge is arranged in related groups that facilitate the recall of information. The knowledge retrieved from a memory may be used in different ways, depending on the situation and the field of competence. Experts determine whether a task is within their knowledge or the rules of adjacent fields shall be applied.

In some studies, along with the concept "competence", the concept "competency" is applied which also has different interpretations in various sources: some identify it with the concept of "competence", others define it as an independent structure.

It is significant that in the works of this period, the concept of competence is interpreted in different ways: first of all, competence is synonymous with professionalism and secondly the competence is one of its components.

After analysis of relationship between competence and competency, Zimnyaya (2005) showed that competence is the internal, potential, hidden psychological developments: knowledge, conceptions, algorithms of operations systems of values and attitudes which are detected then in person's competencies.

Noskova (2009), analyzing the theses of roundtable discussion participants concerning the topic "Competence and PVK: theoretical approaches and the methods of diagnosis", revealed two distinct variants of the terms "competence" and "competency": the concept of "competency" is identical to the concept of "competence". At that competence is an integral characteristic of the work subject, reflecting its commitment to the effective implementation of a professional tasks and its separate components reflect the kinds of individual competencies (e.g., professional, social, personal one, etc.); the concept of "competency" is not identical to the concept of "competence". The first concept characterizes the features of a post and the second one characterizes the subject of work. According to her opinion, during the discussion of this topic some new, useful judgments for the theory and practice were revealed that competencies may have a subjective reflection in the minds of workers and that the social reflection of their rights and responsibilities may not coincide with a given characteristic of the post. This fact may be a separate problem for competency study.

Raven (2002) considered competence as a person's ability which is necessary for the execution of the current action within a given subject area and includes special knowledge, skills and characteristics of thinking and the willingness to take responsibility concerning their actions. He was the first one who paid attention to the psychological component of competence and suggested that the formation and development of competence depends on objective conditions but naturally competence arises in a man as individual psychological characteristics.

The competence components in his opinion are "the characteristics and the abilities of people that allow them to achieve personally meaningful goals regardless of these goals nature and the social structure where these people live and work" (Raven, 2002). Many of these components are "relatively independent of each other. some components are related to a cognitive field and the others are related to the emotional field. these components may replace each other as the components of an effective behavior" (Raven, 2002). At that the cognitive processes developing a cognitive component of competence are considered as the planning or the determination of possible obstacles to achieve a goal, the affective processes are considered as the use of emotions to perform a task (a positive and a negative one) as well as the habitual behavior is determined (for example, the intensive work habit).

There are different approaches to the definition of a competence in domestic psychology. The activity approach (Y.M. Zhukov, L.A. Petrovskaya, etc.) consider competence is as knowledge, skills, the ways of activity performance in accordance with the specified conditions, suggesting a high level of skill. The personal activity approach (A.G. Asmolov, V.A. Hansen, G.A. Kovalev, A.K. Markova, etc.) suggests that competence must be considered in the context of a personality and must determine its integrative quality as a person. Acmeological approach implements the integration of activity and personal activity approach principles, the analysis of competence is performed taking into account the conditions and factors that ensure a high level of activity efficiency.

Within the systematic approach (N.V. Kuzmina, A.K. Markova, etc.), the professional competence may be regarded as the concept similar to professionalism as the characteristic of a professional activity subject or his actions as an individual characteristic of a person psychological traits to the profession requirements.

Various researchers attempted to define the concept of "competence" but there is no common approach in psychology so far. Each author offers his reasons for the description of this phenomenon.

Puchkova and Matveeva (2010) perform the analysis of the main approaches to the define the concept of competence. So A.A. Derkach, considering the professional competence as a person's ability to meet certain professional tasks, includes it in the system of professionalism as a main component. "Professional competence is the main cognitive component of the professional activity subsystem, the scope of professional conduct, constantly expanding system of knowledge which allows to carry out the professional activity with a high efficiency" (Derkacha, 2004). Zeer (2008) calls a set of professional knowledge, skills and the ways of professional work performance.

The consideration of competence as a body of knowledge and skills needed to implement the activities is the common one for all definitions.

Zimnyaya (2005) considers the professional competence as intellectually and personally-conditioned social and professional characteristics of a person.

In our opinion, the content and specificity of professional competence is fully revealed in the research works performed by Markova (1996) who believes that the current competence is often defined as the relationship of mental qualities and states that allow a person performing its professional activities to show the independence and responsibility ("effective competence" as ability to perform specific work functions).

Thus, professional competence is the indicator which defines the level of professional success and its study leads to an expert activity performance. The development of professional competence should be seen as the process starting prior to a professional activity and continuing during its entire performance.

Now a days, the well-known scholars (A.A. Derkach, A.K. Markova, I.A. Zymnaya, E.F. Zeer, J. Raven, L. Spencer) in the field of development psychology, acmeology, the psychology of professionalism, work psychology developed and reveal different types of professional competence (Spencer, 1983).

Zeer (2008) considers that the main components of professional competence is the social and legal competence (knowledge and skills related to professional communication and behavior); special competence (the ability to solve tasks independently); personal competence (the ability to self-realization in professional activities); auto competence (an adequate perception of your own capabilities and the ability to overcome professional destructions).

Markova (1996) identified the following types of professional competence: special competence as the mastery of professional activities at a high level; social competence as the skills in professional communication techniques; personal competence the knowing of

self-development means and individual competence as the readiness for professional growth self-organization. It is also noted that each of the competencies includes such inter-professional components as the special competence the ability to plan the PC operation skills, etc.; personal competence is the ability to plan activities to make his own decisions, creativity; individual competence is the desire to achieve success in professional activity, the desire for professional the self-realization, self-confidence.

Kuzmina (1990) considers the professional competence as one of the most important characteristics for teaching staff. She reveals the following elements of such competence: special competence in the discipline being taught; the methodological competence in the field of knowledge and skills development among students; psychological and pedagogical competence in the field of education; differential-psychological competence in the field of motivation, abilities, orientation of students; the reflection or teaching activities auto psychological competence. The special competence involves the deep knowledge in the field of the subject taught, the knowledge various problems solution ways. The methodological competence includes the knowledge of teaching methods and the ability to apply them in the learning process, the knowledge of a variety of teaching methods. The psycho-pedagogical competence is related with the knowledge of psychology, the psychology of interpersonal interaction, the ability to carry out individual work with students. The differential-psychological competence allows to identify personality traits, the motivation of students to evaluate and take into account the emotional state of people to develop the relations with them competently. The autopsychological competence is the ability to realize one's own abilities, the striving for self-improvement.

Now a days another kind of competence is revealed: "extreme professional competence", reflecting the willingness to work within sudden complicated conditions.

The common types of competencies necessary for a person regardless his profession, include the basic professional qualities and the types of professional conduct.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The performed analysis of different approaches for the definition of professional competence and its species, allow us to make the following conclusion. The content of a professional activity makes certain demands concerning an individual, performing this activity. According to

definition professionalism reflects the level of a person's compliance level with the requirements of profession and includes professional competence. This in its turn, requires a change in the significance of individual psychological components of professional competence depending on the content of professional activity, the shift of accents for example from, the communicative competence to the auto competence, etc. The professionalization is a dynamic process and we may talk about this level of professional competence psychological components development that contribute to the activity result achievement at each stage. Thus, professional competence being the part of the professionalism in respect of the professional activity subject and may be the criterion of its development.

Having considered the types of professional competence, we may say that the researchers reveal them too widely. Many researchers of the researches aimed at the study of professional competence include the emotional and volitional personality aspects in a personal and individual competence. In our opinion, taking into account the fact that the emotional and volitional aspects of personality have a great influence on a person's behavior, it would be advisable to bring them into a separate type of professional competence.

Markova (1996) states that the reason of competence and incompetence may be the psychological characteristics of an individual (state, emotional stability, etc.). Due to the nature of many socio-economic (according to E.A. Klimov's classification) professions (policemen, managers, lifeguards, teachers, doctors), the professional activity includes the interaction with different categories of citizens who need to find an individual approach in communication. This may cause a lack of clear role functions, the mental and physical overload. When one performs some professional tasks the representatives of these professions are often faced with the need to find a way out in an emergency situation. So, the performance of functional responsibilities is associated with the increased responsibility of employees for their actions.

According to the conditions of the professional activities among various socio-economic professions, we may say that the emotional and volitional characteristics of a person occupy a special place in the structure of professional competence.

The emotional characteristics should include the emotional irritability, the emotional stability, strength, the pace and the rhythm of emotional reactions, the emotional tone.

The particular attention should be paid to the study of volitional personality traits included in the structure of professional competence. Based on the experimental

results, it may be argued that the volitional traits of a person (responsibility, self-control, perseverance, determination, independence) have correlations with the functions of planning, forecasting, decision-making, self-control, the locus of control "I", the locus of control "life" (Khakimzyanov, 2012). These correlations indicate that one should more thoroughly explore the volitional aspect of a professional activity subject at different stages of an expert professional competence assessment (the selection of candidates for a certain position, certification, etc.) as well as in the course of professional activity (Khakimzyanov, 2012) as the volitional traits of a personality determine the degree of responsibility, persistence, resoluteness during the performance of professional duties.

According to the specifics of socio-economic professions activity and the high importance of emotional and volitional component of a personality within this activity, one should relate the emotional and volitional competence in a separate kind of professional competence.

In order to determine the significance of the emotional and volitional competence as the factor of professionalism development, we conducted a pilot study. The study was attended by 50 representatives of socio-economic professions at the age from 25-40 years.

The diagnosis of professional competence was carried out using various psychological techniques and included the following ones: Cattell's 16 factor personality questionnaire, the test "Life orientations", the test "The ability of self-control" developed by Peysahov at Kazan University, the diagnostic method of a personality volitional traits developed by M.V. Chumakov, the technique of "Prediction" for the detection of nervous and mental stability.

The reliability of obtained results was provided by research procedure standardization and the use of modern methods for the statistical data processing.

According to the diagnostic study results we found out that 70% of subjects have the scales of emotional stability, internal stress and the level of self-control for emotional and volitional aspect (Cattell's questionnaire) beyond the permissible values.

The obtaining of emotional stability factor in the range of 3 sthenes suggests that the majority of the studied persons is emotionally unstable, intolerant and tend to the postponement of decisions concerning complex issues in the course of their professional activity. The subjects under survey had an internal tension which manifests itself in the form of anxiety, stress, irritability.

The low level of self-control development factor indicates that these surveyed persons have internal conflicts and the lack of discipline.

According to the data obtained by the method "Prediction", developed at the St. Petersburg Military Medical Academy to determine the neuro-psychological resilience and the risk of deadadaptation in stress, we may say that 60% of the observed subjects had neuro-psychological instability during stress.

The low rates of emotional stability, inner tension, self-control development and neuro-psychological stability factors are explained by the fact that a due attention to emotional and volitional aspect of personality is not paid during the selection and development of staff.

According to the survey results the following correlations of Cattell's questionnaire factors are revealed with the values of other methods.

The "Emotional instability" has an inverse correlation with the scale "life purposes" ( $p = 0.001$ ). This indicates that the objectives in the future which give meaning, focus and perspective to life, lead to the reduction of emotional instability which was detected among 70% of the surveyed subjects. The emotional instability also has a reverse correlation with the index of locus control I (consideration of oneself as a strong personality) ( $p = 0.01$ ). The development of locus control, I may reduce the emotional instability and develop the emotional stability among tested subjects. The emotional stability is the most important personal quality that the representatives socio-economic professions should have.

"The lack of self-control" which is characterized by internal conflicts, the lack of discipline has a direct correlation with the neuro-psychological instability ( $p = 0.001$ ). This correlation indicates that the presence of internal conflicts, the non-compliance with the rules prescribed by job descriptions leads to the development of neuro-psychological instability among tested subjects, which has a negative impact on a person and his work efficiency.

The "internal tension" has an inverse correlation with the index of "goal-setting" ( $p = 0.001$ ). Goal setting is the process of creating a system of goals, their relations and the choice of the most preferred ones. The presence of clear life goals among tested subjects leads to the reduction of inner tension, irritability and anxiety.

Let's consider separately the correlations of methodology values "Personality volitional traits" between each other and with other methods.

The "responsibility" has a direct correlation with the index of "openness" ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). The responsibility which manifests itself in the form of a person's ability to perform his tasks reliably increases the willingness to cooperate, the attentiveness to people and affability. The "independence" has a direct correlation with the parameter "planning" ( $p \leq 0.001$ ) that is with the increase

of autonomy the importance of activity planning is also increased. The “perseverance” has a direct relationship with the parameter “locus of control I” ( $p \leq 0.001$ ), i.e., the increase of perseverance as a volitional quality is accompanied by an increased subjectivity during the work and life in general.

It should be noted that emotional stability is an important criterion for the effective evaluation of a professional as the resilience of emotional states and processes to the destructive effects of internal and external conditions (Izard, 1991). The emotional stability allows to reduce the negative impact of emotiogenic factors that influence the professionals working in extreme and (or) conflict situations. The results obtained during the pilot study show that 70% of the tested subjects do not have the emotional stability which adversely affects the development of professionalism.

According to the results of the factor analysis, we may say that the emotional and volitional traits of a person develop a single factor during the performance of professional activities by the representatives of socionomic professions. According to the theoretical analysis of the profession representative activity and the fact that emotional and volitional characteristics play an important role during the performance of professional tasks, we may say that these figures develop the content of the professional competence emotional and volitional components.

Thus, during the empirical research the content of the emotional and volitional competence for a professional activity subject is revealed, including: a strong will, self-control, flexibility, determination, independence, attentiveness, patience, emotional stability, nervous and mental endurance, self-motivation, integrative level of emotional intelligence, programming, the overall level of self-regulation.

The statistical comparison of the “successful” staff group with the representatives of other groups showed that the “successful” group had significantly higher values of emotional stability, self-control and strong will, determination, independence, flexibility, self-motivation, recognition of other people emotions and the integrative indicator of emotional intelligence. According to this fact, the level of emotional intelligence in the “successful” group is significantly higher compared to the other groups. These results indicate a high level of the emotional and volitional competence expression within the group of “successful” people.

### **CONCLUSION**

According to the data obtained one may recommend for the professionals involved in the selection and the development of staff to focus on the assessment of the

individual psychological characteristics of a person, namely the diagnosis of emotional and volitional personal traits.

According to the theoretical and empirical research, the emotional and volitional competence is the presence of high nervous and mental stability, emotional lability, and the ability for the self-determination of a behavior policy, vigorous and purposeful implementation of certain actions and the responsibility for their results.

The diagnosis of emotional and volitional competencies will optimize the psychological support of socionomic professionals activity during the stage of adaptation and during their whole professional activity. The data in the field of emotional and volitional competencies allow psychologists working in the organizations of various levels to have a more qualitative diagnosis of employees which will increase the level of professionalism.

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