

Psychology of Intellectual Activity-Related Development of a Student

Leonid Popov¹ & Elena Ibragimova¹

¹ Kazan Federal University, Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, Russia

Correspondence: Leonid Popov, Kazan Federal University, ul. The Kremlin, 18, Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan, Russia.

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Abstract

The focus is on the student, primarily as a subject of intellectual activity and a psychological mechanism of its development and self-development. The article targets characterizing the strategic approach to the student's personality and showing the development areas based on the concept of the human being a subject of development; it also targets presenting the results of intellectual activity-related development of psychology students, and the place of the outer and inner determination using the "Self-interview" method (an adapted version). One of the most important goals of the modern higher education is to provide a person not only with general and vocational training, but also with the necessary basis for self-education, professional and personal self-development, active use of knowledge and skills to address the emerging practical and theoretical problems. The key conclusion is the rationale for conducting educational activities with account of the main acmeological principle: any training should stimulate productivity, permanent personal and professional growth of students. If we consider socialization as the entry into the culture and its generation, a psychology student must first master the psychological culture, including the specialized knowledge and skills, which can be correlated with the first stage of professional socialization. Then, while mastering it, he begins to use them as his own, which may be the second stage of professional socialization. And finally, he must enrich the psychological culture with his individual contribution, i.e. form the meta-individuality of personality – it is the third stage of professional socialization. Artistic creation, which is an important component of formation of the self-development ability, should be the main guide of their learning and professional activities. A graduate should be prepared not only as a professional but also as personality, a subject of development and professional activities.

Keywords: self-development, intellectual activity-related mechanism, external and internal determination

1. Introduction

The scientific and practical problem of the current stage of students' personality formation as a subject of professional development and self-development consists in switching to implementation of the fundamental knowledge on the psychology of an individual, which has been accumulated in domestic and foreign psychological science, in the higher educational institution. The objects of our study were psychology students studying in the same specialty at a classical university, technical university, and one of private universities. On the example of the students passing professional socialization at higher educational institutions of different types, their abilities were detected: not only to enter into the professional psychological culture, but also to produce something for it. In this case particularly, the student can clearly indicate the function of a subject, i.e. an independent, proactive person with a tendency to transform the external world and to self-transformation.

2. Theoretical Realization of the Problem

To date, the problem of a subject is one of the key problems in the approaches to consideration of personal phenomenology (Rubinstein, 2003; Brushlinsky, 1994; Zhuravlev, 2002). We need to note that in the Western psychology, theories of personality also have the subject concept in the center of focus, indicating the ability of a person to be the initiating subject (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1986). Analysis of various concepts of subjectivity shows that with such an approach, a person acts as a carrier of activity, as the center of the intention of his own existence. The personality in this case is considered in terms of its self-motion; it is perceived as a self-developing system. A.V. Brushlinsky (Brushlinsky, 1994) pointed out that to be a subject means to initiate and carry out such specific types of human activity as practical activity, communication, cognition, contemplation, personal development, and others. A significant component of the intention of one's own

existence is the self-transcendence – the ability to expand one's immediate boundaries (towards better awareness of one's own philosophy and values), interindividual boundaries (in relation to others and one's own environment), timing (integration of one's own past and future), and transpersonal ones (going beyond the boundaries of one's own Ego) (Coward, 2006; Ellerman & Reed, 2001; Gulliver, 2007; Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005; Reed, 1991)

Attempts to describe the personality phenomenon or explain its origin have been taken by the authors of various theories. Personal psychological organization is addressed, for example, within the framework of the following approaches: the "Self-concept" in the works by W. James (James, 1991), R. Burns (Burns, 1986), I.S. Kohn (Kohn, 1978); the individuality by A.G. Asmolov (Asmolov, 1990), V.S. Merlin (Merlin, 1986); the systematic structural consideration of personality in the works by V.N. Myasishchev (Myasishchev, 1999), K.K. Platonov (Platonov, 1986), A. Petrovsky (Petrovsky, 1982), and B.F. Lomov (Lomov, 1994). While some of them emphasized a certain component of it, others tried to explore all of its aspects at once. The multidimensional approach is determined by the variety of strategic understanding of a human as the object of study and the subject of various forms of its activity.

Consideration of approaches to the study of personal psychological organization is not accidental, and is consistent with the classification of strategies of a psychologist's work. The "strategy of a psychologist" concept is based on the provisions of K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1991) and can be considered as the ability to build one's own professional life without assistance, and form for oneself the main professional field of activity, objectives, and steps to achieve them, to regulate the contradictions in life and overcome them without assistance, to strive to implement one's own life plans and programs, the pinnacle of which is the creative self-realization.

Following the traditions of strategic psychology, the concept of the four probabilistic strategies (Popov, Ibragimova, 2005) was introduced, which psychology researchers with practical or theoretical orientation select in their professional activities.

1. *Abstract-analytical, scientific strategy.* Within the framework of this strategy, most often personal, intellectual, emotional, volitional, and other features of the human, mental processes, attitudes, abilities, in which the psychological aspect is clearly seen, become the subject of the study. The main objective is to comprehend the essence of the studied characteristic and construction of their formal model after a psychodiagnostic laboratory experiment using reliable guidelines of statistical processing of the obtained results.

Based on a thorough diagnostic of the ability, all of its manifestations fit a single psychodiagnostic series, the range of which consists of the successes of the tested persons from the least degree of manifestation of the ability to the highest one. Formalized description of the ability is made in the form of a verbally symbolic, graphical model. As part of this strategy, a professional approach to the subject matter is carried out, as well as creation of its model display based on extreme generalization of experimental data.

2. *The strategy of the holistic approach* is implemented in two ways: the practical and theoretical one. In this case, a person acts as psychological integrity, understood as something integrated, consisting of parts, elements, but not limited to them, i.e. having new characteristics and properties.

The main method of data acquisition in *the practical variant of the holistic approach strategy* is observation. In this case, the person is studied not so much on the level of logic and theory, as on the level of clinical, natural observation, intuition, and common sense. There is a rapid transition from pre-made conclusions and hypotheses to active-transforming type of relationship of the psychologist with another person.

Within the framework of the *strategy of holistic approach in its theoretical form*, a different person as a psychic system becomes the subject of study. The initial representation of another person as a personality is based on a certain concept, in which the subject of study can be considered as systemically structured integrity with the necessary and sufficient number of sub-structures and levels. It should be noted that the resulting material is model-normalized, which evidences the professionalism of the work done, but it is more of explanatory, rather than transforming nature.

3. *The manipulation strategy*, i.e. the strategy of controlling other people. The subject of the strategy in this case is the technology of impact that brings success. The technology targets influencing another person, a group of people with whom the manipulator singles out the personal characteristic that is the most "vulnerable" for his purposes. The technology can be regarded as an empirically found combination of techniques, methods, and means of impact, which provide the impact on other people required for the manipulator.

4. *The strategy of personal self-development* is applied by the psychologist to himself, when the "I myself" becomes the subject of study, i.e. the subject, object and the actor are the same. Here, in a harmonious unity, contemplative and transforming baselines are represented.

According to the idea of considering a human as a subject, a model of psychological organization and self-development of the subject was developed, in which two major sets can be singled out: the spatiotemporal set (intelligent) and the determinate set (personal).

The spatiotemporal set is a system-structured organization responsible for inclusion of the subject in the processes of multi-dimensional human interaction with the world and with himself as well as the technology of this interaction. The determinate set consists of numerous influences that have a strong impact on the behavior of the subject.

Self-development of an individual in the process of professional development can be considered in terms of the intellectual activity-related development of a human (Vygotsky, 1991; Rubinstein, 2003; Ponomarev, 1976) as a sequential passage of four "areas of the closest personal and professional development" (Vygotsky, 1991; Popov, 2005), with "mutual transitions" of actions of external and internal nature (Leontyev, 1977). Revealing the reserve capacity of intellectual and personal self-development of a subject can be implemented through the study of the ability for professional self-development.

The first zone of development includes such range, in which the initial manifestations of human activity are carried out by external impact of any simple stimulus through the stage of adoption of this impact in the form of initial saturation to a reproductive response to it.

The second area of development, including all that is done in the first zone, covers a new layer and intellectual activity-related manifestations of the activity: from the stage of the problem statement and preliminary search for its solution, with the inclusion of the stage of logic programs collapse (activities of internal nature) until the continuing activities of external nature, such as reproductions involving improvisation, when the reproduction process includes proactive actions of the subject related to partial creativity, and the technological component is syncretically included in the reproductive and improvisational activity of external nature.

The third area of development, while incorporating the achievements and the determined range of active actions of the subject of the first two areas, is characterized by new extension of the range of actions of the subject from his actions on formulation and solution of tasks, including the phase of intuitive insight, the phase of conscious verbalization of his actions (an action of internal nature) to constructive actions of the subject, which are characterized by the level of achievement "for oneself" (actions of external nature). The technological component is still involved in the actions of the subject related to building up contents on the level of their creative achievements "for oneself".

The fourth area of development, the area of maximum development, including movement across all the previous areas, implies full understanding by the subject of his actions (verbalization, formalization) and the bringing of conclusions to extreme generalization on the pole of actions of internal nature. On the second pole (of external nature), creation of content products professionally assessed by experts at the level of "for a few other people, for the subculture" takes place. The highest point of external nature actions of a subject in certain very rare cases may be creation of products estimated at the level "for the culture." Due to involvement in the actions of the intellectual activity-related plan of such processes as verbalization, formalization, the conditions have formed for singling out the technological component as an independent one having its own levels of generalization of applied methods, up to the "high-tech" level.

The ability of the subject to professional self-development acts as a personal intellectual index characterizing the person in the first place by the mastery of scientific and special knowledge and skills of theoretical and practical nature, and secondly – by the priority in professional self-improvement of actions of the reflexive-transforming type over the actions of the reflective-descriptive (reflexive-ascertaining) type.

The study of the personality self-development problem, as well as the mechanisms of this process in foreign psychology, are largely represented in the works by the psychologists studying the phenomenon of self-actualization (A. Maslow (Maslow, 1968), C. Rogers (Rogers, 1986), V. Frankl (Frankl, 1990), A. Adler (Adler, 1956), G. Allport (Allport, 1968), and others). Analysis of the western concepts of personality, in which the individual is endowed with features such as activity, ability to live "here and now" in close connection with the past and the future, independence of actions, and responsibility for one's decisions, flexibility of behavior, self-acceptance, sociability, and creativity, shows that they are close enough in their understanding of the personal psychological organization with the Russian theories of the subject-based approach in psychology. For

them, the postulation of an active life position, high degree of activity, demonstration of original potency to the continuous development and self-development, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization is also similar at consideration of the phenomenon of personality.

3. Methodology

Totally, there were 253 persons who participated in the empirical study. Since the study was conducted in several universities teaching the "Psychology" specialty (both the public and commercial ones), the provided sample is rather representative. The diagnostic suite consisted of the "Self-interview" technique modified in the course of the research in terms of professional self-identity of personality. To avoid subjectivity, especially in the course of the qualitative data analysis, the study used expert assessment by professional psychologists (the teaching staff).

In the modified "Self-interview" procedure, more attention is paid to the analysis of the place and role of the intellectual potential of students in the course of vocational training. In addition, evaluation by the tested persons of their knowledge and skills, which are one of the central components of the intellectual component of the ability of the subject to professional self-development, is singled out as separate units. In the second version of the plan, the description of the personal potential of a specialist is put in a separate unit, because, in our view, a high level of the ability of the subject to professional self-development assumes mastering by the individual of special personality traits that allow to effectively and successfully carry out the professional activity and achieve significant results. Particular attention in the modified plan is paid to understanding by the tested person of the significance and ratio of the theoretical content and its applications in the future professional activity, as specificity of the activity of an expert researcher and an expert practitioner is obvious and assumes certain peculiar features in mastering by a person of special knowledge, skills, and personality traits.

Modern trends in higher education are, in our opinion, quite contradictory. On the one hand, the number of young people who want to go to a higher educational institution increases obviously, and the value of education comes to the fore of human activities. On the other hand, a certain percentage of students today are characterized by unsatisfactory training, both the general and special one. Accordingly, there is a question about the quality of education for young professionals. In the educational process, lectures are interspersed with practical classes and seminars; different forms of learning are used (dialogs, the problem-based ones, etc.), but it is not always clear how well students have mastered the knowledge delivered to them by the teachers. It becomes important that each concept, category, term, and method become personally important for students and have penetrated into their "souls". Thus, the educational process must proceed in such a way that the assimilation of concepts, categories, laws, and methods would become internally motivated, be important for the studying person, which would ensure formation of the scientific worldview characterizing the graduate as a specialist who has mastered professional knowledge.

One of the most important goals of the modern higher education is to provide a person with not only general and vocational training, but also the necessary basis for self-education, professional and personal self-development, active use of knowledge and skills to address the emerging real practical problems. During the study, we assessed how well students had mastered the psychological culture and also their readiness for professional self-development, based on the analysis of the results obtained using the modified "Self-interview" technique.

It should be noted that in spite of the debatable state of the question about the special training and equipment of students with special knowledge and skills, we find it appropriate in the implementation of educational activities in the "Psychology" specialty to accept the following viewpoint: a psychologist must obtain scientific knowledge in different areas and schools of the domestic and global psychology, as well as master the skills to apply this knowledge in practice. In the context of this approach, we think that there are not two separated psychologies (theoretical and practical), but there is a set of psychological knowledge, presented in a variety of directions, psychological schools, and there is application of this knowledge to practice.

At evaluation of the "Mastering the psychological culture" parameter of the psychology students' works, we took into account the professional fullness of their compositions. It was assessed by the frequency and adequacy of application of the expertise, terms, concepts, and categories.

The method of determining the depth of the psychological content of the compositions also assumes a scale that includes five grades: *One point* is awarded on the condition that the tested person in the composition described himself as a professional and did not use psychological terms, concepts, and expertise. *Two points* – if they are used a little, only are mentioned in some sections of the text, and there possibly is substitution of concepts. *Four points* are awarded if concepts and categories are used quite often, but as "alien", and their negligent use is possible. Provided the tested person uses terms and concepts freely and everywhere – he is awarded *six points*.

The maximum score – *ten points* – is awarded if in addition to free and overall use of psychological terms, concepts, categories and expertise, the tested person also seeks parallels with other sciences and art.

Due to the fact that the significance of the "Mastering the psychological culture" parameter is estimated by the experts twice as high, the obtained score is also doubled, which is counted in the total score as an indicator of the depth of psychological saturation of the compositions with terms, concepts, and expertise.

At evaluation of the "Readiness for professional self-improvement" parameter, we took into account what the tested person described in his essay in the course of reflexion of himself as a psychologist: whether he stated only various aspects of his professional Ego or addressed certain problems hampering further development. Such materials of the "Self-interview" were counted as the most valuable, which contained their own methods to improve oneself as a professional, as well as description of experience of their implementation and experience of addressing the problems faced by the tested persons as professionals.

The method of determining the level of preparedness for professional self-improvement assumes a scale that also includes five grades: *one point* is awarded if the composition contains only data statement. *Two points* are awarded when other than statements of the real Ego, the tested person also addresses some certain problems that he sees in his own Ego as of a professional. *Four points* are awarded when in addition to the above, the tested person suggests his own ways of self-improvement as a professional, which are the opportunity to overcome the existing differences, but these ways are found only in a few sections of the work. With these methods present in all sections, *six points* are awarded. The maximum score – *ten points* – is awarded if in addition to having all of the above in the compositions, the tested person describe his own experience of using the methods of self-improvement, which he understands as methods of changing himself as a professional for the better.

The resulting score is tripled resulting in the total score as an indicator of readiness for professional self-improvement.

4. Results

As a result of analysis of the creative "Self-interview" works composed by students, which were carried out in the above-mentioned higher educational institutions, the following summarized results were obtained, which show the nature of achievements of psychology students in the intellectual activity parameter. The overall picture is that the success in intellectual activity takes place in the first three of the four selected areas of development. 60% of students demonstrated results that were evaluated as the level of the first zone of intellectual activity-related development of the subject of learning activities. Up to 30% of students fit the second area of intellectual activity-related development of psychology students as subjects of educational activity. The third area of intellectual activity-related development consists of up to 10% of students.

5. Discussion of the Results

At the level of the first area of intellectual activity-related development of the subject of educational activities, the results were evaluated, where students, whose number is 60%, can only state fragmentary information about themselves as a personality in the professional language. Thus, describing the vision of themselves, for example, in the field of "my personal potential", "my intellectual potential", "my communicative potential", the students cannot make a coherent holistic picture. Self-knowledge obtained by the test study, self-examination, self-observation, as well as in the form of the "Me in the eyes of others" knowledge, is understood by the students discretely. They cannot analyze those from a professional viewpoint, draw conclusions, and make their own psychological profile. While acquiring specialized knowledge, they cannot use it, so that the accumulated knowledge would become their internal language, i.e. the professional language, in which they think. Based on the idea of psychological pendulum, the intellectual activity-related activeness of students is implemented within acceptance of the applied impact and is manifested in the form of initial saturation and reproductive response to it.

The second area of intellectual activity-related development of psychology students as subjects of the educational activity (up to 30% of the students) included those results, in which the students made the language of psychology their professional language, having "refracted" the professional knowledge through themselves. Here, one has all the skills to set a problem to himself. For example, in the course of the research activities, they suggest ways to solve it, possess the basic professional skills for the psycho-diagnostic experiment. Students in this group are able to process the data and correlate them with the assigned practical task. When reproducing and using the accumulated knowledge and skills, they, showing intellectual initiative, direct their activities towards creativity. Thus, the tested persons move from the initial saturation to the problem statement, carry out steps

towards finding its solution (the activity of internal nature), and their activities of external nature already shift from purely reproductive actions to actions of improvisational nature.

The third area of the intellectual activity-related development (up to 10% of students) included those results where students not only showed a high level of capacity for personal and professional growth, but also were quite enterprising in mastering the knowledge of other fields (sciences). Students in this group are not focused entirely on the psychology, because in their compositions they refer to various aspects of biology, medicine, mathematics, foreign languages, etc. As a rule, they also concern arts: music, fiction, etc. It is important that all this knowledge is organically inserted by students into their professional psychological work. They are intellectually initiative and aspire to create a project of theoretical, experimental, or applied orientation. Students in this group, as part of their research works or their practical activity, create author's trainings of personal growth, communication, role-playing games, etc. Through psychological counseling, they successfully develop their own style of their conduct. All of their actions can be interpreted as creative in content and technology of the psychological mechanism of the subject self-development.

The fourth area of development includes movement across all the previous areas, but the subject in its intellectual act comes to limiting generalization of the findings (the actions of internal nature), and the created content-related product will be evaluated by expert professionals at the level "for the subculture" or, in rare cases, even for the "culture", and the created technology will be of a high level (the actions of external nature). The fourth area of development in the dynamic component of the spatiotemporal set of the development subject is likely to include those professional psychologists who are able to contribute to the theoretical and practical psychology at both the level of new content and the level of innovation technology. For psychology students, this area determines the tendencies of their professional self-development.

Focus on self-actualization reflecting the desire of a person to the fullest possible identification and development of his personal capacity is an important aspect of professional self-development of psychology students. The next step of the research was to review the correlation between the "Mastering the psychological culture" (MPC) and "Preparedness for professional self-improvement" (PPSI) scales and all scales of the "Self-actualization test" technique actuated by us (Gozman, Croz, & Latinskaya, 1995).

In the course of the correlation analysis, we revealed direct correlation of the MPC and PPSI parameters with the scale of "Support", which is one of the main parameters that reflect the personal self-actualization of a person. It was revealed that the more and better the students have mastered the psychological knowledge and skills, the more pronounced their willingness to unassisted professional improvement is, especially since they are free and independent in their choice, autonomous and independent.

Table 1. Корреляция показателей методик «САТ» и «Интервью с самим собой»

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	0,52	0,74	0,57	0,62	0,47	0,52	0,52	0,57	0,52	0,46	0,50	0,61	0,46	0,52
16	0,50	0,66	0,52	0,55	0,42	0,50	0,45	0,53	0,42	0,39	0,48	0,53	0,45	0,50

1 – Компетентность во времени, 2 – Независимость поведения и ответственность («Поддержка»), 3 – Ценностные ориентации, 4 – Гибкость поведения, 5 – Сензитивность к себе, 6 – Спонтанность, 7 – Самоуважение, 8 – Самопринятие, 9 – Представление о природе человека, 10 – Синергия, 11 – Принятие агрессии, 12 – Контактность, 13 – Познавательные потребности, 14 – Креативность, 15 – Овладение психологической культурой, 16 – Готовность к профессиональному самосовершенствованию.

There is direct correlation of the MPC and PPSI parameters with the "Competence in time", "Spontaneity", "Rapport" and "Self-acceptance" parameters. Adequate and efficient perception of the reality implies a person's ability to live in the present world around him understanding the existential value of the life "here and now". We can say that with a high level of preparedness of students for professional self-improvement, they tend to act more not according to pre-planned behavior schemes, but rather flexibly and spontaneously. Self-actualization for them has become a way of life, not just a dream. By mastering the psychological culture, students acquire better knowledge of the regularities of development and operation of the psyche, of the inner world of people, of the psychological reasons that explain their behavior. In addition, they acquire professional skills that determine the success of their practice. We can say that all this determines the ability of the psychology students to establish strong and friendly relations with others and deep contact with them, develop their communication capacity, which determines the effectiveness of the subject-to-subject communication. To accept oneself, to be

capable of assessing one's strengths and weaknesses, as well as autosympathy are the natural basis of mental health and integrity of an individual. The more students are aimed at professional self-development, the more they believe in themselves, and the more conscious and positive their Self-concept is.

There is direct correlation of the MPC and PPSI parameters with the "Flexibility of the behavior" indicator that reflects the personal self-actualization and is directly related to the profession of psychologist. Increase in the quantity and quality of knowledge and skills digested by the psychology students allows them to be more flexible in interaction with others, more quickly and adequately respond to the changing situation.

A valid positive correlation of the MPC and PPSI parameters with the "Creativity" of personality was detected. The result of the students' creativity is creation of both new material and new spiritual values. At that, the creative process, of course, assumes that a person has a certain amount of knowledge and skills allowing to create a brand new, unique, and original product. Manifestation of the creative potential of psychology students is an integral part of the learning process at a higher educational institution. They originally should be, in a certain sense, professionally competent, must absorb the part of psychological culture, which, in turn, will allow them to create creative projects with an emphasis in the area of new content or technology. Thus, we have considered the specificity of self-actualization of psychology students in relation to their capacity for professional self-development.

There are grounds to believe that the nature of intelligent actions of psychology students may have a similar distribution of results in other specialties as well.

6. Conclusion

The promising lines of the research within the designated topic are believed to include: research of the ability of professional psychologists to professional self-development with disclosing the content of their "area of closest development"; testing of the modified "Self-interview" technique on the material of students of different specialties in both humanitarian and science areas, with the study of their capacity for professional self-development; creation of the technology contributing to expansion of the "area of closest development" of students in their intellectual and personal self-development taking into account the mechanism of "mutual transitions" of the action of external nature in the actions of internal nature and vice versa.

7. Summary

1. It was confirmed that the consideration of the intellectual activity-related development of a person as the successive passage of four "areas of the closest personal and professional development" with "mutual transitions" of the action of external nature in the actions of internal nature and vice versa can reveal the mechanism of self-development of a person in the course of professional formation. In addition, the study of the ability for professional self-development allows to disclose the "areas of closest development" in the intellectual and personal self-development of the subject.

2. It was revealed that the study of the ability of a subject for professional self-development allows seeing the areas of closest development in the intellectual and personal self-development of the subject. Three areas of intellectual activity-related development of psychology students in actions of external and internal nature and distribution of the total mass of students between them (I area – 60% of the tested persons, II area – 30%, III area – 10%) were revealed, which correspond to the selected theoretical areas in the concept of a human as the subject of self-development. The fourth area of development in the dynamic component of the spatiotemporal set of the development subject can include professional psychologists. For psychology students, this area determines the tendencies of their professional self-development. The criteria for evaluation were: 1) the degree of mastery by students of the general and specific knowledge and skills; 2) the priority in professional self-improvement of actions of the reflexive-transforming type over the actions of the reflexive-descriptive nature.

3. The correlation of various aspects of self-actualization of psychology students was detected: competence over time, freedom and independence of choice in activity, autonomy, self-acceptance, flexibility of behavior, rapport, creativity, etc. with the degree of understanding of culture by them and their psychological readiness for professional self-improvement ($R \geq 0.5$).

4. It was determined that the "Self-interview" technique modified in the course of the research is not only a diagnostic tool, but also provides a robust method allowing a person to realize through introspection two basic sides of the ability for professional (intellectual and personal) self-development, and take a holistic look at himself as a subject of professional activity.

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