

## The "Self- concept" of students: Scientific bases and features of research

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### Abstract

Modern psychological and pedagogical research of professional training of Pedagogy and psychology students is gaining its relevance in scientific research, especially in the field of the "Self-concept". This study aims to study the problem of diagnosis and description of the "Self-concept" of future specialists of educational psychologists of Bachelor degree students in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The sample consisted of 132 students of the specialty "Pedagogy and psychology" of the Pavlodar state pedagogical University and S. Toraigrov Pavlodar state University, who were men and women aged 17 to 25 years, without work experience. Based on the results obtained, hypothesis of existence of relationship between the "Self-concept" and professional training of future specialists was confirmed.

**Keywords:** "Self-concept", professional training, student, personality, future specialist.

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## 1. Introduction

Practical research in the field of pedagogy and psychology in the XXI century has great importance both for society and for the development of science itself. In the period of rapid development of various spheres of society, psychological and pedagogical science is closely interrelated with social, political, economic and other Sciences.

The application of psychological knowledge in the professional sphere in the modern world has its difficulties and prevailing stereotypes. The most common stereotype is the attribution to psychologists of some kind of supernatural, magical and mythical abilities. So, according to one of the most influential psychoanalysts of the twentieth century, the founder of the British Psychoanalytic society, Glover (2010), many myths that have grown up around psychologists, whom the General public considers something like modern shamans and healers. It is believed that a psychologist can read thoughts of even those people with whom he comes into short-term contact; in addition, psychologists are considered to be insightful judges of human actions and character (Glover, 2010; Urea & Carmen, 2020).

The problem of professional qualities of a specialist teacher-psychologist is only the initial link in the existing chain of difficulties and contradictions during the formation of the professional the "Self-concept". It is also supplemented by problems of integration of theoretical, research and practical activities, difficulties in finding universal diagnostic tools, contradictions in the ratio of quantitative and qualitative in the study of the future specialist's personality, and the complexity of the activity of a teacher-psychologist in various spheres of life.

However, psychology brings under new realities of a rapidly changing world, or rather a changing person in a transforming world, in a new socio-cultural reality (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Gorlova, 2018). According to Znakov (2016) other key areas include .

- the search for an interdisciplinary context-due to the need to look at each problem from different points of view, setting different possible interpretations.
- focusing research attention on the analysis of psychological processes that have the prefix "meta" (metacognitive, metaphenylene, metareplace) - detect focus is not so much to identify the cognitive nature of knowledge, how the disclosure of the existential - hermeneutic grounds reality with the knowledge embodied in bad perceived skills and abilities to understand the world of the subject.
- the modern reinterpretation of activity bases of psyche formation is characterized by a focus not only on the analysis of inner world of a person, but also on the study of circumstances that contribute to the generation of his subjective qualities;
- awareness and scientific justification of a new self-creating, self-generating stage of development of subject's psychology is represented by a shift in the focus of scientists' attention from defining the "I" image of as a set of personal qualities to such methods of constructing the "I", in which different interpretations of it become concrete methods of forming subjectivity;
- changes in the means of social and interpersonal relations of people in the socio-cultural reality-based on the transformation of position of individual in groups and organizations of society, due to changes in the groups and organizations themselves.

This is not a complete list of promising areas that capture a special psychological phenomenon of the modern world in these specific historical conditions. A person's sense of security is undermined for new and remarkably diverse reasons that were not typical of previous periods of



development of our civilization. Among the most relevant and promising areas, the leading place is certainly occupied by the field of personal security (Kessel, Kratzer & Schultz, 2012; Shrivastava et al., 2020).

Scientifically, "Self-concept" came into use in the specialized literature relatively recently, although this does not mean that it has not previously been studied. However, in the 50s of the twentieth century, the attention of the Western scientific community to the problem of "I" personal and its uniqueness increased sharply. These problems have taken a Central place in so called humanistic direction of Western psychology. Fundamental are the works of Burns & Dobson, (1984), Maslow (2008) Asio (2021) and others, who spoke from abstract anthropological positions in understanding the individual and his personal development, turning to the study of human manifestations proper. The "Self-concept" is a generalized idea of oneself, a system of attitudes about one's own personality, or, as psychologists also say, the "Self-concept" is a "theory of oneself". It is important to note that the "Self-concept" is not a static, but a dynamic psychological formation.

The authors of psychological dictionary Petrovsky and Yaroshevsky (1990) define the "Self-concept" as follows: 1) a stable, to a certain extent conscious, experienced, unique dynamic system of representations of the individual about himself; 2) a complete, not devoid of internal contradictions, the "I" image of his own, acting as an attitude to himself, including the following components:

- a) cognitive-image of their qualities, abilities, social significance, etc. (self-awareness);
- b) the emotional-value and self-respect, self-esteem;
- c) evaluative-volitional- desire to increase self-esteem, earn respect.

We consider selected components as an integral and interrelated process of developing student's personality and future professional activity. Motivational and installation structures for the human "I" are ubiquitous and cover all the components of the "Self-concept", which in turn are determined by need and interests of individual in forming his image of the "Self-concept". In this regard, we have chosen the area of formation of the "Self-concept" students' in the conditions of professional training as the current research direction.

### **1.1. Purpose of study**

Also the relevance and the choice of our research is reflected in the "State program of education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020" aims, one of which is to "achieve a high level of quality of higher education that meet needs of labor market, tasks of industrial-innovative development of the country, the identity and relevant international best practices in education" (State program of education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011, 2020). In the program article "Looking to the future: modernization of public consciousness", the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan – ELBASY N.A. Nazarbayev, highlighted the main directions of modernization of consciousness of society and every citizen of Kazakhstan: competitiveness; pragmatism; preservation of national identity; the cult of knowledge; the country's evolutionary development and openness of consciousness (Nazarbayev, 2015). In this regard, psychological and pedagogical research in the field of professional formation of students is currently very relevant in our country and this is evidenced by various research works in this direction.

### **1.2. Related research**

In the special literature, the "Self-concept" as a scientific concept has entered recently, which is probably why neither the domestic nor foreign literature has a single definition of it. Its theoretical and practical development of this concept owes to the writings of Rubinstein (2009),



Burns (1984) and other scientists who have studied personality. The closest thing in meaning to the "Self-concept" is self-consciousness. But in fact, the "Self-concept" is much less neutral, it is supplemented by an evaluative aspect of self-awareness, like self-esteem. For this reason, the "Self-concept" is broader than the concept of "self-consciousness", since the "Self-concept" contains elements that are difficult to access or not at all accessible to the consciousness of the individual. The "Self-concept" is closely related to content-independent categories of personality, such as self-esteem, self-knowledge, self-regulation, self-actualization, etc. Many researchers describe two types of the "Self-concept"— the real and ideal, and already to the particular types of the "Self-concept" can be referred to as the professional the "Self-concept" of the student. The concept of a "real" the "Self-concept" corresponds to the idea of "What I am", and "ideal" - "What I would like to be". In most cases, the real and ideal the "Self-concept" will differ, which can lead to both negative consequences (intrapersonal conflict) and positive ones.

In this regard, one of the most relevant areas in the study of personal and professional characteristics is the area of the "Self-concept", as an extremely important integrative education that acts as a powerful regulator of human behavior, which determines dynamics and direction of personal development. The "Self-concept" as a system-forming and integrative core of an individual largely determines its life positions and level of claims, and it constitutes a special system of qualities (Rogers & Dymond, 1957; Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989; Burns, 1979).

All this is reflected in the content of our research on the scientific basis of the formation of the "Self-concept" of students in the conditions of professional training since 2019 (Matayev, 2019). Karpov (2005) also said that the formation of the "Self-concept" is in the process of interaction of personality with the world of things and the human world, in the process of self-examination and further fragmentation of their own of "I" images for a more detailed constructs, which are surface and deep mental characteristics. Rubinstein (2009) assumed his own "I" image constantly enters into varied interactions with the surrounding reality, the result of which manifests itself in various features and forms, constantly determining different quality. As a result, from these separate interactions through self-perception, self-observation and self-analysis, a collective image of the "Self-concept" is formed, combining all the essential content features of the personality itself.

In addition, Karpov (2005) connects the formation of the "Self-concept" with the process of self-knowledge, considering that this mental education is not static, but is in constant change and development. Its degree of adequacy and level of formation are determined in specific actions and actions of the individual, in connection with which the "Self-concept" has a significant impact both on the field of the psyche and on human behavior itself. According to the majority of scientists in our country, there are four main areas of research in foreign psychology related to the study of the "Self-concept":

1. Basic aspects of James (1890), in which he highlighted the dependence of the "I" image on the relationship between self – esteem and success, and the first of the researchers identified the components of the "I" - conscious and object of awareness. In turn, according to W. James, the Self as an object of awareness contains more detailed formations-physical, material, spiritual and social.

2. Scientific works by Cooley (1922) and Mead (1934), which reveal the influence of society on the "Self-concept". They believed that a person attaches importance to himself only to the extent that he is respected by his environment, and that he also loses his own importance to the proportionately negative and contemptuous treatment of the social environment.

3. Developments of Erik (1968) aimed at the study of the field of identity formation and its basis.

4. Research by Rogers (1961) , according to which the "I" is its inner essence, formed in the process of self-observation and self-knowledge based on impulse influence.



In the initial phase of its formation, qualification and expansive tendencies are concentrated in the environment, which determine its characteristics both positive and negative. The assimilation of these trends is carried out against the background of the influence of people around them, their civilization and their own "I" (Rogers, 1961) .

## **2. Method**

The results of the analysis of scientific literature show that there are many approaches to the study of the "Self-concept", which consider the problem in close connection with self - awareness and self-esteem in the process of personal development, from various theoretical positions, sometimes interrelated, and sometimes contradictory to each other.

In this connection, the use of diagnostic methods and specially developed questionnaire - for students of the specialty "Pedagogy and psychology" was justified.

### **2.1. Data collection method**

The research was experimental research. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire. The experimental base of the ascertaining research was made up of: Pavlodar pedagogical University (Pavlodar), S. Toraigyrov Pavlodar University (Pavlodar).

### **2.2. Sample**

The experiment was attended by students from I to III courses in the amount of 132 people. The sample consisted of students of the specialty "Pedagogy and psychology" of the Pavlodar state pedagogical University and S. Toraigyrov Pavlodar state University, who were men and women aged 17 to 25 years, without work experience.

### **2.3. Procedure**

To study the professional the "Self-concept", the method "Study of motives of educational activity" was used, developed at the Department of pedagogical psychology of A.A. Zhdanov Leningrad State University (modification of A. A. Rean, V. A. Yakunin), which allows you to determine the frequency of naming motives among the most significant in the entire sample. Based on the goals and objectives of our research, this method was modified by us. Based on the results obtained, the rank position of the motive in this sample group of students is determined. Students were presented with a list of 15 motives for learning activities and an open answer option (the 16th), and were asked to choose the five most significant ones (the limited choice method). These 15 motives were divided into five groups:

## **3. Results**

After analyzing the scientific and theoretical literature on the problem of professional formation of the "Self-concept" of students majoring in 5B010300 and 6B01101 "Pedagogy and psychology" in the process of "professionogenesis", we have identified three main structural components representing the professional the "Self-concept" of students in the process of their professional training:

- **cognitive** - ideas about yourself as a person and future professional were studied using the following methods: questionnaire (do you plan to work as a teacher - psychologist in the future), " Who am I? What am I?", " I was. I am, I will be", Budassi;
- **affective** - self-esteem and value orientations were studied using the following methods: questionnaire (who or what influenced in your choice to enroll as a teacher-psychologist), method " Who am I? What am I?", " I was. I am, I will be", Budassi;



• **behavioral** - educational professional and personal motivation was studied using the following methods: questionnaire (in which field you plan to work), Rean's and Budassi's method.

The experiment was attended by students from I to III courses in the amount of 132 people (see table 1).

**Table 1: Experimental selection of the ascertaining experiment**

Course	Higher Educational Institutions		Total
	Pavlodar Pedagogical Universities	S. Toraigyrov Pavlodar University	
1	16	28	44
2	8	33	41
3	27	20	47
Total	51	81	132

The distribution of responses according to the method "Study of motives of students' educational activity" by A.A. Rean is presented in Table 2

**Table 2: distribution of responses according to the method "Study of motives of students' educational activity" by A.A. Rean**

Group of motives	Course		
	1	2	3
Professional	41	38	45
Cognitive	38	32	38
Pragmatic	22	33	41
Social	20	14	19
Content and tactics	25	25	28

The dynamics of the three leading motives of educational activity is shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Leading motives of students' educational activity**

Course	Motive
1	Become a highly qualified specialist Receive a diploma Ensure the success of future professional activities
2	Become a highly qualified specialist Get a diploma Acquire deep and solid knowledge
3	Become a highly qualified specialist to acquire deep and sound knowledge to get intellectual satisfaction

The obtained distribution shows the predominance of professional and cognitive motives in the structure of motivation for educational activities (Tehdit , 2020; Otanga & Aslam, 2020). The most stable motive is "to become a highly qualified specialist", and the prevailing motives in all courses are "to ensure the success of future professional activities" and "to acquire deep and solid knowledge". Only in the I and II courses the only pragmatic motive ("to get a diploma") is included in



the number of leading ones. Its loss from the top three leading motives in subsequent courses indicates a decrease in pragmatic motivation in the learning process.

The results for projective methods are distributed in the following order:

- M. Kuhn's and T. Mcpartland's "Who am I?" (modification of T. V. Kostyak) method is used to study the content characteristics of the "I-Image" (Gorlova, 2018).

- Method "I am in the past. I'm in the present. I in the future" (modification of T.V. Kostyak) is used to study the "Self-concept" and features of the time perspective.

To study **the cognitive component of the "Self-concept"**, we have identified answers to objective characteristics in which people are self-determined by functions in the system of objective "I" (physical, age, physiological parameters, family, social, etc.) and subjective (personal and professional qualities, favorite activities, etc.), based on the perception of themselves as an active, reflective subject.

Objective self-descriptions were divided into 5 main groups:

- "I" physical – (name, gender, age, appearance characteristics);
- "I" family - (daughter, sister, mother, brother, father, father);
- "I" social - (student, friend, student, nationality, citizenship);
- "I" professional - (specialist, psychologist);
- other - (person, person, individual, material security, etc.).

Subjective characteristics include:

- overall quality assessment (good, successful, happy, etc.);
- personal qualities (kindness, responsiveness, intelligence, honesty, decency, politeness, emotionality, sociability, responsibility, courage, etc.);
- professional qualities (sociability, literacy, entrepreneurship, skills ..., ability ..., etc);
- attitude to something (the opposite sex, friends, money, etc.);
- other (temperament type, zodiac sign, metaphorical self-descriptions, etc.).

Also, the analysis of the results of the "I'm in the past. I'm in the present. I'm in the future " additional attention is paid to the "Prospective Self" component. The presence of goals and plans for the future is of great importance for the characterization of the inner world of a person as a whole, reflects the temporal aspect of the "Image-I", aimed at the future, performs existential and goal functions.

To study the **affective component of students' professional the "Self-concept"**, it was important to identify share of positive self-descriptions in retrospective, current and prospective self-descriptions. Such self-descriptions indicate an acceptance of the "I-Image" and a General emotional attitude towards oneself.

**Table 4:** *Distribution of answers cognitive component the "Self-concept" objective characteristics*

Course	"I"Physical	"I"Family	"I"Social	"I"Professional	Other
1	15	25	35	20	36
2	10	23	34	20	27
3	26	33	33	25	35

**Table 5 :** *Distribution of answers cognitive component the "Self-concept" subjective characteristics*



Course	Qualitative assessment	Personal qualities	Professional qualities	Attitude to something	Others
1	28	40	12	11	6
2	33	34	17	9	5
3	37	33	5	15	4

When analyzing the ratio of subjective and objective self-descriptions, it is noteworthy that the quantitative indicators of objective characteristics are reduced from 15 in the first year to 10 in the second year and increased to 26 in the third year. At the same time, the percentage of objective descriptions increases in the direction from "I was" to "I will be" in all courses. The leading descriptions from the first to third year included "social role" (25-35%) and "family role" (17-30%), in the third year the position of "professional role" increases (by 5%). This can be explained by the approaching end of training and the need for direct professional self-determination. In addition to the growth of descriptions of the group "professional role" in the third year, the percentage of "family role" (by 13%), which for the first time occupies a leading position in the top three descriptions, significantly increases. Analyzing the time perspective of the share of socio-professional roles in objective self-descriptions, it can be noted that the largest number of such roles refers to self - descriptions in the present time, and the least-in the past. Such self-descriptions in the present and future are supplemented by the role of a specialist. Also, the majority of respondents in all courses saw the transition of social roles from "schoolboy" in the past to "student" in the present.

Among the subjective self-descriptions, the most interesting in connection with the tasks of our study were the professionally important qualities of the individual in relation to the psychological profession. They included such qualities as activity, discipline, care, sociability, accuracy, responsibility, restraint and determination. A qualitative analysis of the professionally significant qualities that occur shows that students most often distinguish activity, responsibility and restraint.

According to the methodology of S. A. Budassi, the evaluation criterion is the level of self-esteem, which is integrated into the system according to the degree of self-assessment (overestimated, understated, normal). To study the affective component of the professional the "Self-concept" of students of psychological specialties, it was important to identify the overall level of self-esteem. As a result of processing the methodology data three groups were identified with different levels of self esteem:

- overpriced - 45;
- underestimated - 29;
- normal - 58.

As part of the study of cognitive component of the "Self-concept", we were interested in comparing final ranked profiles in the images "I am real" and "Ideal professional" in the dynamics of leading qualities.

**Table 9:** *Leading characteristics in the profiles "I am real" and "Ideal specialist"*

Course	I am real	Ideal specialist
1	Kindness	Accuracy
2	Sincerity	Industriousness
3	Cheerfulness	Determination

#### 4. Discussion

In General, arrangement of results has a slight deviation from the normal distribution curve towards a high level of self-esteem. According to many researchers, a high level of self-esteem is



considered the most optimal, as opposed to normal (Coopersmith, 1959). A normal level of self-esteem allows you to adequately and maturely evaluate yourself, your abilities and behavior. However, in certain critical situations, the self-esteem of this level is less prone to risk and is aimed at achieving a high result than with a high one. Better to settle for what is, for what it's worth, than to try to achieve more and to lose or why you need to make efforts in this matter, if I can not cope or fail other — so says a person with normal self-esteem. A person with a normal level of self-esteem tries to act for sure, weighed and verified. It tries to minimize the risk and maximize the result, and in most cases, it loses only because it does not consider the best options associated with increased activity.

High self-esteem promotes comprehensive personal development, makes a person more active to achieve goals, helps to bear difficulties and failures more easily, and, in general, has a positive impact on social and personal behavior. This is how Burns (1982) describes the formation of a high level of self-esteem : "High self-esteem develops in children in families that differ in cohesion and solidarity. The mother's attitude to her husband is more positive here. In the eyes of the child, parents are always successful. He readily follows the patterns of behavior set by them, persistently and successfully solves the daily tasks that arise before him, because he feels confident in his abilities. He is less prone to stress and anxiety, and has a friendly and realistic perception of the world around him and of himself. High self-esteem provides a good command of the technique of social contacts, allows the individual to show their value without making much effort. The child has acquired the ability to cooperate in the family, the confidence that he is surrounded by love, care and attention. All this creates a solid Foundation for its social development." Coopersmith (1959) also notes the behavior of children with high self-esteem: "...boys from the group with high self-esteem were characterized as active, expressive, generally successful in teaching and social relations, leaders in discussions, they did not retreat when others disagreed with them, were partially insensitive to criticism, highly interested in public affairs, little burdened with a sense of anxiety. They looked like they trusted their own perceptions and reactions and believed that their efforts would lead to success. They turned to others with the expectation that they would be friendly. Their optimism was based not on fantasy, but on a reasonable assessment of their abilities, skills, and personal qualities. They were not preoccupied with internal problems and were much less likely to suffer from psychosomatic disorders than their peers in the low self-esteem group».

Stolyarenko (2000) discusses the dominant position of high self-esteem in personal and social development: "most people have a tendency to rate themselves slightly above average. This allows us to conclude that a person has a need for a sufficiently high self-esteem, i.e. everyone wants to respect themselves. Self-respect is one of the sources of psychological stability and good mood. Let's say a person made a mistake, did something wrong. If this person has a high enough level of self-esteem, they can calm themselves down: "It's okay, because in general I am not a fool and this is not typical for me", i.e. psychological protection is triggered, and the person calms down" (Stolyarenko, 2000).

To study the discrepancy between the "Real and ideal", the "Self-concept", we used Budassi's method. In psychology, it is customary to distinguish two forms of "The self-concept"- "Real and ideal". The concept of "Real" is a person's idea of himself, of what "I" am. The "ideal " "Self-concept" is the person's representation of himself in accordance with his desires ("What I would like to be"). The discrepancy between the "Real and ideal Self" can be a source of serious intrapersonal conflicts, as well as self - development of the individual-much is determined by the measure of this discrepancy, as well as its intrapersonal interpretation. When the subject is asked to rank the 20 qualities they selected first "ideally" and then "according to their qualities", in fact, they provide their ideal and real the "Self-concept", the difference between which corresponds to the level of self-esteem..



## 5. Conclusions

The structure of students' professional the "Self-concept" can be described through a combination of the following components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The content of the cognitive component consists of ideas about yourself as a person and future professional, ideas about the profession. The affective component includes value orientations (personal and professional) and self-esteem. The behavioral component is represented by educational and professional motivation, personal and professional intentions.

The formation of a professional the "Self-concept" during professional training is found in the development of ideas about the ideal professional and strengthening their connection with self-concepts, as well as the growth of self-awareness and self-esteem; the dynamics of cognitive and professional motives. Ideas about the ideal specialist are formed mainly through functional descriptions, but there is a tendency to increase in such representations of professionally important qualities.

In the process of professional training, the ideas about oneself and one's own professional qualities are detailed and re-formed, which is closely related to the specialty "Pedagogy and psychology" being mastered. In the learning process, there is an intersection of personal and professional motives, which are most reflected in the development of professionally important qualities of the future specialist teacher-psychologist.

During professional training, the subjective assessment of personal self-descriptions of readiness for professional activity is not associated with a decrease in descriptive assessments of the image of the ideal professional and the ideal the "Self-concept" of a specialist, but due to an increase in self-esteem for the corresponding professionally important qualities, which are activity, responsibility, and restraint. Motivation of educational activity is represented by two distinct groups of motives: the leading ones, where the main dynamics of motivation of educational activity is observed, and the others, which are represented slightly and are quite stable. As learning progresses, the importance of cognitive and professional motives increases.

Purposeful formation of the main professionally important qualities leads to an increase in the subjective assessment of personal readiness for professional activity, and the development of ideas about the personality of a professional teacher-psychologist. Thus, we have found that there is an influence of some of the studied indicators on others. These results show that students' own resources depend directly on their attitude to themselves, self-esteem, and the "Self-concept". In order for a student to be successful in many areas of life, they need such personal qualities as: adequate self-esteem, self-image as a strong personality, purposefulness, emotional saturation, and effective interpersonal relationships.

In modern socio-economic conditions, graduates of the specialty "Pedagogy and psychology" are no longer enough to have a certain stock of knowledge and professional skills. Successful professional self-realization requires such personal qualities and abilities that would ensure social and professional mobility, dynamism, and the ability to respond adequately to changes in society.

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