

ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATION DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract. *The research study aims at investigating the categories of basic needs that underlie the professional orientation of students enrolled in the first year of study. The research was performed on a sample of 75 students attending the 1st year of a faculty having an agricultural line of studies. From the methodological perspective, the research instrument used in this study was the enquiry based on a questionnaire including 35 items. The results were divided into five categories of basic needs: physiological, security, belonging, social, esteem and statute, as well as self-realization needs. The conclusions have shown that when choosing their profession students take into consideration preponderantly the needs for self-realization and also the needs for esteem and statute. The study offers openings for further research regarding career counselling and motivation for professional activities.*

Keywords: *professional motivation, higher education, professional orientation*

INTRODUCTION

It is well-known the fact that success in choosing a profession is influenced partly by the identification of categories of needs which give a direction to the student's school and professional path, and then by a sum of interventions performed by the career counsellors, who assist the student with his or her school path and further professional career. GINZBERG (1972) cited by BĂBAN, A. (2011) identifies, during the *realistic stage* (18-25 years of age) of a young person, a holistic approach of those factors that can identify which school and professional path to follow, fact that consists in accepting and taking the best pragmatic decisions concerning the young person's professional career, together with outlining his or her own vocational identity. If we refer to higher education, we currently witness a growing diversity in students, who differentiate themselves in terms of original background and also in terms of personal characteristics and needs regarding the professional evolution, correlated with their different levels of development. While witnessing such a complex phenomenon, some specialty studies that investigated the students' needs reveal their real desire to be advised and supported in a large range of interests and approaches regarding a future career. CRITES (1981) cited by NILES & HARRIS-BOWLSBEY (2015) is the one who recommend the professionals in the field that the students should initiate actions concerning the career development by evaluating their own needs of professional development and then with specialized interventions from the part of counselors, adjusted to identified needs. The young person's desires turn into aspirations and ideals which build real motivational structures that offer impulse and direction to the former's activity and behavior (DUMITRU, 2008). Professional motivation has the task to define that conglomerate of needs and targets that motivate the student to find a conscious attitude towards his or her future profession (PINSKA, 2009). A research study conducted by RIASHCHENKO ET ALL. (2013) in Latvia shows that an average of 44.27% of the 1st year students are interested in the study field, while only 8.6% of the 4th year students bear the same characteristic, a fact explained by the actual confrontation between the created vision regarding the profession during the first year and the reality of profession during the last year of study, when the

students have become aware of all the connotations and risks related to the chosen career. Another research performed in 2015 by ARDELEAN ET. ALL, underlines the "lack of a system of professional orientation" among the weaknesses of a SWOT analysis accomplished over the Romanian higher education in more universities in Romania. In this context, among the aspects that create, at a macro level, a state of disadvantage and discomfort to the people leaving school we find again aspects relating to: "chances for progress and career building", "accepting the allowed standards", "the quality of life, financial situation and discrepancy between subjects" (MATEESCU & NEAGU, 2014). Thus, as a consequence of the active role students have in developing their own career, both at an intellectual and behavioral level (BORGES, 1991), cited by CRIȘAN ET ALL. (2014), there is the strong need to access career counselling services, which are meant to make students even more aware of the need to take action in a responsible manner when they deal with career issues.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research aims to investigate the categories of basic needs that underlie the professional orientation of students enrolled in the 1st year of study. The research was performed during the academic year 2017-2018, over a sample of 75 first year students attending a faculty having an agricultural line of studies. We used the inquiry based on a questionnaire which comprised a number of 35 items. The target population: 75 students, 43 of which were girls and 32 boys, with ages raging between 18 and 21 years old (M=19.58; SD=0.71).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

If we follow the objectives of the research, students were asked to add scores ranging from 0 to 4 to a set of 35 items, where 0 is the smallest value and 4 is the highest value. The medium scores obtained for each category of needs, as well as the related standard deviations are presented in Table 1:

Table 1

Categories of needs underlying the professional orientation

Categories of needs	Mean	SD
Needs of self-realization	20.42	0.96
Need of esteem and statute	18.09	1.09
Need for belonging and cooperation	14.06	1.09
Need for security	12.65	1.03
Physiological needs	8.40	1.20
Categories of needs	Mean	SD
Needs of self-realization	20.42	0.96

The analysis of results shows that in the 1st year students' opinion, the most important motivational vector in choosing a future profession is the need for self-realization. Students prove to be mature when they desire to fulfill a higher level need, over the needs that have less impact upon their personal and professional life.

On the second place in our hierarchy based on this study there comes naturally the need for esteem and statute. Students want to enjoy validation coming from the professional community when they graduate, as good specialists in a field of activity. Thus, those answering

this questionnaire, at least at some declarative level, wish to become professionals in a domain of ongoing growing and opening.

On the third place there is the need for belonging and cooperation, students showing a deep level of desire to belong to the academic community at present and to other professional communities in the future.

Certainly, the needs for security and the physiological ones do not belong to the sphere of motivational dominants of professional selection.

CONCLUSIONS

Having the results presented, we find that motivation is an important factor in choosing, building and confirm students' careers. In this context, universities have to continually adjust and update their offer regarding the psychological and professional counseling, by considering the main criteria to motivate the students. The programs of study provided by faculties have to include a curriculum centered on student, focusing on building professional and cross competencies, and mostly functional-action centered, from the perspective of a higher quality training for the future specialists. Researchers in university education have to train graduate students who are able to successfully integrate in the professional life. The study offers openings towards deepening the issues around the most efficient strategies of intrinsic motivation of students from the professional point of view.

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