

A Postmodern Approach to Professional Training of Practical Psychologists in HEIs

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Abstract: The article deals with a postmodern approach to professionalization of practical psychologists at the initial stage of their professional training, which requires new approaches. Also, the article considers a postmodern approach to professional training of practical psychologists as systemic and focused on scientific and practical spheres of professional activities of these specialists to realize their educational and professional needs. A postmodern model of their professional training includes competencies, professional activities, personalization, and values. Besides, the article outlines some essential practical tasks. They involve analyzing the acquisition of practical experience in collegial interaction between psychologists and clients at motivational, cognitive, and emotional levels. The article determines psychopedagogical factors and criteria for developing these structural components at personal and professional levels. It also highlights the priority factors in psychologists' professional development and conditions for meeting their educational needs in HEIs. Importantly, HEIs should be able to develop future specialists' professional consciousness, dialogical competence, and adequate professional self-concept. The article presents the author's postmodern model of professional training for future practical psychologists along with the socio-psychological development of their professional identity. The model aims to provide students with professional experience so that they can perform their professional duties related to psychological counselling, psychodiagnostics, psychoprophylaxis, psychocorrection and psychological experiments through self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-acceptance of their personal and professional qualities.

Keywords: *pedagogical technologies, needs, professional growth, adaptation, postmodernism, students, scientific psychology, postmodern practical psychology, methodology, professional identity, individual.*

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Introduction

A postmodern model of practical psychologists' professional development in today's educational space lies in classical pedagogical technologies. It also implies innovations in professional training of these specialists due to axiological educational changes. In the postmodern era, professional psychological education aims to develop future psychologists' practical professional skills, as well as cultivate their professional awareness through a values-based system of creative use of professional knowledge in specific professional situations. Such education prepares these specialists for any unexpected professional situations and teaches them to consider the unique needs of their clients.

Also, a postmodern model of professional psychological training combines conceptual principles and methods of a classical or modern model of education with innovative pedagogical technologies. It allows one to acquaint future psychologists with applied aspects of their professional activities as a resource for competitiveness in the international labour market. In this regard, it is essential to discover ways to preserve the most effective technologies for professional training of future psychologists in Ukrainian HEIs and implement positive aspects of relevant foreign experience. Postmodernist values of professional education have prioritized students with their personal qualities adapted to the future profession, socio-professional needs, and abilities to become a psychologist.

In the postmodern educational space, professional training of future practical psychologists should be characterized by the high quality of educational services, and their focus on international standards with certification of future specialists as consulting psychologists. It is also important to teach psychology students to use a competence-based approach to solving the psychological problems of the client. They must be able to adapt the chosen methods creatively integrated from various psychological schools and psychotherapeutic areas.

At the same time, one of the important topical aspects in a postmodern approach to training students in practical psychology is the development of curricula in two areas. These are the following: qualified psychological assistance to people, and methodology of studying their unique individualities in difficult living conditions. It must be noted that the second aspect is well studied in scientific psychology. In this regard, postmodern practical psychology seeks to study these aspects as important scientific objects and methodologically analyze their integration, which will certainly affect the quality of future psychologists' professional training. In

this case, scientific psychology and practical psychology as areas of training have a sufficient educational base to solve social problems to the same extent.

Pedagogical Strategies of Professional Training for Practical Psychologists in the Context of Postmodern Education

As part of a postmodern approach, professional training of future practical psychologists, as a period of resolving contradictions and unpredictable crises of professional development in higher education, follows a new personality-oriented paradigm. Besides, it is a process of professional self-awareness, professional identity, personal and professional qualities and skills, a psychological culture of communication, professional knowledge, and abilities due to innovative strategies and pedagogical technologies.

Many scholars have investigated the problem of professional training of practical psychologists in HEIs (Chepeleva, 2015; Endeberia & Novik, 2017; Furman & Nadvynychna, 2013; Lozova, 2016; Panok, 2013; Panok et al., 2016). Each author's concept reveals many problems associated with professional development of psychologists and reflects three main lines in methodological approaches to this problem. These are as follows: development of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities; cultivation of professional motivation and personal traits and qualities that enable professional activities and are integrated into social competence and professional position. The central psychological mechanism for ensuring effective interaction between the psychologist and the client is communication skills. Professional competence of practical psychologists lies in the integration of all these characteristics and three levels of professional training (scientific psychology, applied psychology, psychological practice), as well as the acceptance of ethical norms (Panok, 2013).

Most HEIs have psychological services to support and develop student's potential. Psychological services help students acquire professional skills and create a positive harmonious self-concept during four cycles of their professional training: informational-cognitive (a first-year student as a subject of educational behaviour), regulatory (a second-year student as a subject of educational activity), axiological-reflexive (a third- or fourth-year student as a subject of educational actions), creative (a fifth- or sixth-year student as a subject of educational self-creation) (Furman & Nadvynychna, 2013). The main objectives of psychological services in HEIs, as well as the

leading state psychological institution “*Ukrainian Scientific and Methodological Center for Practical Psychology and Social Work of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine*”, are as follows: to increase a psychological culture of education stakeholders; to humanize relations among students and university teachers; to use an individual approach to each education stakeholder; to promote the full development of students; to boost their professional motivation and develop their career skills; to provide psychological support to prevent deviant and addictive behaviour among students and resolve conflicts and personal problems (Panok et al., 2016).

The recommendations of the International Standard Classification of Education, as well as the requirements of the national labour system of Ukraine, have been used as a guide to prepare a new list of bachelor’s, and master’s degree programmes. This list fully corresponds to the concept of holistic education in the postmodern era. Ukrainian students study under educational-methodological programmes of the psychological science in the context of psychological practice. This increases the methodological potential of practical psychology and applied psychological research (Lozova, 2016).

In Europe, professional training of psychologists is organized at the initiative of the European Union (EU) and the European Federation of Psychological Association (EFPA) to achieve greater mobility of specialists across Europe. The European Federation of Professional Psychologists’ Association (EFPPA) was established in 1981. Back then, it comprised 13 member associations (one per country) and lacked centralized administrative support. Thirty years later, the EFPPA has become the EFPA, in which 35 member associations represent about 300,000 psychologists across Europe. The EFPA is now based in offices in central Brussels, with a director and staff who support the EFPA Executive Board, as well as various standing committees, and working groups (Freeman & Steyaert, 2021).

The initial efforts of the EFPA, as planned by the founders, were aimed at collecting and exchanging information on the state of psychology in the associated countries with an emphasis on education, training, ethics, and legal issues. The EFPA represents psychology in general, including research, professional practice, and education. Education is vital for the future of the psychological profession. It provides access to the profession, transfers knowledge and creates competencies, forms typical attitudes and professional identity of psychologists. The teaching of psychology should be used to realize future psychologists’ potential (Roe & Freeman, 2011). One of the important strategies of the EFPA is to study the reliability and validity of psychological assessment tests, scales, and questionnaires used in

education as possible ways for future development of psychological and educational assessment (Barrett, 2018; Evers et al., 2013).

European Diploma in Psychology (EDP) represents a system of standards for the education and training of professional psychologists. The advantages of psychologists' professional training are as follows: supervised practice in the field of professional psychology; professional mobility of psychologists in Europe; higher standards of training and competences. In addition, one of the most important benefits of EDP is the increase in job opportunities. The psychologists who have an EDP will have more job opportunities than those who have only a national diploma (Potocnik & Barrasa, 2006).

EFPA Regulations on EuroPsy state that psychologists are eligible to be entered in the EuroPsy Register if they have completed national accreditation, provided that the duration of the training programme is five years full-time (300 ECTS). Also, they should be able to provide evidence of at least one-year supervised practice as psychotherapists in a training session and submit a written promise to the National Committee on compliance with the principles of professional activities, set out in the EFPA Meta-code of Professional Ethics. Importantly, they need to confirm their professional competence in the form of specified hours of practice and should strive for continuing education and training (EFPA, 2019, pp. 10-13).

Professional training of psychologists covers the four main areas: health; education; work in the organization and a specific field (criminology, sports, trade) under the twenty main competencies. These competencies involve the following functions: discussing goals of cooperation with clients; assessing the client's problem by interviewing, testing, or observing; development and intervention as the achievement of goals in a particular situation; professional communication meeting clients' expectations and needs, as well as feedback (EFPA, 2019, pp. 45-48).

In Western Europe, higher education of psychologists is not divided into psychology and practical psychology. Their professional training is based on the EuroPsy standard. Its concept was officially formulated by the EFPP in 1997. EuroPsy includes requirements for academic and practical training of psychologists, their compliance with professional ethical standards, as well as a high level of psychologists' competence (Lozova, 2016).

Foreign researchers believe that professional training of future psychologists should be focused on both scientific and practical spheres since these specialists should be able to integrate methods of certain psychological concepts to solve professional problems. Student internship

should take place in the chosen professional field and under the guidance of a professional practitioner (Ponomareva, 2016). Besides, psychologists should be aware of the client's psychological problem, and which conceptual approaches, theories, and methods can help solve it (Palamarchuk et al., 2020; Ponomareva, 2017; Sheremet et al., 2019).

A postmodern approach is defined as a systematic approach to professional training of future practical psychologists in HEIs. It also follows communicative, humanistic, developmental, axiological, creative, personality-, and activity-oriented, competence-, problem-, and gender-based approaches. The main objectives of this approach are as follows: to integrate scientific and practical spheres of future professional activities; to create an inclusive and partnership-based environment focused on each student's individuality; to develop innovative educational strategies for professional adaptation of students in a crisis of professional development; to promote future specialists' psychological and professional culture of communication with clients in the form of adequate dialogue; to assure the quality of the educational process (Nerubasska & Maksymchuk, 2020; Nerubasska et al., 2020).

Some scholars assume that approaches as educational scientific paradigms create an important methodological basis for determining methodological principles of organizing the educational process in HEIs. A systemic approach primarily defines learning as a system and requires one to consider links between goals, objectives, content, forms, and methods of learning in the interaction with the components of the educational process. It allows one to reveal general systemic properties and qualitative characteristics. In methodological terms, it is essential to consider approaches as components of a systemic approach in the context of educational goals. These goals are as follows: to develop student's personality based on spirituality, as well as social and professional competence as the basis of effective communication (interaction) in the world (Gerasymova et al., 2019; Melnyk et al., 2019; Onishchuk et al., 2020; Pryshchak & Zaliubivska, 2019, pp. 32-33).

Foreign and Ukrainian researchers believe that a postmodern theory of knowledge organization considers the world as unknowable and meaningless. This theory attempts to rethink reality, restore thinking from totality, and incorporate aesthetic, moral, and scientific experience, as well as that of borderline situations and everyday routine, in reflection. Besides, it seeks to cultivate human creativity and subjectivity and creates a healthy personality. Importantly, postmodernist tendencies allow one to change educational priorities and highlight equality in relations between education

stakeholders as a new educational value in terms of information exchange and recognition of its validity. Postmodernists claim that knowledge should be useful and applied in practice (Milova, 2007).

Postmodernism denies the “knowledge-based” model of education and views knowledge as a subjective construct. It is this approach to knowledge in educational activities that contributes to developing a self-sufficient, and autonomous individual. The humanism of postmodernism is “individualized” since it aims to assert and dignify everyone. Today, there are some holistic postmodernist conceptions of education represented in critical pedagogy, German anti-pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, critical thinking pedagogy, and other alternative educational projects. However, postmodernist tendencies are also present in Ukrainian education today. Ukrainian researchers consider the educational process as a system, describe its leading patterns and identify its main stages. Accordingly, the integral educational process consists of three stages: *preparatory* (goal setting), *primary* (achieving goals of education and upbringing), *final* (assessing educational attainment). In a postmodern context, pedagogical goal setting focuses on the personal models of individuals and encourages them to create themselves, strive for self-development and self-improvement. Postmodernism prioritizes an individual with his or her life goals, values, and experience in terms of the educational process. It relies on one’s creativity and, thus, transforms today’s education into a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon (Vakhovskiy, 2015).

As a part of a postmodern approach, methods of researching each client’s individuality play a crucial role in providing future psychologists with counselling experience. These methods include dialogues and narratives as typical personal stories that reflect typical life situations and ways to respond to them. Personal narratives develop during a dialogue between the psychologist and the client. Postmodernism perceives an individual as a nonlinear and creative process characterized by autonomy, identification, testing, and bold experimentation. As noted by Savchyn (2015), postmodernists focus on the variability of the world and personality. At the same time, postmodern psychology highlights such abilities as self-development, self-construction, and reflection (Savchyn, 2015, p. 124).

Postmodernism favours the unexpectedness of traumatic life events. According to Chepeleva (2015), a narrative reconciles both traumatic and non-traumatic fragments of experience, making it consistent. Only dialogues allow one to navigate through one’s personal experience, forming new conceptual schemes and narrative structures. Thus, one can be viewed as an author, narrator, and researcher of one’s own life, or a subject who attempts

to find meaning and order in it. On the one hand, people are the authors of self-narratives, and on the other hand, the actors in the space of these narrative texts (Chepeleva, 2015, pp. 48-51).

An important component of a postmodern model to specialist training is axiological. The values of students are interrelated with learning motivation, the vision of professional activities and social needs. In this regard, Radchuk (2015) claims that it is extremely essential today to study the axiogenesis of a student's personality in the context of higher education. It is because radical transformations in Ukrainian society change stereotypes of a professional career and professional development. The analysis of higher education practices indicates the danger of serious deformation in future specialist's personal development.

It is empirically proven that education is an environment of self-actualization only for every tenth student. This can be interpreted as the inability of today's higher education to create appropriate educational conditions for external initiation of internal actualization of students' subjective and axiological potential. This causes an educational axiological crisis characterized by anomie and reflects weakening social norms due to students' unfulfilled expectations about their self-realization within HEIs. Eventually, this leads to alienation from the formal content of education and depersonalization (Radchuk, 2015, pp. 319-339).

One of the important educational and professional goals of practical psychologists' training is the development of their professional thinking. Given that their professional functions include counselling and psychotherapy, they should have meta-theoretical thinking skills to make and prove hypotheses, and understand the client's personality, which is focused on five aspects of the client's problem analysis. These are the following: focusing on the client without interpretation; identifying contradictions of the problem through opposition due to phenomenological and scientific thinking; reconciling irreconcilable opposites and finding the context in which the selected opposites are synthesized, and the "struggle" is removed; transforming synthesis found at the level of meaning in concrete facts, namely, a therapeutic idea of overcoming dead-end situations, building a useful "life theory" on this basis; making the client an active participant in psychotherapeutic research by separating the imaginary from the real (Krupelnyska, 2018).

Ukrainian researchers also consider psychological support programmes on future specialists' professional development as relevant for professional training of future psychologists. They believe that this will balance professionalization, encourage wide use of group effect in social and

psychological training, and create situations in which group members need to solve relevant problems by themselves (Endeberia & Novik, 2017). It is also advisable to develop curricula for further training of future psychologists that take into account social procurement and the need for narrower specialists (Synyshyna, 2019).

Optimal Conditions and Effective Strategies for Training Practical Psychologists in Postmodern Education

Postmodern education is focused on the constant search for values, motives, needs, scientific and life meanings, and, most importantly, human freedom. Future psychologist's autonomy, critical and creative thinking is a guarantee of competent psychological support. Psychologists should not meet "conformist" educational standards that fail to cultivate student's professional self-identification and reflection at an optimal level. Moreover, external manifestations of a psychologist's emotional intelligence cannot be combined with objective identification of the client's interests, needs and motives, as well as with adequate psychological assistance.

In this regard, postmodern practical psychology needs such pedagogical innovative technologies that can solve the main problems in professional training of future psychologists related to certain professional characteristics. These are as follows: insufficient levels of self-actualization, self-identification, self-analysis, and self-interest in constant personal and professional growth; preference given to an authoritarian style of communication against the background of alienation and uselessness common in those government agencies in which subordinates' behaviour is manipulated, and only psychological work can prevent it.

An important strategy of a postmodern approach to professional training of future psychologists involves developing competence in psychological counselling at a creative level. It also means applying theoretical principles of different psychological schools in building authorial methods based on the client's characteristics and needs. Besides, it is vital to make students aware of counselling as an art of partnership, in which the client and the psychologist share an optimal degree of responsibility for the achieved result.

Importantly, practical experience of collegial interaction between psychologists and clients is acquired at three levels: *motivational* (creating an interaction with the client, considering his or her needs, as well as the specifics of the psychological problem); *cognitive* (intellectual-cognitive and organizational-communicative actions of psychologists; selection of

methodological tools; search for ways to solve the client's problem following his or her needs); *emotional* (feedback from the client; reflection of emotional and professional experience by psychologists).

The described strategies of future psychologists' professionalization have been included in the author's socio-psychological training course on the development of professional self-identity. This course aims to provide students with professional experience so that they can perform their professional duties related to psychological counselling, psychodiagnostics, psychoprophylaxis, psychocorrection and psychological experiments through self-knowledge, self-understanding, and self-acceptance of their personal and professional qualities. A postmodern approach interprets professional self-identity as the basis for developing professional competence. Besides, it considers it as a dynamic phenomenon associated with gaining, transforming, and diversifying professional experience, and able to change under various social conditions.

Psycho-pedagogical factors and criteria for developing these structural components are *personal* (creativity; positive self-esteem; high levels of emotional intelligence and professional empathy; communication and organization skills, reflexivity; congruence of character and temperament) and *professional* (using professional cognitions of practical psychologists under today's conditions; focus on professional communication; ability to create new correctional and developmental techniques, formulate and solve innovative professional problems, deal with psychological experiments of different levels) indicators of professional efficiency.

Conclusions

Therefore, the integration of postmodern and competence-based approaches to professional training of future practical psychologists encourages students to become active participants in the educational process. It is possible due to constant and systematic updates in the content and methods of teaching and learning. Besides, it is essential to introduce innovative pedagogical technologies according to the requirements of postmodern education.

The priority factors of psychologists' professional genesis are their motivation for personal and professional growth, the need for professional self-realization, and professional values as significant motivational constructs. Sufficient motivation for successful professionalization and appropriate psycho-pedagogical conditions for professional development in HEIs are enough to develop students' professional empathy, reflection, and consciousness, dialogic literacy, adequate professional self-concept,

professional management and innovations skills to make new decisions in crises.

Finally, one can meet the educational needs of psychology students due to relevant conditions. These are the following: harmonizing professional values of future practical psychologists with those of professional environment (their inconsistency due to false self-identification, unfulfilled role expectations, personnel strategies to reduce psychologist's activity and initiative in the future workplace may lead to weak professional self-realization and an inappropriate attitude of the community towards the profession); organizing communicative training sessions in HEIs since communication and listening are often significant problems for future psychologists; providing psychological services (mostly, such services operate only formally, which may cause a low level of professional training); hiring highly qualified research and teaching staff.

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