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# Theoretical and Analytical Foundations and New Technological Means of Overcoming Barriers to Personal and Professional Development of Educational Subjects

Georgy V. Mitin\* (a), Larisa M. Mitina (b), Svetlana O. Shchelina (c)

(a), (b) *Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education, 125009, Moscow (Russia), 9 building 4 Mokhovaya street, mitinalm@mail.ru*

(c) *National Research Lobachevsky State University of Nizhny Novgorod (Arzamas branch), 607220 Arzamas (Russia), 36 K. Marks street, svetikol91@mail.ru*

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## Abstract

One of the main issues of personal and professional development of a modern person is the necessity to study psychological barriers – those negative phenomena that have become widespread and affect individual and public consciousness: marginalism, procrastination and learned helplessness. The purpose of the research is to study the psychological content of the selected phenomena, their interrelationships; to develop and implement the technology of actualizing personal resources to overcome psychological barriers in personal and professional development of educational subjects. In line with the systematic personal development approach, based on the concept of professional development of an individual, a special methodological program has been developed and a plan of theoretical and empirical research (stating and forming stages) has been implemented. The study involved school and university teachers, schoolchildren and university students (n=738). The results of the study shows that teachers with low level of personal and professional development are characterized by signs of marginal consciousness, procrastination, due to the syndrome of learned helplessness formed in childhood and student life, as well as the position of a victim, transmitted and assigned by students. Personal helplessness is not formed among students if they develop in conditions of polysubject interaction, where the teacher is characterized by high level of professional development, meaningfulness of life, humanistic nature values and the absence of an existential vacuum. The developed and tested technology of actualizing personal resources (coping behavior, reflexive design and emotional involvement) proves its effectiveness by increasing the level of self-awareness and integral personal characteristics among educational subjects, reducing the learned helplessness, procrastination, and marginalism indicators, thereby ensuring an increase in the level of their personal and professional development.

*Keywords:* the concept of educational subjects' personal-and-professional development, psychological barriers and motivators of personal and professional development, learned helplessness, marginal consciousness, procrastination, psychological technology of actualizing personal and professional resources among educational subjects.

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\* Corresponding author. E-mail: mitinalm@mail.ru

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## **Introduction**

The modern epoch is characterized by great challenges and risks caused by radical social, cultural and technological changes in society. The challenges of the time require answers to a number of fundamental questions: to what extent is a modern person capable or ready for change and able to go beyond traditions, identify new tasks and means of knowledge, but most importantly - what personal qualities can act as motivators, catalysts for accepting challenges, and which, on the contrary, represent internal barriers that block the potential for development?

All the above mentioned is particularly acute in connection with the necessity to solve the problem of personal and professional development of school, college and university educational subjects, responsible for ensuring students' development, health and effective lifestyle.

The answers to these questions come from the solution of a number of interrelated theoretical, experimental and practical questions. One of the central ones is the necessity to study psychological barriers – negative phenomena affecting individual and social consciousness. Our analysis of psychological barriers to educational subjects' personal and professional development (Mitina, Mitin, 2020; Mitin, 2017, 2020) make it possible to identify the main ones: marginal consciousness and self-consciousness, procrastination, personal (learned) helplessness. There are different approaches to studying these phenomena; most researchers study each of these processes in isolation from each other.

It can be stated that none of the psychological, pedagogic, sociological and economic studies of a person's professional life studied the influence of a complex of negative phenomena on personal and professional development level. As a result, practical psychological work (trainings, seminars, coaching, etc.) turned out to be ineffective.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of the research is theoretical and empirical studying the psychological content of the selected phenomena as well as their interrelationships; developing and implementing the technology of updating resources aimed at overcoming psychological barriers of educational subjects' personal and professional development.

### **Literature review**

Psychological analysis of modern studies of marginalism (Druzhilov, 2017; Yermolaeva, 2001; Kalashnikov, Minyurova, 2017; Spasennikov, 2011) shows that the main sign of marginality concerning professional consciousness as well as self-consciousness is the inversion of values and meanings, the desire to have benefits not by realizing their uniqueness as a person and a professional, but to receive them undeservedly in the shortest way.

The main feature of the marginality of individual professional consciousness is the gap between the concepts of "I can" and "I have", and the corporate professional consciousness is the discrepancy between the concepts of "professional" and "position", the gap between career growth and professional improvement. At the level of public consciousness, marginalization manifests itself in the psychological readiness to accept low-level professional services that do not meet social expectations. The choice between the need for personal benefit and understanding the social harm caused is made by "understatement" or completely ignoring it by the subject (Yermolaeva, 2001; Mitina, Mitin, 2020).

The question of professional marginalism in this context, is advisable to be studied comprehensively together with the problem of procrastination, indicating a person's tendency to constantly postpone various cases "for later" (Druzhilov, 2017; Yermolaeva, 2001; Kalashnikov, Minyurova, 2017; Kosheleva, 2017; Nekita A. G., Malenko, 2009; Cheremoshkina, 2015).

Procrastination is a factor that stimulates distortions of self-determination in the life, personal, social and professional fields concerning a modern person (Bolotova, Chevrenidi, 2017; Mokhova, Nevryuev, 2013; Aitken, 1982; Lay, 1986; Solomon, Rothblum, 1984).

The analysis of scientific sources shows that the procrastination of an individual acts as an indicator of self-determination process of an individual, significantly determining the main milestones of its progress to self-efficacy and, as a result, to meaningfulness and life satisfaction. (Vorob'eva, Yakimanskaya, 2003; Gorbunova, 2010; Pichil, 2014; Chernysheva, 2016; Burka, Yuen, 1982; Ferrari, 1992).

Studies show that the main psychological factor of a specialist's professional involution, marginalism and procrastination is the emergence and consolidation of various forms of personal helplessness in childhood, primarily -the learned helplessness (Vedeneeva, Tsiring, 2011; Volkova, 2014; Malkina-Pykh, 2010).

As a result of their research, M. Seligman and S. Mayer concluded that the completely learned helplessness syndrome is formed by the age of eight, and its essence is that a person does not believe in the effectiveness of his actions (Maier, Seligman, 1967).

At the same time, modern research proves that learned helplessness is formed not only in preschool, but also in later life and even in adulthood. It is facilitated by a high level of motivation to avoid various failures, as well as control over the action by the type of orientation to the condition (Bashirova, 2018; Vasilenko T. D., Khorunzhaya, 2021).

### **Methodology**

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is represented by a systematic personality-developing approach (Mitina, 2014), qualitatively expanding the object-subject field of research in different spaces of professional life of a person and makes it possible to conduct a meaningful and experimental study of personal and professional development at different stages of ontogenesis and different stages and conditions of professional life, also allowing for a scientifically based forecast of professional future of development. In line with this approach, the concept of professional development is developed, distinguishing two alternative models (strategies) of professional work : the model of professional development of an individual and adaptive functioning model. These models differ from each other in the professional self-awareness development level and integral personal characteristics (orientation, competence, flexibility), as well as in the level of a reflexive resource performing a certain function in relation to the resolution of intrapersonal contradictions (semantic, regulatory and pathogenic levels).

This research shows that the model of professional development characterizes the constructive path of a person in the profession, creation, building up and updating their creative potential, while the adaptive functioning model defines the destructive path in the profession, stagnation and neuroticism, marginalism and procrastination, destruction, loss of the creative potential and personal resources.

Based on the provisions of the concept, we have developed a psychological technology for professional development which makes it possible to transform adaptive behavior into behavior aimed at creative self-realization in the profession, updating the resource capabilities of an individual.

For determining the relationship among the indicators personal and professional development, learned helplessness, procrastination and marginal consciousness indicators, an empirical study (stating and forming experiments) on samples of school and university teachers as well as school and university students (n=738) was conducted. The specially developed methodological program included the following methods: the Self-Actualizing Test (SAT, adapted by L. L. Gozman and others), the method of studying the value orientations of M. Rokeach, life-meaning orientations test by D. A. Leontieva, V. V. Boyko's method of diagnosing the level of emotional burnout, the STONE-P ("STOUN-P") attributive style questionnaire for adolescents, Phillips anxiety level (School Anxiety Scale), the questionnaire of the optimistic-pessimistic explanation style (T. O. Gordeeva, O. V. Krylova, modification of the CASQ test by M. Seligman), the Garanyan modification of general procrastination scale by C.Lay. "Report on a significant event for the week" by L. M. Mitina, as well as author's questionnaires, interviews and observations.

## **Results and Discussion**

The results of the ascertaining experiment make it possible to come to the following conclusions:

1. High level of personal and professional development was revealed in a small number of the surveyed (21% of school teachers and 26 % of university teachers). The rest (79% and 74%, respectively) are characterized by an average and low level of personal and professional development as well as adaptive functioning model.
2. On all scales of the test of life-meaning orientations, groups of teachers with high professional development level have the best results indicating high meaningfulness of life and the absence of an existential vacuum.
3. There is an interrelationship between the place of basic values on the rank scale and a teacher's professional development level. The lower the professional development level of an individual is, the more significant the pragmatic values and the lower the place of values having a humanistic character are. On the contrary, for teachers with high level of professional development, spiritual and moral values (wisdom, spirituality, love for one's neighbor, the happiness among others, love for the Motherland, etc.) come to the fore.

4. The majority (68 %) of the representatives of the adaptive functioning model is characterized by the signs of marginal professional consciousness and procrastination, largely due to the learned helplessness syndrome formed in childhood as well as the role position of the victim, transmitted and assigned by students.

5. Learned helplessness is formed and consolidated in the process of long-term failures during school and university education, facilitated by deviant forms of behavior among teachers due to emotional burnout and professional deformations of an individual.

6. Personal helplessness of pessimistic students (37%) is represented by the isolation, anxiety, excitability and dependence on others; it is a prerequisite for the emergence of addictions, psychosomatic diseases, stress as well as forming marginal self-consciousness and procrastination.

7. Personal helplessness is not formed if students develop under the conditions of polysubject interaction "child-adult", "teacher-student", "teacher-student".

8. Indicators of learned helplessness, procrastination and marginal consciousness increased dramatically in school and college students during the lockdown and distance learning. This happened as a result of the fact that having resources in the form of telephones and the Internet, schoolchildren and students exchanged ready-made information and answers, without making much effort, but at the same time getting good grades; as for primary schools, parents were the ones who studied, not children.

The results of the study confirm the necessity to prepare teachers with high level of personal and professional development, ready to create an educational and educational environment in which students are able to gain experience of independent activity, form active position concerning finding the meaning of life as well as profession, overcoming the manifestations of learned helplessness, marginalism and procrastination.

The formative experiment was devoted developing and testing technology for updating resources to overcome barriers to educational subjects' personal and professional development. It consisted of two stages: stage I – integrating the technology in school, stage II - integrating in Higher education (Mitin, 2018; Mitina, Shchelina, 2018). It is based on the technology of constructive behavior change (Mitina, 2018), consisting of four behavior change stages (preparation, awareness, re-evaluation, action), behavior change processes (motivational (stage I), cognitive (stage II), affective (stage III), behavioral (stage IV)), as well as a set of influence methods (traditional and active). The modification of this technology consisted in a different filling of the psychotechnical content of each stage.

Forms of implementing the technology of updating resources to overcome barriers to personal and professional development can be represented by scientific and practical seminars, training seminars or coaching workshops.

The most effective organizational and psychological condition for improving students' personal and professional development process (stage I of the formative experiment) is the psychological technology integrated into the educational space of the school, aimed at updating personal and professional resources of educational subjects, the stages of which are correlated with the periods of students' education at school and modified in accordance with the specifics of age. As shown in our research, the active forms of such development are the following: in primary school (stage I) a special experimental educational subject "The world and me", the program "House of Good Deeds - developing creative self-activity and independence"; in adolescence (stage II) special optional classes "Who am I and who is next?", "Program for developing cognitive abilities", "Program for developing trust"; at the pre-professional stage of training (grades 8-9-stage III) - a two-year coaching workshop "My professional intentions", "What is time management?»; during high school age (stage IV) - special psychological training seminars "In search of your profession", aimed at developing school graduates' preparedness for choosing a profession consciously and independently.

As a result of implementing the personal and professional development programs among primary school students and younger adolescents, such a psychological neoplasm is formed as a predisposition, i.e., a tendency to something, to some types of amateur activity, the presence of individual psychological characteristics for the development of something. Older adolescents at the pre-professional stage of training form a professional intention – a complex personal education arising as a result of students' awareness of the need to perform certain actions in accordance with their own development program, aimed at choosing a strategy for professional development and a profile of training at school.

Depending on the level of awareness of professional intentions among school students (grades 10-11), special psychological work, aimed at forming the preparedness for a conscious and independent choice of profession is carried out, the new formation is subjectified, transforming into a subjective ability of the student.

While working with students (stage II of the formative experiment) , the following stages of technology were correlated with the periods (courses) of training in a pedagogical university:

- 1st course (preparation stage) – recruitment of participants in a group, familiarization with the following topics: "Professionalism and career: what helps and what hinders", "Marginalism", "Procrastination", "Learned helplessness"; watching films and videos on topics (short film "Procrastination" by J. Kelly, videos "I'm busy" (Carmel Cathalian), "How learned helplessness works" (A. Sharifov), "S. Bankovskaya – Marginality Sociology" ("PostNauka" (post-science))), their analysis and discussion. Identification of the types of participants and choosing means of influencing them. Type I - not interested, does not believe in the necessity, impact and usefulness of these classes, and that these topics will not affect him; type II - begins to think about problems, tries to remember similar situations in his life, tries to understand whether this knowledge will be useful to him in life and in what way, weighs all the "pros" and "cons" of changing his behavior, type III - is active, interested, considers problems relevant, wants to master new skills.

- 2nd course (awareness stage) - cooperative teaching methods (STAD, discussion, "Coop-coop", Jigsaw), where students analyzed the topics "What can prevent me from working?", "Conflicts in professional activity", "How to make friends with a student and a teacher?"; a series of classes "Psychological design of professional tasks", aimed at updating the existing and mastering new experience in solving professional tasks, the development of reflection as a means of correcting psychological barriers that hinder their personal and professional development;

- 3rd course (re-evaluation stage) – social and psychological training including elements of a business game, including exercises and games aimed at developing resources to overcome the negative impact of psychological barriers to personal and professional development: constructive strategies of coping behavior, reflexive design and emotional involvement;

- 4th year (stage of action) - holding round tables together with teachers, where discussing the problems of marginal consciousness, procrastination and learned helplessness as well as ways to overcome them; teachers were invited to share their personal experience concerning encountering such problems and solving them with students; students, in their turn, to share with teachers their knowledge and skills acquired during participation in the program and in industrial practice; the students also demonstrated their master classes on overcoming psychological barriers and developing resources to overcome them; at the end - the technology and the achieved results, the consolidation of new constructive ways to overcome the psychological barriers that hinder personal and professional development, support and encourage students to further self-development and self-improvement in their future professional activities were assessed.

## **Conclusion**

The results of theoretical and empirical research show that one of the main tasks of modern education is the need to study, prevent and correct a complex of psychological barriers (marginal consciousness, procrastination, learned helplessness) that block the potential of school and university educational subjects' personal and professional development.

Achieving a certain level of professional development is based on a complex combination of integral personality characteristics (focus, competence, flexibility) and complex abilities (coping behavior, reflexive design, emotional involvement), where each element not only complements the other, but also has a synergistic effect.

Primary, secondary and senior school students' personal and professional development programs were developed on the basis of psychological technology and implemented along a continuous educational trajectory. Gradually, different types of students' creative activity (research, construction, design, etc.) changed and became more complex.

Projects and programs integrated into the educational (including extracurricular) process of the university make it possible to reconsider the strategic guidelines of professional training, making the development of subjectivity (integral personal characteristics) the main goal, allowing students to make a conscious and independent choice of life strategy and professional path and constructively overcome the psychological barriers of education subject personal and professional development.

All this makes it possible to carry out a continuous process of self-projection of an individual and consistently move from one stage of psychological restructuring to another (self-determination, self-expression, self-realization), effectively overcoming the psychological barriers that hinder personal and professional development.

The effectiveness of personal resources (coping behavior, reflexive design, emotional involvement) actualizing technology is empirically confirmed by an increase in the level of self-awareness and integral characteristics of educational subjects, a decrease in the indicators of learned helplessness, procrastination, and marginalism, thereby ensuring an increase in the level of their personal and professional development.

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