

On the Relationship of the Concepts “Professionally Important Qualities and Professional Competence”

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Abstract— The article is devoted to questions of professionally important qualities and professional competence. Much attention is given to traditional and innovative approach these conceptions. It is spoken in detail about professional potential.

Keywords—*competence; competency; professionally important qualities; professionalism; professional potential.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The wide use of the competence-based approach to professional education and personnel management requires the elaboration of traditional and innovative approaches, their correlation, their comparative advantages and limitations. The traditional approach is based on the concept of professionally important qualities PIQ. As a rule, these qualities can be identified and quantified. This is the main advantage of the PIQ concept. The innovative approach is represented by the concept of professional competence including not only knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) but also value orientations, personal motives and qualities. The main advantage of this concept is its focus on practice and efficiency.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodological bases of the current study is a set of theoretical methods, including a) a systematic method that allows to present professionally important qualities and professional competence as a system of interrelated elements; b) a comparative method by which a comparative assessment of traditional and innovative approaches, their advantages and limitations is made; c) modeling which reveals the competence potential of the employee.

III. STUDY OF PROFESSIONALLY IMPORTANT QUALITIES

By the end of the last century in psychology of labor the tradition of using the term “professionally important qualities had been developed in Russian psychology of labor. This term had become so common that answering the question “What are professionally important qualities?” Every psychologist used his own fragment from the contexts of different theoretical approaches to explaining the nature psychological characteristics of workers involved in labor activity and not from any generally accepted definition. You can judge about the sustainability of the meaningful perception and popularity of the term by the fact that professional psychologists and experts in the field of organization management often used abbreviation PIQ without any explanation.

Any activity requires a certain set of professionally important qualities, which is not a mechanical sum of these qualities but their naturally organized system. The formation of the system of professionally important qualities is a rather complicated psychological process. According to V.D. Shadrikov, professionally important qualities serve as internal conditions through which external influences and requirements are refracted, which is a key moment in the formation of psychological activity system [1].

A.K. Markova notes that professionally important qualities of the individual can be the actual mental and personal as well as biological properties of the subject of professional activity, such as somatic, morphological, neurodynamic ones [2].

Yu.Y. Kotelova considering the concept of “professionally important signs” thinks that psychological characteristics of sensory, cognitive, motor activities as well as the peculiarities of attention, thinking, memory, emotionally strong-willed sphere can be considered “professionally important signs” [3].

E.S. Shepeleva treats professionally important qualities as the components of professional suitability which are necessary

for a person to be able to solve professional problems successfully. Among them there is a wide range of different qualities – from natural abilities to professional knowledge attended in the process of vocational training and self-training, personality characteristics (motivation, orientation, semantic sphere, character), psychophysiological features (temperament, features of higher nervous activity), features of mental processes (memory, attention, thinking, imagination) and even anatomical and morphological characteristics of a person (in relation to certain activities) [4].

V.A. Dushkov, A.V. Korolev, B. A. Smirnov note that in addition to the individual qualities of a person such as certain mental and psychomotor properties (expressed by the level of development of relevant processes) professionally important qualities also include physical qualities that meet the requirements of a certain profession and ensure mastering of this profession [5].

The difference of the points of view on the psychological nature of various PIQ, their role in ensuring the efficiency of work and personal preferences of certain methods of measurement/ evaluation of PIQ did not prevent professionals from understanding each other, „from speaking and arguing in the same language” [6].

But in the 1990s the foreign term “competences” appeared in Russia and became popular among experts in the field of personnel management and evaluation. Very soon specialists on the psychology of labor and personnel management started a discussion (permanent but not always obvious) on the question, whether the term completely coincided with the meaning and the scope of the term PIQ. The points of view of the experts on this problem were completely different and the number of absolutely different and definitions of the term “competences” in the textbooks and tutorials became frightening. Problems became more evident when the term “competences” started to be used in different regulatory documents and its discrepancies started to influence negatively the practice of using common, reliable and valid tools for research diagnostics and evaluation of the quality of labor resources of domestic organizations and enterprises. The level of mutual understanding of the experts in the field of personnel evaluation practice has decreased on the whole. The necessity of revision of the existing points of view on the problem given has become evident for many experts. It has become extremely important to try to understand the true meaning and interpretation of so popular now term “competences”.

We would like to offer the following conclusions from the collective work done. Their aim is to distinguish between the concepts compared in the article.

Professionally important qualities and averaged important qualities used in relation to all representatives of the profession (to all accountants or programmers, for example), to the whole industry.

Competence is the combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation factors, personal qualities and situational intentions which provides an effective solution by the task

executor of a certain class, in a certain organization, at a certain workplace with a certain production team.

As within the same industry organizations can be large and small, new, rapidly developing and well-established, innovative, creative or formally bureaucratic, i.e. they can be at different stages of their development and have different socio-psychological climate different informal corporate culture, models of desirable competences at these organizations will vary significantly. The competence model doesn’t mean a sector-wide PIQ model.

It must be specially developed for every organization. Unlike the PIQ concept which is very close to the traditional model of universal personal traits (resistant to different situations) the competence concept is actually much closer to the Russian (Moscow) activity theory of psyche because competences take into account not only human traits but also those external (organizational context) and internal (production experience of an employee) conditions under which professional activities are carried out.

Propositions and conclusions in this study have been made to accentuate differences between notions compared in the article. First, professionally important qualities are averaged important qualities, which can be referred to all employees, (e.g. to all accountants or programmers), to the whole industry. Professionally important qualities, being individual properties of the subject activity, are necessary for its realization at the given level and correlate with the main effective parameters (quality, reliability). Professionally important qualities are dynamic personality traits which, on the one hand, are the prerequisite for professional activity and on the other hand, they improve themselves get better in the course of activities, transforming into something new.

Secondly, there are two categories of professionally important personality traits. The first category includes professionally important qualities characterized by their most direct connection with the parameters of activity – they are leading professionally important qualities. The second category includes professionally important qualities having the greatest number of intrasystemic connections with other qualities, i. e. they are characterized by the greatest structural weight and, therefore, occupy the central position in the entire quality system. They are basic professionally important qualities. Basic and leading professionally important qualities are the basis for the formation of professional competences. The rest of the qualities of the individual necessary for his or her professional activity are structured around them and are combined on their basis. Therefore, professionally important qualities are structurally important for activity realization. Each activity requires a certain set of professionally important qualities which is not their “mechanical” sum but a naturally organized system. Functional relationships of compensatory and promotional types are established between individual professionally important qualities, the system of professionally important qualities acting as a symptom complex of subjective properties that are specific for a particular activity.

Third, not all professionally important qualities are related to the activity parameters by simple linear dependence, i.e. the

dependence of the type: “the higher the level of professionally” important qualities, the more effective the activity by nonlinear dependence of the optimum type: these parameters take on the most importance not at the maximum, but at some average-optimal-levels of the development of professionally important qualities. Along with this, the so-called professionally important qualities of the development of activities and professionally important qualities of performance should be differentiated. The former ones are more important for effective high quality and rapid acquisition by the subject of activity, the ones are important for its implementation at the standard-set level. . For a wide range of activities, the differentiation of professionally important qualities between those that act as such under normal conditions of implementation and those that are necessary under complicated and often extreme conditions of its implementation is very actual. For many types of professional activity, it is necessary to distinguish those individual qualities that are responsible for its own performing part and those that are necessary for the perception – reception of professionally significant information. In this regard it customary to talk about professionally important qualities of performance and information professionally important qualities. Fourth the highest degree of the development of RIQ (professionalism) is competence [7]. Professional competence is the basic criterion for assessing the quality of any activity. It is formed in the process of activity and always manifests itself in organic unity with human values as only under the conditions of value attitude and public interest to the activity high professional results can be achieved.

The notion competence can be viewed upon in two angles: broad and narrow. In the broad one it includes such elements as knowledge, abilities, skills, personal characteristics and value system of the individual (employee). In the narrow one the notion “competence” is limited only to knowledge, skills and abilities of the staff. The lack of attention to the personal characteristics and value system of the individual is largely due to the fact that tools for their diagnoses and evaluation are undeveloped. It, in its turn, makes it difficult to have an objective view of both personal characteristics of the employee and their severity. Moreover, numerous studies have shown that personal qualities and values tend to transform both in their structure and components under the influence of social environment standards the specifics of their own experience as well as details of each specific situations. Therefore, it is possible to speak about determination of the parameters only of the current set of personal qualities and values of the individual (employee).

From our point of view the removal of the personal factor from the concepts “competence” and “competency” is not entirely justified. First of all it is due to the fact knowledge skills and abilities of personnel can be judged upon only if their personal qualities and values are taken into account.

The result produced in the form of labor behavior and the actions of employees is influenced by all the points mentioned above. From this point of view, we think it is more logical and justified to use the concepts “competence” and “competency”

in their broad meaning in the theory and practice of personnel management [8].

The concept “professional competence” in addition to the general set of professional ideas includes the foreknowledge of the consequences of the use of a particular method of influence, the level of skills and achievements in the practical application of knowledge. Professional competence is not only knowledge and skills available; it is also the ability to use them for carrying out duties.

In the works of V.M. Zakharov the concept of the competence potential has been introduced, which is used in two meanings:

first, as synonym of professional potential and secondly, as a qualitative characteristic of professional potential and as a concept relevant to the content of systemic renovation of reproduction of this potential [9]. In this regard he has solved the problem of the selection and description of quality (competence) parameters of professional potential:

- Applicability (lat. Application – attachment, connection). Competences are some internal, potential, hidden psychological new formations (knowledge, ideas, programs of actions, system of values and relations) which discover themselves and then are identified in person’s competences as the actual activity forms;

- Efficiency orientation. Competence expresses professional knowledge, awareness and abilities of civil servant for their effective realization in the activity. Efficiency orientation is a defining feature of professional competence. Not by chance that J.Raven defines competence as the qualities of the individual which increase significantly the efficiency of labor activity [10].

- Conceptuality, associated with the fact that management is increasingly looked upon as the interoperability system within it is impotent to create general ideas, to form unified vision which allows people with different status in a specific situation to negotiate, to come to a common understanding;

- Practical orientation: an essential feature of the competence approach is its emphasis not only on the formation and application of knowledge abilities and skills but also on the readiness to use them in practice, personal qualities of people, their values and motives which transform knowledge, abilities and skills into practical actions;

- Integrativity expresses the fact that the competence potential presents a variety of approaches to the professional activity which is integrated into a holistic view of the subject of activity;

- Creativity: the professional potential becomes the most powerful energy resource of any organization and its rational use is the most important element of the science of management.

- Technological effectiveness involves the use of special technologies of disclosure of individual representations, cognitive limitations and cognitive possibilities of changing the views on the essential realities

for management: management objects, the subject of management, means and methods of management;

- Humanism: management technologies based on competences are new instruments of social orientation developing attention to other people as the necessary bases for activities in any field;

- Continuity. The competence potential accumulates not only the present (everyday) experience but the past experience too which provides the connection of times the continuity of the realization and development of the creative forces of a man;

- Limitation (excessiveness). Only those understandings knowledge, abilities, skills and value orientations which are necessary for professional activity in a specific area can be considered professional competences.

CONCLUSION

The analysis done makes it possible to conclude that it would be premature and unreasonable to abandon the traditional approach to vocational education and personnel management focusing on professionally important qualities. The innovative approach based on the recognition of the priority of professional competence is still experiencing difficult the identification and quantification of professional competences. At the same time, it is important to take into account such significant and distinctive parameters of professional competence as applicability, efficiency orientation, conceptuality, integrativity, creativity, manufacturability, humanism, continuity, limitation (excessiveness).

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