

Original article

UDC 378.1

doi 10.46741/2686-9764.2024.65.1.012



## Image of the Educational Environment of a Departmental Organization and Professional Identity of a Future Employee

**LYUBOV' V. KOVTUNENKO**

Voronezh State University, Voronezh, Russia, kovtunen-kolv@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5113-1735>

**ANTON B. KOVTUNENKO**

Voronezh State University, Voronezh, Russia, kovtunen-koab123@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6594-1258>

### Abstract

*Introduction:* the article is devoted to the problem of professional identity of an employee (cadet) studying at a departmental educational institution. The study is relevant due to the difficulties of professional self-determination of a future employee. Professional formation and maturity of value orientations and beliefs of cadets will further ensure not only successful psychological adaptation to the service, but also the effectiveness of their professional activities. *Purpose:* to analyze professional identity of an employee, to identify the status of the professional environmental identity of a future employee of the penal system during the study at a university. *Methods:* theoretical (analysis, comparison, generalization, systematization of psychological and pedagogical literature) and empirical (observation, survey, interpretation of results) research methods. *Results:* it is revealed that first and fourth-year cadets have significant differences in the status of professional identity. If first-year students have a predetermined one, formed under the influence of social environment and external circumstances, then graduates have an achieved one: they meaningfully determine the importance of their professional activities, have a positive focus on the future service. The “moratorium” level is found in 16% of the graduates. *Conclusion:* professional identity of an employee has an unstable, temporary character, reacts to changes occurring in the professional environment and personal life. In this regard, there is a need for the formation of professional environmental identity among cadets during the training period.

**Key words:** penal system; employee; departmental organization; cadet; educational environment; professional environmental identity.

5.8.1. General pedagogy, history of pedagogy and education.

For citation: Kovtunen L.V., Kovtunen A.B. Image of the educational environment of a departmental organization and professional identity of a future employee. *Penitentiary Science*, 2024, vol. 18, no. 1 (65), pp. 102–107. doi 10.46741/2686-9764.2024.65.1.012.

### Introduction

Speaking about the construction of an image of the world, the idea of correlation with events of the surrounding reality comes to the fore. The problem of identity is defined not only in accordance with traditional ideas about its group identity in the present, but also in differences between group affiliation in the past and representations in the future.

The unity of such identities determines the specifics of the process of formation of possible “self” of a person. It can definitely be assumed that this process is largely determined by motivation. Everyone when assessing their identity strives for positive characteristics given by themselves and others. In case of failure, an individual will try to avoid a negative assessment in the future or take another environment, society, or microcosm.

G.M. Andreeva mentions in her study “Psychology of social cognition” that a number of researchers addressing this issue believe that “the mechanisms of formation of possible identities are very tightly tied to the social context, in most cases to the intergroup context” [1, p. 169].

Let us consider some ideas of foreign researchers [2–7] on the problem under consideration:

- “since in individualistic cultures more emphasis is placed on the self, while in collectivistic cultures – on the group, it is typical for the latter to assume a larger number of possible selves;

- in individualistic cultures, where the level of social mobility is higher, “possible identities” can be associated with other groups (for example, in the future);

- when we consider a fixed group membership, “possible identity” is a projection of the “fate” of an existing group;

- group members convince others to confirm “possible identities”, i.e. to accept a positive vision of what may happen to the group in the future;

- “possible identities” are supported by an actual identity. If a “possible identity” seems “dangerous”, it is withdrawn (or transferred to another group)” [1, p. 178].

Nowadays, there are many similar hypotheses, but it should be noted that the problem of identity of a person with attachment to a social and intergroup context is being actively discussed, the boundaries of research are constantly expanding, and the mechanisms of formation of possible identities are being studied.

Let us consider the definition of identity. In the Explanatory Dictionary of S.I. Ozhegov, identical is “completely coincident” [8, p. 193].

In the Great Psychological Encyclopedia, identity is person’s self-image or self-concept; who you think you are; the integrity of your being [9].

In our opinion, the most complete definition of this concept is presented in the Encyclopedia of the history of philosophy: “identity (from Latin *identificare* – to equate, from late Latin *identifico* – I equate) – the correlation of something (“having being”) with itself in the coherence and continuity of its own variability and thought of as an “observer” telling about it” [10].

Nowadays, there is no single definition of identity that would meet the requirements of all sciences, although this concept is studied in many branches of science: philosophy, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, etc. This reflects not only its multidimensional nature, but also its complexity and multifactoriality.

J. Mead considers identity as a set of existing attitudes, values, norms that are borrowed from others, and which with the passage of time become person’s own. Reflecting, a person begins to consider him/herself as a social self and tries on various social roles [11].

E. Erikson defines identity as “an individual’s self-image in all the richness of person’s relationship to the world around him/her, a sense of adequacy and stable ownership of his/her own self by a person regardless of changes in self and situation; the ability of a person to fully

solve problems at every stage of his/her development" [12, p. 12].

C.G. Jung introduces the concept of a person, considering the self to be the unconscious center of the psyche, around which personal and individual characteristics of a person are formed [13].

Today, static and dynamic ways for the identity formation are identified. If the static path considers personality types, then the dynamic path is associated with the emphasis on the stages of personality development, at each of which social attitudes and behavior of an individual are only one of the stages of the formation of his/her identity [14]. We back the statement of Yu.V. Stavropol that in the modern world there is an additional opportunity to consciously choose a social, cultural and ethnic group to join [14].

Considering the educational environment of a departmental organization as a kind of society that forms a future professional employee, and taking into account specific characteristics of the image of the "educational environment of a departmental organization", we will identify how they affect professional identity of an employee. To do this, let us consider features of the educational environment of a departmental organization.

The problem of environment and its influence on personality development was analyzed by foreign (C.A. Helvetius, Ya.A. Komenskii, R. Owen) and domestic (P.F. Kapterev, N.M. Borytko, Yu.S. Manuilov, V.A. Yasvin) scientists.

As a factor of personality socialization, the phenomenon of environment and its impact on personality development are still relevant (A.V. Mudrik L.I. Novikova, N.E. Shchurkova).

An analysis of environmental studies in various fields of science shows that "the environment is considered by researchers as one of the leading factors of personality development. By the environment of a departmental educational organization, we mean "a socially oriented micro-society with certain relationships that ensures the formation of students' professional knowledge, skills, competencies, socially approved value orientations and professionally significant qualities, developing in time and space, determining their subjective activity and creating opportunities for self-realization" [15, p. 154].

Features of the educational environment of a departmental university are the following: normative-legal and organizational-managerial regulation of life and activity; subordination, disciplinary relations in official activities (duty, closeness, secrecy, strict compliance with the requirements of regulations, knowledge of traditions, limited contacts with relatives and friends, high fitness demands, etc.). All this has a significant impact on the formation of professional competencies and qualities of an employee and his/her readiness to perform official duty. Practice-oriented training and education takes into account the specifics of future professional activity, characterized by special conditions of service, etc.

The revealed features of professional environment of a departmental organization as a factor influencing the identity of an employee are ambivalent. The phenomenon of ambivalence is the anthropological basis of human existence and is expressed in the coexistence of mutually exclusive logics. On the one hand, getting into an environment of a departmental organization different from the previous lifestyle, a cadet feels discomfort, which he/she seeks to overcome (especially during the adaptation period and at the initial stage of training), on the other hand, organizing life according to the daily routine, immersion in the history of law enforcement, studying traditions, and following rituals form opposite emotions, opinions, and a positive attitude towards the new environment.

Contradictions in life are inevitable, they cannot be eliminated, they have to be constantly resolved, moreover, they form the dynamic basis of life. Overcoming contradictions resolves ambivalence and creates harmony. Due to the contradictions that constantly arise and are solved, the harmonious is born and lives in a person.

Professional and personal development of a cadet is determined by the richness of the environment of a departmental organization and his/her own inner world. The ambivalence of the image of professional environment of a departmental organization and personal and social life of a cadet requires pedagogical attention and professional skills of teachers and staff of the university. In every person, there is inevitably a confrontation between two sides of human nature: biological and social, images of the self

and the other. Teaching cadets to resolve contradictions that are at opposite poles of personal and socio-professional, educating a person to “be a person” and “be a professional, keeping a person in himself” is one of the leading ideas of forming an employee’s professional environmental identity.

The way to pedagogically resolve this contradiction may be to combine principles of cultural and natural conformity.

The resolved contradiction should lead to the awareness of the need for social-value and professional norms that are deontological in nature and formed in the course of practical activity. Gaining a personal sense of the importance of future professional activity, an employee, in turn, acquires the ability to manage his/her emotional and volitional state. The development of subjectivity as the ability to make choices independently of others in a professional situation is carried out on the basis of value orientations, consideration of other people’s interests, their respect, understanding that only the unity of “everything” preserves the life of an individual self. The formed moral and ethical qualities and ethical rules of communication contribute to overcoming this contradiction, which is why it is so important to educate and instill moral and ethical norms of interaction in a professional environment.

We agree with N.L. Ivanova and T.V. Rumyantseva that “there is a clear deficit in the description of psychodiagnostic techniques that allow us to identify and analyze manifestations of identity” [16, p. 7].

T.P. Emel’yanova in her work “Constructing social representations in the conditions of transformation of Russian society” describes results of the analysis of studies of “social representations in the framework of various theoretical paradigms, offering as a tool a methodology for measuring social representations” [17].

To identify the level of formation and maturity of the professional identity of cadets of departmental educational organizations, we took as a basis the “Questionnaire for Diagnosing Students’ Professional Identity” developed by A.A. Ozerina [18].

Modification of the questionnaire for the diagnosis of professional identity of cadets allowed us to identify “educational and pro-

fessional plans (definite/indefinite; own/ borrowed); attitude to the chosen profession (emotional acceptance / rejection; rational acceptance/ rejection), an idea of the future profession (internal/superficial; holistic /fragmentary), professional image formation (clear/blurred; conscious/stereotypical), professional position (active/passive; autonomous/dependent), professional self-esteem (adequate/inadequate; as a result of self-reflection / the result of evaluating others), and professional motivation (positive/ negative; intrusive/ extrinsic)” [18, p. 19].

Identification of a combination of subcategories corresponds to one of the four statuses of cadets’ professional identity: achieved (a certain set of personally significant goals, values and beliefs, experienced by cadets as personally significant, providing a sense of direction and meaningfulness of the upcoming professional activity), moratorium (refusal or postponement for an indefinite period from the choice of one’s life path), diffuse (loss of interest in one’s inner world, unwillingness to change (rigidity of the self-concept), low self-esteem, there are no identity components), predetermined (a ready-made decision is taken under the influence of social environment and external circumstances) [18].

The analysis of the research conducted among the first-year (25 people) and fourth-year (23 people) cadets of departmental universities of the Federal Penitentiary Service shows the following results.

During the first year of study, educational and professional plans are uncertain (54.1%); borrowed, as a rule, recommended by parents or family acquaintances (34%). An attitude to the chosen profession is based on emotional acceptance of the future profession, although there are no clear ideas about the specifics of future professional activity (67.1%). So, the idea of the future profession is superficial, fragmentary, and based on stereotypes formed when watching films about the penal system and stories told by employees. The professional position is not yet formed, professional motivation of the vast majority of the survey participants is positive, extrinsic (78.6%).

During the fourth year of study, professional competencies of cadets are formed, students have done practical training practices in insti-

tutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia. So, cadets have formed educational and professional plans on their own (75.7%); the attitude to the chosen profession is based on rational acceptance (71.1%); the idea of the future profession is holistic (63.5%); the professional position is active, autonomous (82.3%); professional self-esteem is based on the result of their own reflection (69 %); professional motivation is mostly positive, intrusive (54%); although negative, extrinsic (24%) motivation of cadets is also identified.

Thus, it can be concluded that the first-year cadets have a predetermined professional identity status, that is, accepted as a ready-made decision made not by them personally, but under the influence of social environment and external circumstances (parents, friends, life situation). Emotional acceptance of the future profession is rather pronounced, although there are no clear ideas about future professional activity, they are superficial and fragmentary. The fourth-year cadets (graduates) mainly have an achieved status of professional environmental identity, they understand the significance and specifics of professional activity, are aware of their own goals, values, beliefs,

and professionally significant factors providing a positive orientation and meaningfulness of life (56%). Besides, a small share of them (16.05%) have a moratorium status of professional identity; they refuse to consciously make a choice of their professional path or delay to take a final decision, performing official duties due to prevailing life circumstances, but not feeling satisfied with the choice made.

#### Conclusion

Thus, the construction of identity boundaries in the identification process takes place on the border with the social environment and is not fundamentally completed. Professional identity of an employee is largely determined by the formed image of the future professional environment during the period of study in a departmental organization.

Contradictions in the professional environment should be presented to students and key directions of their resolution in future professional activity are indicated. Cadets' skills to resolve contradictions should be developed during their study at a departmental institution, so that they can independently make adequate professional decisions, while simultaneously acquiring professional environmental identity.

## REFERENCES

1. Andreeva G.M. *Psikhologiya sotsial'nogo poznaniya: ucheb. posobie* [Psychology of social cognition: study guide]. Moscow, 2004. 288 p.
2. Cinirella M. The concept of possible social identities. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1998, no. 2, pp. 227–248.
3. Dannon W. *Social cognition and child development*. Washington, 1978. 352 p.
4. Doise W. *Levels of explanation in social psychology*. Cambridge, 1986. 183 p.
5. Fiske S. Schema-triggered affect: application to social perception. In: Clark M., Friske S. (Eds.). *Affect and cognition: the seventeenth annual Carnegie symposium on cognition: collection of reports*. New York, 1982. 357 p.
6. Fiske S., Taylor Sh. *Social cognition*. New York, 1994. 632 p.
7. Flavell J. H., Ross Le. *Social cognitive development*. Cambridge, 1981. 322 p.
8. Ozhegov S.I. *Slovar' russkogo yazyka* [Dictionary of the Russian language]. Ed. by Shvedova N.Yu. Moscow, 1981. 917 p.
9. Al'mukhanova A.B. et al. *Bol'shaya psikhologicheskaya entsiklopediya* [Great psychological encyclopedia]. Available at: <https://rus-big-psyho.slovaronline.com> (accessed December 20, 2023).
10. *Entsiklopediya po istorii filosofii* [Encyclopedia of the history of philosophy]. Available at: <https://velikanov.ru/philosophy/identichnost'.asp> (accessed December 20, 2023).
11. Mead D. Internalized others and the self. In: *Amerikanskaya sotsiologicheskaya mysl'* [American sociological thought]. Moscow, 1994. 495 p. (In Russ.).
12. Erikson E. *Identichnost': yunost' i krizis* [Identity: youth and crisis]. Moscow, 1996. 344 p.
13. Jung C.G. *Psikhologiya bessoznatel'nogo* [Psychology of the unconscious]. Moscow, 2010. 352 p.
14. Stavropol'skii Yu.V. Models of ethnocultural identity in modern American psychology. *Voprosy psikhologii = Issues of Psychology*, 2003, no. 6, pp. 112–118. (In Russ.).



15. Kovtunenکو L.V. *Kontseptsiya resotsializatsii nesovershennoletnikh osuzhdennykh v pedagogicheskoi srede vospitatel'noi kolonii: dis. ... d-ra ped. nauk* [The concept of resocialization of juvenile convicts in the pedagogical environment of a juvenile correctional facility: Doctor of Sciences (Pedagogy) dissertation]. Voronezh, 2018. 430 p.
16. Ivanova N.L., Rumyantseva T.V. *Sotsial'naya identichnost': teoriya i praktika* [Social identity: theory and practice]. Moscow, 2009. 453 p.
17. Emel'yanova T.P. *Konstruirovaniye sotsial'nykh predstavlenii v usloviyakh transformatsii Rossiiskogo obshchestva* [Constructing social representations in the conditions of transformation of Russian society]. Moscow, 2006. 400 p.
18. Ozerina A.A. Development of a questionnaire for the diagnosis of professional identity of students. *Izvestiya Dagestanskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie nauki = Izvestiya Dagestan State Pedagogical University. Psychological and Pedagogical Sciences*, 2011, no. 2 (15), pp. 15–22. (In Russ.).

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**LYUBOV' V. KOVTUNENKO** – Doctor of Sciences (Pedagogy), Associate Professor, professor at the Department of Pedagogy and Pedagogical Psychology of Faculty of Philosophy and Psychology of the Voronezh State University, Voronezh, Russia, kovtunenkov@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5113-1735>

**ANTON B. KOVTUNENKO** – Postgraduate Student at the Department of Pedagogy and Pedagogical Psychology of the Faculty of Philosophy and Psychology of the Voronezh State University, Voronezh, Russia, kovtunenkoab123@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6594-1258>

*Received February 1, 2024*