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Professional Proclivities and Profession Appeal Factors of Kazakhstani Students of Different Majors

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Students' professional preferences and factors of professional motivation should be considered in Kazakhstani Higher Education. **Research Questions:** Do professional preferences of Kazakhstani students correspond to their chosen majors? What factors of professional motivation determine students' academic success in the higher education? **Purpose of the Study:** To determine professional preferences and factors of professional motivation standing out for Kazakhstani students of various majors. Higher Education teachers need such a knowledge in order to accomplish the educational process. **Research Methods:** The students' professional proclivities and their correspondence to the chosen major were examined based on Holland's Theory of Career Choice. In order to assess the level of the motivational component for the future professional activities, "Learning professional appeal factors" methodology by V.A. Jadov was used. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to statistically compare the averages of examined indicators. **Findings:** Students' the most common Holland's personality type is entrepreneurial: 33 – 63%. Ranking the type allows to put majors in the following order: Accounting, Assessment, Management, Finance. The most appealing factors of professional motivation: working with people, opportunity for self-development, tasks based on skills, social recognition, high salary. Satisfaction by the chosen profession has revealed an average level of the factor. **Conclusions:** The revealed professional preferences of Kazakhstani students correspond to those majors of economic profile, on which students are studying. Overall, the most common Holland's personality types are entrepreneurial and social. Revealed relationship between students' professional proclivity and chosen major is the prerequisite for the future successful professional activity.

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Keywords: Higher education; major; professional preferences; motivation.



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1. Introduction

Problem of professional self-determination among students, in particular, the representation of one's professional "Self" among final year students, who will become part of the labor market and labor force of the society within next 6 months, is extremely topical.

Professional self-determination of a person is complex and long-lasting process, lasting a considerable period in a lifetime (Klimov, 2004; Zeer, 2005). Its efficiency is determined by the level of constancy of person's psychological abilities with contents and demands of a professional activity, as well as person's ability to adapt to the changing socio-economic environment due to the professional career building (Povarenkov, 2002; Rodina & Prudnikov, 2006).

It is presumed that quality of preparing the specialists of each field will be of higher standard, if student's professional preferences agree with the future specialty. The problem of preferences (proclivities) has been studied since 1940s in psychology. Rubinstein (1999) thought that preference (proclivity) is a directivity towards a particular activity. According to Kovalev (1969), this was professional directivity. Orlov (1981) noted that profession preferences occur when one is not only attracted by the result but by the process as well. A combination of stable typological specifics of the nerve system correlates to the combination of typological specifics and leads to having proclivities to the same type of activity (Ilyin, 2000).

Belonging to a particular professional community is a significant social characteristic of a person. A person's adaptation to a future profession begins even during the phase of professional education. The refinement of professional claims and determination of "the right career choice" also occur in that period (Cherniavskaia, 2003). If given a weak initial motivation (interest) in chosen profession student can simply terminate the process of education. With a stronger motivation he/she will successfully graduate from the course, but will prefer a job in different specialty. With even stronger appeal to chosen professional direction one starts to "accept the profession", which creates a specific situation of "bringing" the person into the system of requirements and values of the profession. This, in turn, creates the directivity to development in the professional activity (Sazhaev & Shterenzon, 2014), and upon completing a course person will definitely be working in chosen field with no regard to outer conditions of the profession. The last case refers to formation of a specialist, interested in the field and able to compete, who is ready to work for the benefit of the society, which is actually professional education's primary task.

Conventionally, business schools have considered mostly with academic training than with professional grounding of students (Cunningham, 1995). Schlee (2000) stated that in the past, accent had been given to the development of specific skills and competencies in the classroom rather than the supervision of skills in an applied setting or the development of social skills and professional character through mentoring. Recently things have changed so that business schools are beginning to incorporate professional practice skills and managerial skills into business training (ibid). The goal of this teaching embraces improvement of skills in the areas of communication, leadership, teamwork, decision making, and business ethics. The goal of such education is to enrich the educational experiences of undergraduate business majors.

As of a motivational theory viewpoint, the process of rising "meaningful goals" and making tangible progress toward the fulfilment of those goals is determined and enriches undergraduates' motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) propose that a central to enriching motivation is for individuals to recognize that a given set of activities will profit valued results. If using this viewpoint with university students, one would think that career search, leading to an improved understanding of how academic studies will develop future

career plans, is valuable to the educational experience. Analogously, professional development training supports students to prepare for the world of work through a focus on professionalism and business etiquette. If students begin to comprehend how the progress of a professionalism and “soft skills” (i.e., communication, leadership, etc.) will advantage them in the job search, it is expected their motivation to join professional development training/other school activities, increases. Kenny et al. (2006) exemplified Lapan’s research, when “career planning can function as an external motivator that helps students make a connection between doing well in school and having choices and opportunities later in life”.

Professional improvement activity can also function as the outer motivational factor for university students. As well, the outcomes of the Kenny et al., research identified two supplementary factors - student career plan-fullness and career expectations. Even though these are similar, but not equal to processes including professional development practices. There is enough comparison to suggest that it is possible for professional development activities to identify various motivational factors.

Another perspective deals with the reciprocal relationship that student engagement may impact career planning (Lapan & Kosciulek, 2001). Although the findings of Kenny et al. suggested that school engagement activity is causal of interest. As mentioned, the goal of this study was to gain an understanding of professional preferences and factors of professional motivation standing out for Kazakhstani students of various majors. Consequently, this inverse relationship should be explored in future studies.

Literature suggests that a component of successful academic and social integration relates to consistent interactions between faculty and students. The traditional “quality measures” (e.g., admission standards, number of Ph.D. faculty, faculty research, types of resources, etc.) used to evaluate a college education are being questioned about their validity in measuring excellence in undergraduate education. According to Pascarella (2001), the 1995 Education Commission of the US report, these “quality measures ... say nothing about how and why students were actively engaged in the learning process, the extent and nature of student interactions with faculty, the focus and intensity of academic experiences, and the overall level of student engagement” (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005, p. 154).

These interactions with faculty influenced student engagement and were cited as predictors of student persistence (Stage & Hossler, 2000). This research suggests that faculty may play a critical role in encouraging students to participate in activities leading to enhanced student outcomes.

These activities can be varied in nature and may include career-related professional development. Since faculty roles and faculty “cultures” vary widely, the impact of faculty is crucial in any country/culture/community including Schools of Business.

In order for these institutions/faculty to maximize their effectiveness in transforming lives, research repeatedly mentions student engagement as a critical component. What is student engagement?

In a broad sense, it is student involvement or the quality of effort students devote to activities that contribute to desired outcomes.

As previously stated, several researchers and practitioners believe there are two aspects of student engagement. The first is the amount of time and effort expended by students into their academics and other educationally purposeful activities. The second is how the institution creates curriculum/programs and deploys its resources to create environments conducive to fostering student engagement. Since this form of involvement can have a major impact on the way students utilize resources, it is important to invest time into understanding the obstacles facing disengaged students as well as the factors that motivate engaged students.

Hopefully, this literature review drew attention to how a complex set of factors intersects and directly relates to participation in student services programming. My goal was to develop an understanding of to which extend professional preferences and factors of professional motivation stand out for the

students of various majors in Business Schools of Kazakhstan. Supervisors, advisers, and teachers of higher education institutions are required to know the peculiarities of professional preferences and profession appeal factors of the students in order to accomplish the individual educational process.

Perhaps this study will also encourage additional research to further understand student professional development issues. This could lead to insight as to how to create environments or manipulate conditions that promote student career/professional development activity that will ultimately impact student success.

2. Problem Statement

Forming highly-qualified professionals is the strategic task of the higher education in modern days Kazakhstan. In the process of professional growth, a problem of professional preferences and factors of professional motivation should be emphasized.

Professional interests, preferences are the element of motivational sphere, which are dedicated to the development of professional activity and encourage improving them. According to Todt, crystallization, or formed system of interests, occurs when a person is approximately 15 years old, and it is one of the main signs of professional settings maturity (Golovakha, 2008). Particularity of professional interests, unlike other forms of motivation dealing with conversion of the activity, is that mechanisms of emotional satisfaction are connected not only with the product or the result of an activity, but also with the process, or the wish to complete a task.

Based on that, it can be said that the more tasks a person is willing to complete, the more adequate his/her professional choice is.

Therefore, problems of professional preferences at the stage of higher professional education have the direct impact on solving important practical issues and determine the necessity of its further development.

3. Research Questions

In light of above, the following research questions were addressed in this study.

1. What professional preferences prevail for the students of Business Schools in Kazakhstan? Do these preferences correspond to the chosen by them majors?
2. What factors of professional motivation determine students' academic success in the higher education institution?

4. Purpose of the Study

This study highlights such a program of student's involvement in business practice at the University of International Business (UIB), Kazakhstan. The UIB, one of the leading regional Business Schools has repositioned by senior administration as the University of Practical Knowledge since 2015.

The Professional Development Center, PDC was renewed in the UIB to "connect" students with the business community around a model emphasizing involvement with professional organizations. The Professional Development Center facilitates networking opportunities with local and regional business partners. This program is integrated into the four-year curriculum and includes mandatory participation in a credit-bearing professional development courses. The goal of the PDC is to enhance the educational experiences of undergraduate business majors, but despite the support of administration, faculty and staff,

wholehearted student engagement levels vary. It was a purpose of study to determine to which extend professional preferences and factors of professional motivation stand out for the students of various majors in Business Schools of Kazakhstan in the beginning of 2014-15 academic year.

Administration, supervisors, advisers, and teachers of higher education institutions are required to know the peculiarities of professional preferences and profession appeal factors of the students in order to accomplish the individual educational process.

5. Research Methods

5.1 Sample

The study was conducted in the fall semester of the 2014-15 academic year. Representative sample group consisted of 154 senior students (i.e. 4th year students). Sample included 114 female and 40 male students trained at the University of International Business, Almaty. The average age of students is 21-22 years. Subjects were selected from a larger pool of applicant according to their majors. Students by majors presented in the study: "Accounting and Auditing" - 48 students; "Finance" - 19 students; "Assessment" - 26 students; "Management" - 22 students; "Economics" - 22 students; "Marketing" - 17 students.

5.2 Research Methods

In order to examine the professional preferences of the students and their correspondence to a type of profession J.Holland's "Person's professional directivity determination test" was used (Raigorodskii, 1998). The test is based on the well-known theory of professional choice, developed by an American psychologist Holland (1996) and determines person's proclivities, abilities and interests in relation to various concrete professions; in other words, it determines the pool of a person's demands in professional sphere.

In order to assess the growth level of the motivational component for the formation of future specialists' professional activities, "Learning professional appeal factors" methodology by V.A. Jadov, modified by N. Kuzmina & A.Rean (Ilyin, 2000) was used.

In order to determine difference in professional preferences amongst students of various majors, the comparison of average examined indicators based on Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney criteria was used.

6 Findings

The research has shown that amongst final year students the most wide-spread personality type was entrepreneurial (table 1). This type is presented across the specialties in the following order: 63% of Finance students, 59% of Management students, 50% of Assessment students, 33% of Accounting and Auditing students, 27% of students in both Economic and Marketing. Ranking the type allows to put majors in the following descending order: Finance, Management, Assessment, Accounting & Audit, Economics, Marketing.

Table 1. The professional predispositions of students in different majors, % of total amount

Students' majors	Holland's personality type						
	Realistic	Research	Social	Conventional	Entrepreneurial	Artistic	Several types
Accounting and Auditing (n = 48)	-	8	4	8	33	27	19
Assessment (n = 26)	-	11	23	-	50	8	8
Economics (n = 22)	5	9	14	5	27	27	13
Finance (n = 19)	-	11	11	-	63	5	10
Management (n = 22)	-	23	-	-	59	4	14
Marketing (n = 17)	-	-	19	5	27	37	12

According to Holland (1996), the preferred activities for the entrepreneurial type of personality are working with other people and organizations in order to achieve organizational aims and economic success, financial and interpersonal risk, participation in competing activities, sales, entrepreneurship, organizing meetings, conferences, groups, managing organizations, companies, campaigns, presentations. In other words, these types of activities should be appealing and attractive for the students of Business Schools majors.

Artistic type of personality is also quite prominent among students. Marketing students have the maximum indicator of artistic personality type of 37%. In other specialties, artistic type comprises 4-27% of the students.

Research and social personality types have approximately same or lower figures of 9-23% and 11-23% respectively out all specialties' students.

Conventional and realistic personality types appeared the least among the research participants, with 5-8% and 0-5% respectively.

Overall, the preferred activities mentioned above and profession examples correspond to those professions of economic sphere, which students are studying and will be getting their degrees in. Therefore, based on the obtained relation between the proclivity to a professional activity and chosen specialty, it can be said that for most of the students this is the prerequisite of a successful professional activities.

At the same time, as it can be seen on table 1, some students of each specialty can also be characterized with other personality types, which also agree with the chosen specialty. However, when considering their personal qualities and values, their working environment and profession must be more specific. Additionally, a small ratio of the students (8-19%) from each major chose between 2 and 4 preferred professional activities, what reveals the ambivalence of their professional proclivities. At the same time, according to Holland (1996), some personality types are compatible and their combination in one person comprises his/her strength, and provides advantages in a professional career. On the other hand, some combinations of character specifics of different personality types in one individual signify the contradiction in personal aims, values, motivations, and can lead to dissatisfaction with oneself, his/her work, etc. Such occurrence is described with Holland's (1996) congruence term.

Congruence occurs when an individual lives and works in the surrounding of same or similar type as his/hers own. In order to determine the congruence level of a person and his/her surrounding Holland's hexagon was used. The following results and sequences were produced (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correspondence between students' professional proclivities and chosen specialty based on Holland's hexagon.

Students' majors	% of total amount
Accounting and Auditing (n = 48)	45
Assessment (n = 26)	73
Economics (n = 22)	46
Finance (n = 19)	74
Management (n = 22)	59
Marketing (n = 17)	66

Professional proclivity of 74% of Finance students, 73% of Assessment students, 66% of Marketing students, 59% of Management students, 46% of Economics students, 45% of Accounting and Auditing students corresponds to the chosen profession.

Based on the research findings on professional directivity of students, it is possible that choice of other students of these specialties was influenced not by the preferences, but by social factors, such as prestige of the specialty, salary, etc. (Golovakha, 2008; Sazhaev & Shterenzon, 2014).

In order to determine difference in professional preferences amongst students of various majors, the comparison of average examined indicators based on Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney criteria was calculated. As it is shown in the table 3, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the differences between the samples deemed statistically significant at a selected level $p \leq 0.01$. Only the U-values for students with majors in Assessment are given below. For other specialties there are calculated different results.

Table 3. The empirical U-values for students in Assessment.

Holand's personality type	Realistic	Research	Social	Conventional	Artistic
Entrepreneurial	24.5	74	124.5	74.5	108.5

The result is significant at $p \leq 0.01$.

Having examined the importance of different factors involved in specialty's appeal the following results were produced (see Table 4).

Finance, Management, Accounting and Auditing, Assessment student think of the chosen profession as "one of the most essential for the society"; therefore, the importance level varies between 0.56 and 0.65. For Economics and Marketing students, their professions have negative impressions and importance level are of -0.05 and 0.17.

For the chosen demographics of students of different majors the most important factors included “working with people” (+0.38 - +1.00), “opportunity for self-development” (+0.73 - +1.0), “job description corresponds to my skill-set” (+0.43 - +1.0), and “work fits my character” (+0.4 - +0.81). Additionally, for Business School students one of the most important factors in profession's appeal is “opportunity to gain social admiration and respect”. Importance level has positive values. However, only for Assessment students is comprises +0.13, while for other specialties this varies between +0.61 and +1.0.

Table 4. Professional motivation importance factors for students of various majors of the Business School.

Factors of Professional Motivation	Students' majors					
	Assessment	Finance	Management	Accounting & Audit	Economics	Marketing
Profession is one of the most essential for the society	0,65	0,56	0,62	0,64	-0,05	0,17
Working with people	1	0,38	0,52	0,86	0,8	0,66
Work requires continues creativity	0,48	0,18	0,43	0,09	0,3	0,46
Work is exhausting	0,13	-0,16	-0,33	-0,57	-0,24	-0,13
High salary	0,3	0,89	0,9	0,87	0,62	0,56
Opportunity for self-development	0,74	0,89	1	0,74	0,81	0,73
Job description corresponds to my skill-set	0,65	1	0,9	0,95	0,43	0,75
Work fits my character	0,48	0,63	0,81	0,44	0,4	0,75
Short working hours	0,22	-0,11	-0,43	-0,05	0,05	0,16
Little interaction with people	-0,48	0,06	-0,62	0	-0,81	-0,41
Opportunity to gain social admiration and respect	0,13	0,79	1	0,64	0,81	0,61
Overall satisfaction level (OSL) with the profession	0,39	0,47	0,44	0,42	0,28	0,41

Such factors as “work requires continues creativity” and “high salary” fluctuate considerably, but in within the positive frames, having the values of - +0.09 - +0.48 and +0.3 - +0.9 respectively.

Students of all majors consider the following factors as negative ones: “work is exhausting” (-0.57 - +0.13), “short working hours” (-0.43 - +0.22), “little interaction with people” (-0.81 - +0.06).

The overall satisfaction level (OSL) with the profession varies between +0.28 and +0.47. The highest importance levels of the profession were observed amongst Finance students (+0.47) and Management students (+0.44). Economics student are the least satisfied with their profession group, having the figure of +0.28.

Thereby, amongst students of Business Schools of Kazakhstan the most common Holland's personality type is entrepreneurial (33 – 63% of the students). Ranking the type allows to put majors in the

following descending order: Finance, Management, Assessment, Accounting & Audit, Economics, Marketing.

The students have put the following as the most appealing factors of professional motivation: working with people, opportunity for self-development, work based on skills and character of a student, opportunity to gain social recognition, high salary.

All majors have an average level of satisfaction by the profession.

7 Conclusions

To sum up, professional motivation of students determines the successful outcome of studies in higher education institution. In the professional motivation structure a student's attitude towards the profession plays the essential role. Satisfaction with a profession is a dynamic indicator in the learning-teaching process. In order to improve the learning-teaching activities it is important to form positive attitude towards the profession. Examining profession appeal factors among final year students of various specialties at the UIB has shown that nearly all participants had marked the following as the most attractive factors: working with people, opportunity for self-development, work fits student's character and skill-set, opportunity to gain social admiration and respect, high salary. Unattractive factors like "exhaustion", "long working hours", "frequent interaction with other people" are same for almost all students. At the same time, there's an overall average satisfaction level with the profession across all majors, and all groups have chosen their profession adequately according to their professional preferences, but with varied levels of professional interest.

Knowing the specifics of personal professional preferences of a student is essential for the supervisors, learning groups' advisors, teachers of different courses at professional higher education institutions, in order to implement individually-oriented learning-teaching process. Lack of interest or insufficient wish to tie one's life with a particular profession will have a negative impact on the pass rate and quality of specialist preparation. Considering the fact that professional interests develop in the context of leading activities, characteristic for a particular stage of psychological and professional development (particularly during studies at a university), it is necessary to systematically diagnose professional motivations for adequate and comprehensive problem assessment, occurring during specialist preparation, along with developing special solutions.

In order to improve the quality of professional activities, it is essential not only to pass the knowledge, form skill-set of a future specialist, but to form preferences to the activity. Since the indicator of a strong proclivity towards a type of activity is possession of skills and abilities, it is important to form preferences towards a future type of activity based on developing skills and abilities for the professional activity.

The revealed professional preferences of the students of various majors in Business Schools of Kazakhstan correspond to those majors of economic profile, on which students are studying.

Overall, the most common Holland personality types are entrepreneurial and social.

On basis of revealed relationship between proclivity for professional activity and chosen major is the prerequisite for the future successful professional activity for the majority of future professionals.

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