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Development of professionally significant qualities of future economists by means of the hidden curriculum

Desarrollo de cualidades profesionalmente significativas de futuros economistas mediante el currículum oculto

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the research is determined by the necessity of the optimized training of future economists. The purpose of the research is to test experimentally a model for the formation of professionally significant qualities of future economists using the hidden curriculum technology. This article used the ascertaining experiment, formative experiment, questioning, testing, method of expert assessment, content analysis of the academic curriculum, and the mathematical statistics method. Results showed of the research identified the conditions for the development of the professionally significant qualities of future economists using the hidden curriculum technology.

Keywords: Future Economists, Hidden Curriculum, Higher Education, Professional Competence.

RESUMEN

La relevancia de la investigación está determinada por la necesidad de la formación optimizada de los futuros economistas. El propósito de la investigación es probar experimentalmente un modelo para la formación de cualidades profesionalmente significativas de futuros economistas mediante la tecnología del currículum oculto. Este artículo utilizó el experimento de determinación, el experimento formativo, las preguntas, las pruebas, el método de evaluación experta y el método de estadística matemática. Los resultados mostrados de la investigación identificaron las condiciones para el desarrollo de las cualidades profesionalmente significativas de los futuros economistas a través de la tecnología del currículum oculto.

Palabras clave: Competencia Profesional, Currículum Oculto, Economistas del Futuro, Educación Superior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The hidden curriculum allows the solving of additional educational problems at the level of content and methodology. In particular, the authors of the research highlight the importance of the development of professionally significant qualities of future economists in the context of rapidly changing professional requirements in the labor market. The hidden curriculum is regarded as a superposition on educational activity, which is formalized with an educational program and academic curriculum. The hidden curriculum allows the use of educational and pedagogical activity resources in higher education.

In the context of the issues under consideration, this technology seems relevant. On the one hand, professionally significant qualities of future economists are determined by the socioeconomic context, whose characteristics are rapidly developing. On the other hand, these qualities are influenced by the necessity of the relevant content in the curriculum and the Federal State Education Standards of Higher Education (FSHE).

One of the key issues of higher education development is the necessity of an effective means of training competitive specialists. However, the modern labor market is characterized by rapid changes in the set of popular professions and competitive competencies (Lysytsia et al.: 2019, pp. 336-352; Maragheh et al.: 2019, pp. 6-12). In particular, a transformation of requirements is observed for a modern professional, due to the digitalization of the global and domestic economy.

In this context, the issue of training a competitive specialist in the field of so-called "retire professions" is relevant. Professions in the sphere of economics are included in the atlases of the professions of the future, developed within the framework of the foresight conducted by the Agency for Strategic Initiatives, the Moscow School of Management Skolkovo, "Atlas of New Professions" (Atlas of New Professions: 2019), the business magazine "Invest-Foresight", etc. In particular, Herman Gref, the head of Sberbank, has stated the necessity of reducing the number of accountants and managers "on simple issues" in the context of the development of artificial intelligence. This process started in 2017. However, according to the results of the study of worker occupations and middle-level professions required in the labor market, conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation, the profession of an accountant was ranked in the top ten most demanded professions.

In this context, the following issues are the most relevant:

- 1) Which qualities should the future economists acquire to be competitive?
- 2) How can the educational process be made flexible and effective to meet the requirements of the labor market?

In the context of this study, the researchers restricted their attention to the professionally significant qualities of future economists as the basis of professional competence.

1.1 Literature review

The theory of professionally important/significant qualities actively entered the scientific thesaurus in the 1930s. The modern theories of professionally important/significant qualities, which were developed by such scientists as Klimov: 1998; and Shadrikov: 2010, p. 320, are based on a systematic approach. In foreign psychology and pedagogy, there is also an analog of the theory of professionally significant qualities, which is presented in studies and publications using the abbreviation KSAO: Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, Other characteristics.

In Russian science, two definitions are used: professionally important qualities and professionally significant qualities. Some authors regard these terms as synonyms (Dushkov et al.: 2005; and Shadrikov: 2010, p. 320; Ramos: 2007; Martínez, Ramos y Annía: 2019; Martins et al.: 2019). Other researchers differentiate the terms "professionally important qualities" and "professionally significant qualities."

Markova defines professionally important qualities as the characteristics necessary for professional activity. For example, sociability is a professionally important quality for all the professions related to the "person-person" type. Professionally significant qualities consist of qualities and abilities that are desirable for effective professional activities (Markova: 1996; Urdaneta & Villalobos: 2016; Villalobos & Ganga: 2016; Hernández, Villalobos, Morales & Moreno: 2016)

Derkach introduces another point of view. The researcher considers professionally important qualities as those that determine the effectiveness and efficiency of professional activity. However, professionally significant qualities provide effective self-development (Derkach & Kuzmina: 1993).

According to the third theory (Yarullina and Nikishina), professionally important qualities are qualities, abilities, and professional knowledge that determine the effectiveness and success of professional activities. Professionally significant qualities are "interests, attitudes, character traits and several other qualities" that "determine a person's attitude to professional functions and professionalization as a whole, as well as the degree of their acceptance".

In this study, we support the point of view of Markova (Markova: 1996) and Mitina (Mitina: 2002). According to their idea, the concept of "professionally important personality qualities" combines the qualities, abilities, and orientations of a personality, which are basic and necessary to perform a specific type of professional activity. In this sense, the presence or absence of these qualities correlates with professional suitability. The description of professionally important qualities is characterized by the application of the obligation mode. Professionally important qualities ensure the effectiveness of the professional activity, that is, its feasibility. The result will be achieved.

In this study, professionally significant qualities of future economists are regarded as a system of personal characteristics, professional abilities, attitudes, methods, and types of thinking, which influence efficiency and success in various types of economic careers.

Professionally significant qualities of future economists are a complex phenomenon. In its structuring, researchers distinguish a number of specific qualities, such as: creativity, associative thinking, analytical thinking, initiative, responsibility, social activity, sociability, leadership, alternativeness, flexibility, consistency, profitability, communication and organizational skills, business and leadership skills, enterprise, responsibility and self-organization, motivational-emotional, cognitive-creative and socially-perceptive.

Structural components of the professionally significant qualities of future economists were analyzed in the context of current professional and educational standards and requirements of the digital economy, which are reflected in the importance of *soft skills*. As a result, the following clusters were distinguished: qualities-relationships, individual-personal qualities and abilities, special qualities and abilities, as well as socio-personal qualities and abilities. Within each cluster, specific qualities and abilities were differentiated according to normative and additional standards. Normative qualities ensure the professional activity of future economists is at a sufficient level, which corresponds to the prescribed duties. Additional qualities contribute to a successful and effective professional career.

Qualities-relations are contextual (or peripheral) professionally significant qualities of future economists. They include professional motivation, attitude toward the profession of an economist (professional values), and civic position.

Individual-personal qualities include psychological qualities and personal features, which characterize professional suitability of the individual for professional activity, namely, the economic one.

The normative individual and personal qualities of future economists are emotional balance, stress tolerance, discipline, objectivity, honesty.

Additional individual-personal qualities ensure future economists' professional and career development; therefore, they contribute to the efficiency of professional careers. These qualities include: flexibility of thinking, professional mobility, the ability for self-education and self-development.

Special abilities and qualities are determined by professional activity. In particular, the profession of an economist primarily refers to the type of profession “person - a sign system”, and secondly, to the type of “person-person”. Special abilities and qualities are determined by the estimated economic, analytical, accounting, accounting and financial, banking and insurance types of professional activity. Consequently, the basis of the normative special abilities and qualities of future economists are analytical abilities (the ability to think analytically, the ability to extract details and components from the general), synthetic abilities (abstraction, generalization), predictive capability (strategic planning, prediction of the deficits, problems and mistakes, etc). Additional special abilities and qualities at the present stage of economic development in our country include critical thinking, project skills, and lean thinking.

Socio-personal qualities determine the main spheres of professional interaction of future economists, such as interaction with clients, colleagues, and superiors, as well as management. Communicative abilities (ability to work in a team, develop effective models of interpersonal interaction, cooperation ability) and the ability to resolve conflict is considered as normative socio-personal qualities. Additional socio-personal qualities include team-building skills and customer focus.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

According to the works of Polonnikov (Polonnikov: 2017, p. 209; Revisan et al.: 2020) the hidden curriculum was identified as a relevant mechanism for the formation of professionally significant qualities of future economists at the level of educational content management.

The concept of a curriculum was not commonly used in domestic pedagogical science due to fairly implicit reasons. It was introduced into scientific practice by Bobbitt (Bobbitt: 1918) in the first quarter of the 20th century. In his works, the curriculum was presented as a comprehensive document that defined the content of education in a list of principles and rules for its development, as well as for instructions for its implementation.

In the middle of the 20th century, the curriculum was applied to the detalization of all the elements of labor (Tyler: 1949). This interpretation of the curriculum was the basis for the formation of a list of competencies. Labor actions were recorded in various qualification handbooks and reflected in job specifications, presenting one of the first taxonomies of labor actions and necessary skills. Subsequently, Tyler transferred his ideas to educational practice. According to his ideas, the curriculum should detail specific issues such as the taxonomy of learning goals, the content of education, methods for achieving these goals and a list of diagnostic procedures (Tyler: 1949; Ahmadi & Movahed: 2019, pp. 1-10).

In this sense, the curriculum is implemented, firstly, as a system for organizing the educational process and, secondly, in a specific document. In Russian pedagogical semantics, the curriculum in this sense is synonymous with the terms *education program* and *educational standard*. This synonymity caused the rejection of the idea of the curriculum in domestic pedagogical thought.

The researchers identified types of curriculum that have been or are being implemented in Western educational practices, such as the recommended curriculum, prescribed the (official) curriculum, formal curriculum, informal curriculum, open curriculum, integrated curriculum, hidden curriculum, national curriculum, school curriculum.

However, it was the phenomenon of the hidden curriculum that captured the interest of Russian and foreign researchers. Smith, accepting the interpretation of the curriculum as an education program or educational standard, points out the social context appears in the educational process through the hidden curriculum. In his opinion, the hidden curriculum should influence the worldview, value system, and students' habits through the content of education and the educational process (Smith: 2000).

Cox regards the hidden curriculum as a kind of social contract between the state and the individual, synchronizing personal and public goals (Cox: 2007, pp. 245-248).

Polonnikov defines a hidden curriculum as an active social context that correlates with the content of education and the educational process. The hidden curriculum can be a powerful mechanism for the formation of a person's worldview due to its qualities, namely - activity and involvement of the social context (Polonnikov: 2017, p. 209).

At the same time, the sociology of education regards the hidden curriculum negatively (Apple: 1992, pp. 4-19; Bernstein: 2000; Bourdieu: 1984; Douglas & Waksler: 1982; Young: 2017).

It is worth noting that a negative assessment of the hidden curriculum is characteristic of the sociology of education. This is regarded as negative because the hidden curriculum has the potential to change students' attitudes, possibly without their knowledge, which can be regarded as an offense against their liberty. This is the second reason for the suppression of the hidden curriculum in domestic pedagogical thought. At the same time, in pedagogical research primarily by foreign authors, the hidden curriculum is devoid of both positive and negative connotations. This idea is clearly emphasized by Nechitaylo: "The specifics of the hidden curriculum and its effectiveness are not connected with the knowledge (historical, sociological, philosophical, etc.) that it transmits. The applied (consciously or unconsciously) techniques for hidden programming are universal".

Pastuović interprets the hidden curriculum as an educational program opposite the formal curriculum (in the Russian interpretation - the education program, educational plan, educational standard) (Pastuović: 1999).

Thus, a hidden curriculum allows for solving additional educational problems at a higher level of content and methodology. In particular, the authors of the research highlight the importance of the development of professionally significant qualities of future economists in the context of rapidly changing professional requirements in the labor market. A hidden curriculum is regarded as a superposition on educational activity, which is formalized with an educational program and academic curriculum. The hidden curriculum allows the use of the educational and pedagogical activity resources in higher education.

In this regard, the authors of the research considered the hidden curriculum as contextual educational technology. Its functioning is based on immersing students into an active social context through the systematic introduction of certain socio-educational aspects into the educational process. Also, a certain set of methods and means of education is implemented (Behadili et al.: 2019; Nalbandi & Zonoozi: 2019).

At the instrumental level, a hidden curriculum is designed with specific content and methodology for teaching future economists. At the content level, it seems to be effective to formalize the hidden curriculum, developing it based on existing programs and the content of academic disciplines. The content of the hidden curriculum is superimposed on the formalized content. At the same time, the content of the open curriculum can also be formalized through its development as a detailed program, which specifically indicates the topic and the content that should be implemented. Formalization of a hidden curriculum allows for the development of a taxonomy of its content according to the principles of consistency and coherence, avoiding the unjustified distribution of content blocks. The authors of this work regard these blocks as qualities-relations, individual-personal qualities and abilities, special qualities and abilities, socio-personal qualities and abilities in the context of their normative and excess content.

3. RESULTS

The experiment studied the effectiveness of the formation of professionally significant qualities of future economists using a hidden curriculum. This work was conducted in the period from 2017 to 2019 through the Institute of Law and Economics of FSBEI of Higher Education "Yelets State Ivan Bunin University." The experiment involved 62 people (44 students, 11 teachers, 7 employers). The research portfolio included ascertaining and formative experiments. As a result of the ascertaining experiment, diagnostic tools for the

evaluation of professionally significant qualities of future economists were developed. They included criteria, indicators, levels, diagnostic methods, and rating scales.

An insufficient level of professionally significant qualities was demonstrated by 38.10% of control group students and by 21.74% of experimental group students. A sufficient level was shown by 61.90% of control group students and by 78.26% of experimental group students. A super-sufficient level was not demonstrated by any student in either group. These data indicate a steady influence of the traditional educational process on the formation of normative professionally significant qualities. Although, there is a concern that a high proportion of students have an insufficient level of professionally significant qualities. Also, the traditional educational process does not suggest the development of additional professionally significant qualities.

The formative experiment introduced the traditional organization of the educational process in the control group, while the hidden curriculum was implemented into the educational process of the experimental group. In the context of this study, the following disciplines were involved: "Management", "Finance", "Econometrics", "Marketing", "Labor Economics", "Money, Credit, Banks", "Company Economics", "Financial accounting", "Macroeconomic planning and forecasting", "Taxes and taxation", "Comprehensive analysis of economic activity."

Mastering of professional skills and experience was a significant part of the students' educational activities in the hidden curriculum. In particular, an internship plan was agreed upon with social partners - future employers. It was assumed that students would perform the duties of the company executive assistant part-time. At this level, this allowed for the training of such social and personal qualities as communicative and managerial abilities, conflict resolution skills, self-confidence, independence, leadership qualities. During the internship, the following special abilities and qualities were trained: analytical and synthetic abilities, critical thinking, and predictive capability.

In the context of educational activities with the implementation of the hidden curriculum, opportunities for curator hours and students' social activities were used. The curator hours' work was focused on the formation of quality relations and socio-personal qualities. In particular, the active use of gaming, training, and situational technologies influenced professional motivation, initiative, mobility, self-education ability, ability to resolve conflicts, and leadership qualities. Within the framework of the curator hours' work, meeting platforms were organized with the economists who had achieved professional success. Students were actively involved in voluntary work. Within the framework of this activity, there were social projects to participate in, such as training in financial literacy for elderly people, kindergarten pupils, and schoolchildren. This activity contributed to the formation of the following individual and personal qualities: emotional balance and stress tolerance, perseverance, independence, flexibility, and initiative.

In general, the changes in the development of professionally significant qualities in the control group of students show the following: there was a decrease in the proportion of students with an insufficient level and an increase in the proportion of students with a sufficient level by 19.05%. This shows that the traditional educational process impacts the formation of normative professionally significant qualities, although it does not impact additional qualities. The dynamics of the development of professionally significant qualities in the experimental group of students confirm the hypothesis of the study, such that: the developed model and pedagogical conditions allow us to form not only normative but also additional professionally significant qualities. The changes in professionally significant qualities in students was as follows: there was a decrease in the proportion of students demonstrating insufficient and sufficient levels by 8.70% and 17.39% respectively, whereas there was an increase in the proportion of students with a super-sufficient level by 26.09%.

The researchers used a Student t-test for disconnected samples. This allowed them to compare the results of the final analysis between the control and experimental groups. As a result, it was found that temp is in the significance zone. The differences are statistically significant at more than 0.1% level, which confirms the main hypothesis of the study, namely, the hidden curriculum impacts the formation of professionally significant qualities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study of the content and structure of professionally significant qualities of future economists is a key task in the implementation of a competency-based approach for modern higher education. Professionally significant qualities of future economists are one of the basic components contributing to the quality and efficiency of economic activity.

According to the results of the formative experiment, the hidden curriculum impacts the development of professionally significant qualities. However, the traditional educational process of the university does not have a determinant influence on the development of professionally significant qualities of future economists.

An analysis of the formative experiment results shows two basic trends:

- The values of axiological and social-personal criteria developed evenly;
- Among the values of individual-personal and professional-personal criteria, the intensive development of the values indicating extra characteristics was observed.

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