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SOFT SKILLS AS A COMPONENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The modernization of the system of Russian higher education is due to the global focus on ensuring the quality of education within the framework of the Unesco department. Sustainable Development Goals 17 aim to meet the socio-economic needs of the present and future generations of the entire globe, and each of the 17 Goals solves a specific task. As a social institution, education serves as an indicator of the state of the world community. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation is continuously improving the Federal State Educational Standards for Higher Professional Education. The prospects for introducing a competency-based approach into the educational process of new generation Russian universities are obvious. Recently, a variety of training and courses on the development of personal qualities have appeared. In accordance with modern world standards and advanced technologies, the implementation of an innovative cultural, scientific and educational environment is included in the list of project objectives. The authors conclude that education becomes essentially motivated, quick-thinking, focused on problem-solving and a risk-taking person acting in conjunction with other people, armed with knowledge, tolerance and socially oriented. Based on the proposed supposition, they propose a list of testing questions that can reveal the student's psychological abilities that stand for their soft skills development

1. Introduction

Changes in the educational sphere are associated with the processes of the socio-political and economic structure of the whole society. These changes require a profound modernization of educational goals which will correspond to the current needs of all humanity. Modern education differs from the education of the past. The main difference lies in the formulation of its values. On the one hand, it's no longer expected that the young generation is to follow the behavioural pattern of their tutors. Personal social interaction, i.e. ideas, values, and information, is not influenced by the elder authority. On the other hand, the modern generation lacks the value of community support or social loyalty. Therefore, the presented dissonance of collective value can be overcome by building new forms of self-organization in modern education.

2. Problem Statement

According to the World's Economic Forum (The Future of Jobs), technological opportunities in the nearest future will lead to job reduction for the third part of the world's population. Robots will be able to replace 800 million working places by 2030, that is why the World Economic Forum makes a proposition of the skills modernization (World Economic Forum, 2018). The stated problem makes it necessary to conduct continuous educational training for highly qualified specialists and workers. In accordance with the stated issue, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation maintains the continuous process of improving the Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Professional Education. It is obvious that it is aimed at the implementation of a competency-based approach to education.

3. Research Questions

The majority of people take the level of education as the main criterion for their success in the professional field. As a matter of fact, professionalism isn't the only means of successful realisation. It is proved nowadays that the youth environment formed at the university needs an additional opportunity for the development of both professional and social-personal competencies among students. Soft skills formation affects further students' self-determination and their motivational readiness for the professional activities (Dalibozhko et al., 2018).

4. Purpose of the Study

The work aims to identify the strong and weak points of modern education. Taking into account the present system of educational assessment, the authors of the paper strive to introduce the main points of leading abilities in modern society that are presented in the list of soft skills. Therefore, the article serves to lay the foundation for the possible assessment that could be organised among the students of high education establishments.

5. Research Methods

In the course of the work, the following research methods were used: theoretical analysis of literature, comparison, generalization, deduction, content analysis.

6. Findings

According to the resolution of the UN conference which was held in New York in 2015, high quality of life in modern society is impossible without the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDG 17): 1. Limitation of poverty; 2. Elimination of hunger; 3. Good health and wellbeing; 4. Qualified education; 5. Gender equality; 6. Clean water and environment; 7. Unexpensive and clean energy; 8. Decent work and economic growth; 9. Industrialization, innovation and infrastructure; 10. Inequality limitation;11. Sustainable communities; 12. Responsible consumption; 13. Climate change resistance; 14. Security of marine ecosystems;15. Security of territorial ecosystems; 16. Social justice; 17. International partnership (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016).
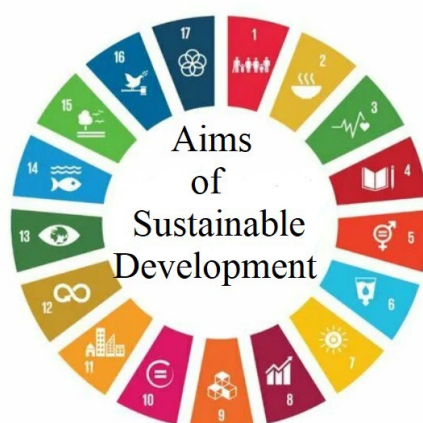

Figure 1. 17 Aims of Sustainable Development

The presented list of sustainable development goals serves as a guide for solving social and environmental problems of the world states for a 15-year period (SDG 17 was adopted in 2015 for successful implementation until 2030). The educational vector of SDG 17 is directly or indirectly implied in each paragraph of the proposed memorandum. For example, Goal 4, defined as Qualified Education, appeals to create an environment in which, by 2030, education opportunities will be widespread for the sake of society's sustainable development. More implicitly, the educational value is also found in Goal 17, International partnership, and in Goal 9, Industrialization, innovation and infrastructure. The formulations of the listed goals can be taken as a basis for the expansion of regional and international relations that are established for the implementation of scientific, technological and educational cooperation (Education for sustainable development).

6.1. Please replace this text with context of your paper

According to the conducted research of the most popular educational profiles among 18-19 years' old teenagers, students are more eager to develop their personal qualities, than professional ones. A report devoted to the future of professions was made at the World Economic Forum in Davos (Chernigovskaya, 2019). The report lists the skills that will be most needed in the nearest 5 years. The listed qualities display 11 skills that lay the foundation for the future leaders in society:

- *Complex multilevel problem solving* – independent determination of the problem and the whole complex of its causes and sources; identification of the problem issue and anticipation of its consequences.
- *Critical thinking* – doubt about the validity of any information, the existing rules and ideas about the world; preference for decision making and actions rather than supplying information.
- *Creativity* – non-standard approach in thinking and behavioural patterns, constant creative development; support for the innovation and modeling based on an integral approach and unordinary solutions.
- *People management* – creation of conditions for the disclosure of creative potential and the maximum achievements of the people around; combination having a "vision" of solving the situation and organizing people on the basis of this "vision".
- *Cooperation with others* – building interaction with people in various forms of communication; the ability to create a common field when solving an issue.
- *Emotional quotient* – recognizing emotions and understanding other people's intentions; managing one's own emotions and states; rendering influence on the emotions and states of others.
- *Judgement and decision making* – forming one's own opinion and the courage to accept independent decisions and their consequences.
- *Customer focus* – interacting with others when solving problems based on the ability to understand people's values and needs.
- *The ability to negotiate* – communication aimed at setting long-term cooperation; an ability to speak convincingly using verbal and non-verbal techniques.
- *Cognitive flexibility* – prompt switching from one thought to another, as well as thinking over several ideas and tasks at the same time.
- *Effective job hunting* – active use in job search of various methods for implementation of the optimal combination of employers' needs, trends in the development of the professional sphere and their own skills and goals (Baibekova, 2020).

The listed skills make up soft skills – a complex supra-professional skills that guarantee success in any area of professional human activities (Yarkova & Cherkasova, 2016). Judging by their notion, soft skills are associated with the ability to communicate, negotiate, manage people, as well as the ability to think quickly, promptly, resulting in solutions to problems and generating new projects and ideas.

6.2. New method of assessment

In order to improve the quality of education, international experts (P. Mortimore, T. Walker, G.A. Zuckerman, A.L. Wenger) prioritize the necessity for the modernization of assessment technologies. A properly constructed program of assessment may serve as the basis for the field of educational policy and practice. In this respect we suggest conducting separate testing checks – 1) Hard Skills Testing; 2) Soft Skills Testing. The first testing is to contain questions that reflect the professional features of the studied disciplines. The second testing is to be made generic, i.e. appropriate for any professional course or educational training (Shipilov, 2016).

The proposed method of assessment seems indispensable due to the current changes observed in the educational field. University teachers tend to assess the level of mastering the professional discipline, but not the level of communicative and social abilities. Therefore, the current system of assessment does not show at what level the students' social abilities are actually formed. To perform the testing questionnaire we made up a list of questions that can relatively disclose the responders' abilities of the skills listed above (Table 01).

Table 1. Questions for the soft skills testing

№	Soft Skill	Testing Questions
1	*Complex multilevel problem solving*	a. Can you easily transform a problem into a task when solving the situation without any help? b. Can you take into account the information that may affect it but does not refer to it directly when solving the problem? c. Can you use different approaches including interdisciplinary ones when analyzing the problem? d. Can you expand the area of your professional knowledge in related fields?
2	*Critical thinking*	a. Do you rely on actions more than your beliefs and ideas of this world? b. Can you start looking for the ways to overcome the limitations? c. Do you change your ideas and beliefs when you get good reasoning for them? d. Do you clarify the validity of any new information?
3	*Creativity*	a. Do you find several solutions to one problem at once? b. Do people around you often single out your creativity in solving problems? c. Are you in the habit of collecting a database of unique ideas, forecasts of the future and discoveries of various fields? Do you try to develop creativity when doing exercises of solving problems in various fields?
4	*People management*	a. Do you generally produce developed feedback to your colleagues when solving the task? b. Do you inspire others to achieve one common result? c. Do the people you work with usually get from you prompt support on working issues? d. Do you initiate team forms for solving a local problem?
5	*Cooperation with others*	a. Do you draw everyone's attention to common interests when there is a dispute with others? b. Do you ask for help from others if you can't solve the problem yourself? c. Are you always involved in the joint search for the solutions of team tasks? d. Do you fully understand your functions in the team solution of the problem?
6	*Emotional quotient*	a. Do you pay more attention to their manners than to their words when communicating with people? b. Do you understand the reasons for people's emotions when interacting with aggressive people? c. Do you use self-regulation techniques to maintain workable state of mind in stressful situations?

7	*Judgement and decision making*	d. Do the people around you confirm that you exactly understand their emotional state? a. Do you intentionally form ways that will help you to make decisions? b. Do you deal with the consequences of the made decisions on your own? c. Do you track the consequences of your actions and make conclusions about their effectiveness? d. Do you follow your conscientiousness and will when making decisions?
8	*Customer focus*	a. Do people tend to ask you for help in various life situations? b. Do you specify your ideas about the interests and hobbies of people around? c. Do your actions help others to better understand their own interests and needs? d. Do you collect information to know in what way it can be helpful to others? e. Do you try to do more than what they demand in order to build close relationships, please others and thereby create good mood to yourself?
9	*The ability to negotiate*	a. Do you manage to come to agreements that satisfy the parties' mutual interests? b. Do you try to settle the best agreement for yourself in every possible way? c. Do you build long-term cooperation in negotiations? d. Do you give the opportunity to the other side of the dispute to save its face?
10	*Cognitive flexibility*	a. Is it easy for you to deliberately switch from one topic of communication to another? b. Is it easy for you to find arguments in favour of the opposite point of view? c. Do you warmly accept reasoned arguments of others, even if they do not correspond with mine? d. Do you use various sources to know and understand the needs of employers in private and public companies?
11	*Effective job hunting*	a. Do you intentionally expand the circle of professional communication? b. Do you develop your writing and verbal skills of presenting the information? c. Do you take part in projects that develop your skills and make it possible to declare myself in the professional field? d. Are you used to formulating professional and career goals for yourself? e. Do you use various sources to know and understand the needs of employers in private and public companies?

7. Conclusion

The conducted test is an easy-to-use tool that will help you to assess the students' abilities independently. The questionnaire includes 55 statements describing the manifestations of 11 soft skills. Its goal is to form the students' understanding of their soft skills development. The validity of the testing results is determined by one's sincerity to the test. When performing the test, students are requested to refer to their own experiences, habitual actions and behavioural patterns.

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