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FEATURES OF CAREER GUIDANCE IN AN OPEN INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The article provides the analysis and problems of career guidance work in an open information environment which is characterized by such a phenomenon as “informational noise” (information impact on a person). Modern people are involved in various kinds of information flows. The constant exposure to information, sometimes unnecessary and distracting, does not contribute to making a conscious, rational choice in many crucial life areas, including the choice of a professional path. The information impact experienced by an individual contributes to their rethinking of the role of traditional ways to obtain information and advice about their life, therefore, in order to provide a professional approach to helping in choosing a profession, various electronic information resources should be explored. Today, practicing counselors are faced with the task of correctly positioning career guidance in the media space. It is shown that counseling on the choice of a future profession (or education) should take into account the psychological characteristics of information perception in conditions of informational noise. Career guidance should be perceived in the public mind as a tool for identifying individual, personal, professional predispositions. Specific recommendations for building career guidance work in the modern information society, including the possibilities and advantages of the system of lifelong career guidance, are given. It is shown that the way of presenting information about professional self-determination in the process of searching for a professional vocation must meet the requirements of accessibility, reliability, information content, and interactivity.

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Keywords: Information society, informational noise, lifelong career guidance, career guidance, professional self-determination



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1. Introduction

Modern people live in the reality of an information society. Accessibility, transparency of information is an obvious advantage of an open information environment. However, for each information space, openness also has its “side effects” which include, according to many modern researchers, the phenomenon of informational noise (Lagutkina, 2019; Mironov, 2015; Poludina, 2011). Informational noise is one of the factors influencing the professional self-determination of an individual in an open information environment.

Informational noise is interpreted as a phenomenon in the information space, media space (Lagutkina, 2019), as “information redundancy in a communicative environment” (Poludina, 2011, p. 387). Of course, this is the most general definition which can be supplemented with other characteristics of informational impact: information proliferation on the Internet, the availability of all kinds of information, attention manipulation (click-bait headlines, viral videos or illustrations, etc.), a variety of information channels, the use of psychological techniques to hold attention when perceiving information, an abundance of inaccurate information, spam, etc. Informational noise creates an environment for receiving, evaluating, perceiving, and selecting information, making itself one of the contexts in which people live. That is why it is important today to analyze the features of the functioning of various social institutions in the context of informational noise.

In the modern information society, the value of an information consumer, which is perceived as a part of “social capital”, that is, as an object of “monetization”, has increased. The best qualities of such an ideal consumer of information are irrational thinking, inability to critically assess information, susceptibility to psychological manipulation. In the conditions of information impact, an individual loses the most important personal qualities: choice autonomy (independence), the ability to realize their true personal desires, aspirations, and preferences, concentration, a critical approach to information, that is, such qualities that are especially necessary for professional self-determination.

When faced with the choice of a professional and educational path, a person rarely thinks that this choice includes many factors, that it must be conscious and based on the definition of personal “strengths” (predispositions), the current state of the labor market, psychological characteristics, physical preparedness, and much more. Parents or friends very often turn out to be assistants in choosing a profession or specialty, who, of course, by no means follow professional methods of career guidance in their advice. However, trust in the personal advice of friends or family members still plays a role in choosing a profession.

2. Problem Statement

The development of an open information environment makes any information widely available. In this regard, in the public consciousness, the perception of both traditional education and career guidance is changing. The quality of education and professional self-determination of a person is influenced by the way and characteristics of information consumption. Researchers point out that the information impact experienced by a modern person leads to certain psychological consequences, including those affecting information perception, learning, and the processes of making a choice and interpretation.

The perception of information occurs through the assessment, first of all, not of its content, but of the volume (the phenomenon of the so-called clip thinking). The requirement for brevity and conciseness of information messages is based, among other things, on an increase in the volume of information flows: “due to the increase in the volume of information flowing to Internet users, as well as, in general, due to the formation of a new media culture, consumer practices have shifted towards the consumption of shorter messages” (Poludina, 2011, p. 392). The redundancy of information leads to another interesting psychological effect – information is assessed in terms of rating (the number of “likes”, “recommendations, ratings, tops, collections of useful links by authoritative users” (Poludina, 2011, p. 393), the opinion of “influencers” – public opinion leaders). Also, information impact as a part of electronic culture creates the problem of the crisis of self-identification (Kasavina, 2018).

Career guidance is aimed not only at determining the inclinations, predispositions of the person choosing a profession, but also at informing. Moreover, it is the receipt of insufficient or inaccurate information about the profession that very often leads to the wrong choice which subsequently has to be corrected (Shafranov-Kutsev et al., 2018).

Thus, in career guidance work, there is a whole complex of problems associated with the realities of an open information environment.

3. Research Questions

- 3.1. How, in the process of professional self-determination, can a person get really necessary and important information (about a profession, education, the possibilities of obtaining qualified advice on the issue of professional self-determination) in the flow of informational noise?
- 3.2. How should career guidance position itself in general in the context of modern “electronic culture” in order to earn trust and attention?
- 3.3. What requirements should informing about professions meet in order to build an effective career guidance system in an open information environment?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the features of career guidance work in relation to the information impact on the subject of professional self-determination in an open information environment.

5. Research Methods

The study methodology includes an analysis of relevant scientific literature, *modeling* a career guidance strategy, taking into account the conditions for the development of the information society and electronic culture, and *comparing* traditional and innovative approaches to the practice of career guidance. Since career guidance is considered by us as an object of interdisciplinary research at the interface of psychology, pedagogy, sociology, and also as a multi-level activity in which various social institutions are involved, it seems appropriate to use a systemic approach. Despite the fact that the

research is theoretical, the presented results were also formulated on the basis of personal experience of teaching and the practice of career counseling at an educational institution of the system of universities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation.

6. Findings

The information society and electronic culture are the reality of our time. In 2019-2020, the coronavirus pandemic contributed as a trigger to the intensive development of information technology and to the involvement of more and more people in the number of active users of Internet resources. Many people say that “the world will never be the same” in the sense that it will be simply impossible to remain uninvolved in the use of modern information resources.

Some educators note that the education sector (which is already undergoing regular optimizations, reorganizations, and reforms) will also experience changes precisely in connection with the development of the information society (Sancho, 2010; Shcherbakova & Shcherbakova, 2020). Undoubtedly, changes will also take place in relation to the institution of career guidance, and today it is necessary to analyze the features of career guidance in the context of the information society.

Information impact both creates problems and opens up new opportunities, including for the development of a system of assistance in choosing a profession. At least, when developing a system of career guidance work, one should consider the formation of a certain strategy in the context of information impact.

Gradually exploring the information environment, a person realizes that the reliability and quality of the information they receive often leaves much to be desired. This is the problem of *fake news*, attention manipulation, and intrusive advertising. Over time, the skill of filtering out unnecessary information, understanding of the features of manipulative strategies used by subjects producing information, as well as, in general, the differentiation of the meaning of the virtual and the real, the personal and the digital are acquired. Of course, being involved in the flow of informational noise does not contribute to the formation of an autonomous, independent, critically thinking person, as has already been said. But for career counselors and for all participants in the career guidance system, there is an opportunity to “declare themselves” by breaking through the informational noise.

Career guidance is an activity aimed at *independent, conscious, rational, and based on reliable information* career self-determination of an individual. The purpose of career guidance is not to manipulate a person, but to help identify genuine personal desires, preferences, and strengths. A counselor on professional self-determination, even if their consultations are carried out remotely (via the Internet) and using modern information technologies, should explain the essence of an independent choice, show the ways to search for reliable information about a profession or about specific work conditions. Moreover, it is precisely these aspects of career guidance that should also be understood by parents who often claim to be counselors in choosing a profession.

In the informational noise, a modern person gradually learns to find useful, reliable, and necessary information. If a young person cannot find a useful resource on the Internet that helps in choosing a professional path, then this indicates the fact that educational technologies are significantly lagging behind the pace of social development (Koroleva & Havenson, 2015). Lessons via Skype or Zoom, the

use of an “Electronic grade book” or electronic libraries are confidently “taking root” in the sector of education. Online career guidance platforms should also be created and developed (Ahmed et al., 2018), and interactive digital technologies should be used (Niles & Garis, 1990; Sancho, 2010).

The phenomenon of informational noise dictates its own conditions for information presentation. It should be presented through a *variety* of sources, including social media. It is needed to pay attention to the amount of information provided during consultations. Too rich informational messages (or “longreads”) can be read, but not perceived (Mironov, 2015). One of the useful skills for “adjusting” to clip thinking is the ability to structure information, present a large amount of knowledge through small “portions”. An individual who is familiar with the phenomenon of information impact over time acquires the skill of identifying informational noise; therefore it is necessary to carry out career guidance work, paying attention to the analysis of *the usefulness, accuracy, and reliability* of information.

Career guidance should be positioned as a tool for *joint (with a counselor) search* for a preferred professional activity, and in this sense interactivity, involvement in the process of finding a professional path, and not passive perception of the taught information about the world of professions, are of particular importance. The need to work with messages that do not provide multimedia and interactivity causes internal discomfort, the reason for which is the unusualness of the communicative environment. As a result, the desire to avoid this kind of discomfort, for example, makes the information sources, providing not the reliability and completeness of information, but the usual structure of the communicative environment, the main source of information (Mironov, 2015, p. 26). Some methods of career guidance work initially have the effect of interactivity (for example, professional trials), and they should be given special attention.

Educational standards, requirements for qualifications or professional competencies are constantly being updated. Globalization processes and technological development are destroying the usual “linear life cycle models” (Zhang, 2016), in connection with which modern people perceive find themselves in a situation of the need for lifelong learning.

The concept of lifelong learning already has its own history of theoretical understanding and practical content. In the context of a lifelong learning strategy, the concept of lifelong career guidance should also be developed (Zhang, 2016). The *lifelong career guidance* strategy involves making professional guidance and advice, aimed at helping people choose a profession or specialty, available. Lifelong career guidance is designed to help citizens of all ages and at any time of their life “meaningful decisions in terms of education, training and occupation and to manage their individual directions of learning, work and other circumstances, where these opportunities and competencies are acquired and/or used (throughout life)” (Wannan & McCarthy, 2005, p. 11). It is necessary to introduce the principles of lifelong career guidance, that is, to build a multi-level system of career guidance (today, career guidance is mainly aimed at schoolchildren), when career guidance tools will be available, including in higher educational institutions (for example, when choosing a specialty or when looking for a job) (Mutirova, 2008). Today, it is important to learn from experience and model our own concepts of a career guidance system, taking into account the realities of the information society (Gurtov et al., 2019).

A modern person intuitively understands the need to maintain the level of their educational competencies, therefore, various marketing proposals for professional education have gained popularity.

Information and education become products in the market (Fursov, 2017). There is a whole niche for the promotion and sale of information products: courses, webinars, educational programs or applications, and the particular characteristic of promoting such products is often the imposition of false, illusory ideas about education and professional activity on the person who makes their choice. Educational products are often advertised as an opportunity for financial independence in the near future whereby everyone can learn a certain “occupation” and in a fairly short time. Most often, modern professions associated with informational noise are positioned this way: SMM manager, copywriter, SEO specialist, etc. Under these circumstances, competent career counseling, that is assistance in understanding the essence, goals, opportunities, and prospects of a professional activity, is also needed.

7. Conclusion

The community of career counselors and educators should not ignore the changing characteristics of the social life of a modern person. Ways of communication, means of obtaining information are being built in accordance with the developing information society.

Informational noise is a phenomenon that affects most citizens. It affects the psychological reactions of a person, the nature of the perception of information, behavioral patterns, the processes of choosing and interpretation. When developing a strategy for citizens' career guidance, the context of information impact should be taken into account.

Career guidance cultivates such personal qualities as independence, the ability to critically assess information, consciousness and thoughtfulness when making a choice. In this respect, career guidance appeals to the qualities of a person, completely opposite to those of an ideal consumer of informational noise. A career guidance strategy should be based on opposing the flow of unnecessary, wasteful information. A person intuitively understands the negative properties of informational noise and tries to cope with its impact. However, it has to be admitted that information impact becomes the background, the context of our life.

In view of the above, in career guidance work, it is necessary to “adjust” to the context of the impact of informational noise on a person. To increase the effectiveness of career guidance work, it is necessary to comply with the requirements of accessibility, reliability, information content, interactivity of information, to provide a variety of information resources.

In connection with the development of the trend of lifelong learning, special attention should be paid to the concept of lifelong career guidance, which implies an integrated approach to professional self-determination.

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