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# University Graduate Career Potential in Digital Transformation Period: Features and Problems of Formation

**Mariya N. Prozorova**

Kirov State Medical University, Kirov, Russia

**Anatoly D. Zharkov**

Moscow State Institute of Culture, Khimki, Russia

**Alena A. Zharkova**

Moscow State Institute of Culture, Khimki, Russia

**Vinera A. Khamdamova**

Kokand State Pedagogical Institute named after Mukimi, Kokand, Republic of Uzbekistan

**Sarvinoz O. Sattorova**

Kokand State Pedagogical Institute named after Mukimi, Kokand, Republic of Uzbekistan

**Valerii S. Losev**

Pacific National University, Khabarovsk, Russia

**Abstract**---The student personal and professional development becomes even more meaningful and, based on the peculiarities of the world development in general, becomes one of the most important tasks of modern higher education, the main goal and direction of which is based on humanistic-personal orientation. Building a career is one of the main concerns not only for working professionals, but also for potential employees, including graduates who are on the cusp of entering professional life. The article aims to identify the characteristics of the career potential of university graduates. A questionnaire method was used as a research method allowing effective identifying of the perceptions' characteristics about a graduate's career potential. The article identifies student opportunities for self-actualization and self-realization in the professional environment in a time of digital transformation of various spheres of life. The authors of the experiment revealed that graduates who

showed high levels of readiness for career development have a more formed idea of the desires associated with the development of their career potential, the goals of their activities, and aspire, seek new things, constantly are engaged in self-development.

**Keywords**---career potential, digital transformation, personal resource, self-development, university graduates.

## Introduction

The modern world is changing the way we think about careers. Today's careers are no longer sustainable and planned, and are becoming harder and harder to plan for the next few years. The unpredictability factor is at work, the competition among candidates has increased dramatically, and you have to be one-step ahead to be noticed (Moll, 2012; Gerasimov, 2017; Shlyakhina, 2021; Kalimullina & Trotsenko, 2018; Qarkaxhja et al., 2021; Kvon et al., 2019; Maphosa, 2021; Nauzeer & Jaunky, 2021). This makes psychological counselling a relevant activity today. It helps to build psychological readiness for change, increase self-esteem and self-respect, develop potential skills, create positive attitudes in the client towards themselves and others, increase stress tolerance, engagement and control over life in general (Kolobaev, 2015; Reprintseva, 2012; Khammer, 2008; Gileva, 2019). The labor market demands highly competent professionals who are not only able to carry out their direct duties professionally, but who are also able to make decisions independently when situations arise (Premand, et al., 2016; Saks & Ashforth, 1999).

Modern society forces people to be able to adapt quickly to changing conditions, to cope with stress, to plan their activities in order to survive, to live well and to satisfy their higher needs (Kostromina, 2011; Yanchenko, 2013; Rubtsova, 2015; Tugun et al., 2020). In such circumstances, counselling to develop psychological readiness for career building is of great importance, as it helps to identify values and identify professional orientations and opportunities for student self-actualization and self-realization in the professional environment. In the first half of the twentieth century, in the works of scholars and practitioners studying the problems of improving the upbringing and development of young people, terms such as socio-psychological adaptation, psychological provision, psychological and pedagogical support, social and psychological support, psychological assistance, psychological accompany began to be frequently used. These concepts refer to activities aimed at teaching a person skills and abilities that ensure timely adaptation to the dynamics of the profession and continuous professional and personal growth (Brundage et al., 2005; Braddy et al., 2014).

## Literature review

In most cases, modern counselling on psychological preparedness development to build a career is based on several approaches, a set of which includes a large number of different approaches that help to address the difficulties encountered in the client's life more fully and deeply (Shinkevich et al., 2020). To begin with, the counsellor analyses the client's problematic aspects related to his/her career,

forming an idea of the reasons for the problem and possible solutions. Based on the findings, behavioral strategies are developed that should lead to a solution to the problem situation, as well as to the free expression of a person's potential in activity and creativity at all levels of being: spiritual, intellectual, personal, social and professional (Rubio, 2020; Kozina, 2021). Most authors point out that there is no specific age for career counselling: it may be necessary for a working adult as well as for a young person who, for example, is just graduating from the university and is on the threshold of entering a new professional life. In a constantly changing external environment, there are also changes in careers, career values, and orientation (Alyabina, 2018; Khashchenko, 2014; Shaidullina et al., 2015; Volkova et al., 2020; Stupar-Rutenfrans & Johnson, 2021). Largely, careers depend on the personnel market. Due to the rapid growth of new information, shifting scientific paradigms and economic and political processes in general, professions that were in demand until recently are no longer relevant today (Bebetsos & Konstantinidis, 2021). The values and worldview based on which one chooses and learns a profession change, the job changes. Due to this, a person loses its meaning (Ansoff, 1989; Kibanov et al., 2002).

The concept of free choice as a developmental condition is considered to be the basis of the support system for the individual. In creating the theoretical basis for psychological support, scholars have relied on a person-centered approach, which, in turn, understands development as the entity's choice and grounding of various innovations and ways of professional development. Every situation that arises generates a large number of options for its resolution. On this basis, we can say that psychological support will act as an assistant to the entity in creating an orientation field of development, assigning responsibility for their actions (Dikareva & Mirskaya, 1989; Zhuravlev, 2004). People who need psychological accompany and psychological care need such psychological support (Komissarova, 2002; Zholdak & Seyranov, 1999; Masalimova & Shaidullina, 2016).

All of the client's goals and objectives are projected onto the client's current ability to change something in their professional life. In this way, a set of actions that the client has to put into practice is formed during the counselling session. The first results are analyzed. The consultant, in turn, needs to assess the relevance and appropriateness of the objectives based on the client's arguments and progress reports, and to adjust them if necessary. In this stage, an analysis of the performance of the reflexive procedures, an analysis of the overall changes in the client's professional life, and the development of his/her career is made (Chernyshev, 2008; Galyuk & Startseva, 2020; Shaidullina et al., 2018; Desyatko et al., 2019). Thus, psychological support contributes to the reduction of tension, stress, increased involvement, and increased certainty of life goals, thereby increasing the productivity of activities in general and the adaptability of the person to new conditions. In turn, psychological support in the form of career counselling helps the entity to identify career choices, set the right career goals and ways to achieve them, and form psychological readiness for professional change (Figure 1).

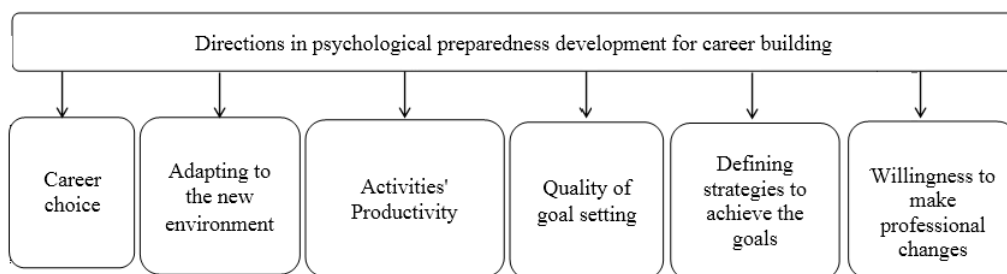


Figure 1. Needed areas in the development of psychological readiness of graduates to build a career

Career building psychological readiness counselling is an interpersonal process with the aim of helping individuals with their career development problems. The issue of counselling is the issue of setting and realization of goals, and the development and formation of psychological readiness to develop oneself, one's personal resources, and readiness for change. These goals refer not only to the narrow sphere of professional activity, but are also interconnected with all spheres of human activity that are important for a person today (Gendin, 2014; Olkhovaya et al., 2019; Schermerorn et al., 2004; Ryabova, 2005; Kuteinitsyna, 2008). The development and formation of career potential contributes to the development and formation of professional self-awareness. The previously listed components are the components of professional self-awareness (Tsypkin, 2001; Sheynov, 2002; Shaidullina et al., 2015; Cherdymova et al., 2019).

Thus, career potential is a psychological intrapersonal resource, which is formed under the influence of external and internal factors, providing the individual with a more successful interaction with the external environment, formation, development and advancement in professional activity. Career potential helps a person to adapt faster and more easily to changing conditions in the professional environment, and to engage and channel the necessary personal resources to address emerging professional challenges. Developed career potential allows a person to cope with stress more productively, preserving their psychological and social health (Sorokoumova & Cherdymova, 2021; Minkina, 2020; Travin & Dyatlov, 2002). The more developed one's career potential, the freer and more confident one feels in carrying out professional activities. Career potential is related to the phenomenon of psychological well-being. Moreover, the higher a person's level of career potential, the more he/she experiences and value a state of happiness and life satisfaction (Hinings et al., 2018; Sousa & Rocha, 2019).

### The study objectives and structure

Psychological support of students at university is considered within the framework of parallel actions of digitalization of education and creation of psychological readiness of a future specialist for professional activity, his/her continuous professional self-development and personal self-determination. The pilot study was conducted in early 2021 and included the following stages:

- Introductory stage. The questionnaire parts were developed and questions for the ongoing study were formulated to provide information on students' psychological readiness for careers:
  - Do you intend to go straight to work after graduation?
  - How do you rate your readiness to build a career?
  - Did you work during your studies?
  - What does it mean to you to build a career?
  - Have you thought about what career path you want to pursue?
  - Have you thought about what direction you would like to take your career in?
  - Are there people in your environment whose career makes you want to do the same?
- Research stage. Graduates were divided into two groups: group 1, which included students who were psychologically prepared for a career (control group); group 2, which included students who were psychologically unprepared for a career (experimental group).
- Analytical stage. The analysis of differences between the two groups was carried out using methods of mathematical statistics. The following methods of mathematical statistics were used in the study: wilcoxon t-criterion, which was used to compare the indicators of the experimental group before passing the career development program and after passing it; u-mann-whitney criterion, which was used to analyze the differences between the two groups: control and experimental.

The questionnaire provides an opportunity to obtain information on students' psychological readiness for careers and their desire to develop their career potential. It includes questions related to students' career self-assessment, assessment of the desire to develop skills that contribute to successful career ladder progression. A graduate, by trying on a particular skill, assesses the level of proficiency in it according to the suggested grading ([Ashford & Cummings, 1983](#); [Bipp et al., 2019](#)).

## Results

The survey revealed that today's graduates had the opportunity to attend a variety of events aimed mainly at the professional and career orientation of students (77% of those surveyed responded in this way). Graduates who score high on psychological readiness for career development may already have a better idea of their career aspirations (89%) and goals for their work, and they have certain aspirations (72%). Students' personality traits also play an important role. For example, in some, the study found that there is a desire to look for new things, to be interested in the unknown and constantly to engage in self-development (83 %). One should not forget that the sample is made up of undergraduates, which in turn can have a positive impact on their desire to build and develop their careers, as they will soon be entering a new, professional environment. In addition, students (19%, almost one in five) who showed a low level of career development were identified. Low scores on the questionnaire may indicate that students are not aware of the specifics of career development, have difficulties or are unwilling to deal with the issue. This may be because today's students are not

aware of the specifics of building a career, have difficulties or are simply not motivated to deal with the issue. Often the decline in motivation to build a career is linked to a lack of practical application of theoretical knowledge, resulting in an inability to evaluate oneself in career terms. After all, young professionals at the start of their careers are often inexperienced in their field and consequently are likely to be underpaid relative to expectations in the early stages of their careers.

Students with a higher average rank on the self-realization scale are more morally mature, more clearly accepting of reality and themselves, his or her activities are filled with responsibility, but not only to themselves, but also to society. Such people tolerate stressful situations more easily and are friendly to the outside world. Graduates with a low level of self-actualization are less morally formed and may show less responsibility in various situations than those with a high level of self-actualization. They lack aspiration in trying to manifest their latent resources and personal potential (Pfeifer & Peake, 2012; Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Students who score high on the psychological well-being scale are more confident in themselves and their abilities; they enjoy life and try to learn from the situations that occur in life. They strive for self-realisation and enjoyment in life. Students with a low score on this scale are characterized as less satisfied members of society. They are more passive in activities, self-development and self-actualization. They are perhaps less likely, than the students described above to experience a sense of happiness. The relationship between students' psychological readiness for careers and characteristics of psychological well-being (positive attitude towards others, autonomy, environmental management, personal growth, goals, self-acceptance) should be expected to be significantly higher in the group of respondents with career readiness and development of career important qualities and skills than in the second group (Nevolina et al., 2021; Ruan, 2018).

## **Discussion**

Today's digital society is confronted with the problem of inconsistency between professional and educational standards, demonstrating a lack of interconnectedness between them. Such a mismatch can lead to undesirable results in the form of graduate inefficiency in their chosen field, low labor market sustainability and mobility. Today, in the stage of digital transformation of various aspects of life activity, there are studies of career counselling for university graduates and attempts to form and develop tutoring within the university. However, there is a significant contradiction between the actual needs of graduates in developing their careers and the programs that are actually being implemented. It is also important to bear in mind that professional standards do not always coincide with educational standards, demonstrating a lack of interconnectedness. Such a mismatch can lead to undesirable results in the form of graduate inefficiency in their chosen field, low labor market sustainability and mobility (Dung et al., 2021; Alsharif, 2020).

One of the main tasks of psychological support is not only to diagnose and provide support and assistance to the entity, but also to teach him/her to overcome difficulties with personal effort, without the help of anyone else, to take

responsibility for their own development and self-improvement, to help them become a full entity of their own professional life (Rinartha et al., 2018; Ginaya et al., 2020).

At a time when there is familiarity and training for the profession and generally entering the entity's working life, complex situations that need to be addressed may manifest themselves in the course of work. They influence him/her more actively, contributing to a certain image of working life that differs from the previously dominant view of the people who have surrounded him/her throughout his/her life. Thus, an uneasy process of transition is formed from professional expectations to a reassessment of the values previously formed in young people. Sometimes this leads to dissatisfaction, frustration with one's professional performance, a sense of not realizing one's potential in professional life, an attitude towards one's job duties as a chore, and so on. For example, it is often the case that graduates at the inclusion stage of the working activity may face problems of this nature due to their passivity: they may carry out the activities they have been assigned, but they do not bring in any personal creativity or take any initiative. In such situations, the psychosocial services that are available within the organization that can help.

Counselling on the development of psychological readiness for career building as a type of psychological support allows forming psychological readiness for career building, to make an individual plan of professional development in accordance with professional and educational standards, to increase motivation for career development, to realize the career potential of the individual. Today, the criterion for a career is not only success in a professional activity, but also success in life in general. In turn, the development of professional and psychological potential, or career potential expressed through knowledge, abilities, skills, certain psychological characteristics of the individual, allows an individual to achieve positive changes in life in general, and in particular in professional development, actively to move up the career ladder, to be able competently to solve emerging difficulties in the professional sphere, correctly plan and set professional goals and achieve them, to be more adaptive and stress-resistant to changes in the external environment. Therefore, career development is important for everyone who wants to develop their professional skills, social role, and status, increase their remuneration and successfully build their career. We present career potential as a multidimensional inner resource of the individual that contributes to career success and professional awareness. Based on the above-mentioned, there is a need for psychological support formation in the university environment.

In doing so, it is important to focus on the students' psychological characteristics, develop their potential, help them to form goals and move towards achieving them. The determinants of career potential are such elements as resilience, self-organization, psychological well-being and human needs. In turn, the level of each of these elements will form the whole image of a graduate's career potential. Thanks to psychological support within universities, students' motivation for vocational training and further career development will be increased and a psychological readiness for career will be formed. The university's career development service will provide vocationally oriented training, inform students about careers and professions, and hold various types of activities aimed at

preparing the student for a professional career. In this regard, students will be psychologically prepared for their upcoming careers and will develop an interest in self-improvement, self-learning, creating an image of the profession and the image of the self in the profession. This will make it possible to resist and overcome stressful situations while maintaining inner comfort and confidence in oneself and one's abilities. Psychological support within HEIs can contribute not only to the formation of psychological readiness for career and to the image of one's career potential, but also to the ways of its development. In turn, psychological readiness can be seen as the first step in the development of career potential. In this study, career potential is considered as an interrelation of three components: cognitive, motivational-value, and behavioral, which include psychological readiness, awareness of the subject content of career and career goals, attitudes towards career, ways and means of career building.

## **Conclusion**

In turn, a support program during the higher education phase can include the development of individual psychological traits and skills that contribute to a better introduction of the individual into a professional and career environment. Such qualities and skills include, for example, resilience, determination, self-development, communication skills, understanding and understanding of the labor market, CV writing skills, job searching, and identifying personal goals and opportunities. Psychological counselling is a directed phenomenon that aims to prevent and develop the client's psychological resources. At the end of counselling, the graduate should change his/her attitude towards himself/herself, his/her personal career resources and working life in general. The analyzed features of psychological readiness for careers of university graduates in the period of digital transformation of various spheres of life showed the following results:

- Graduates with high levels of psychological readiness for career development have a better understanding of their career potential and activity goals and have certain aspirations, seek new things and are constantly engaged in self-development.
- Graduates with low levels of psychological preparedness for career development find it difficult or unwilling to address the issue.
- Graduates with a high level of self-actualization are more morally mature, more clearly accept reality and themselves, their activities are filled with responsibility, they easier bear stressful situations and are friendly to the outside world, more confident in themselves and their abilities, enjoy life and try to learn from situations that occur in it.
- Graduates with low levels of self-actualization are lacking aspirations in trying to manifest their latent resources and personal potential.

Today's labor market offers significantly more opportunities for individual career choice and professional development. Today, the opportunities for graduates to express themselves and realize their potential have increased significantly. This makes it possible to build a career in line with the actual abilities and capacities of the candidate, unlike in the recent past, when it was very difficult for graduates

to break through, as length of service and work experience were the most important conditions.

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