

## PROFESSIONAL VALUES IN HIGHER TECHNICAL EDUCATION

**Abstract:** Looking at the educational system in Romania, one can easily see that there is a very big difference between what people learn in school and what it is needed in the work field of our society. Considering all this, the present paper proposes an analysis of how professional values are perceived and understood by students who are at the University now, and who will soon face the challenge of finding a job. Finding these values in the beginning of the University studies, the professors can adopt new ways of teaching, in order to help the students, prepare better for their professional life.

**Key words:** value, education, profession, psycho-pedagogy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION - The importance of choosing this theme for the current Romanian educational system

It is a sad truth that at this moment Romania is drifting apart, from economic, social, political and other points of view. People are confused, disappointed, they leave their country to work abroad and they blame poverty on the government, thievery, the law and the politics.

But, what if the state of affairs at this point is caused by a slightly less visible factor, a factor that has been acting for some time and will show its effects for many years after: the education system? Many of us have been born and raised within this educational system. Having no other alternatives, we blindly accepted what we were told, to learn as much as we were given, no comment, and no right of having an opinion. From the beginning of the primary school to the first year of college we swam in a mass of information that was mostly useless, having no right to choose what to learn or why.

An effective education system, like the one in Finland, is the one that ensures equal opportunities in compulsory education and promotes excellence in higher education. Considering this criteria, Romanian education is far from providing all of those things. As far as the Romanian universities are concerned, we do not have any of the top performers in the world, not being included even in a top 1000. Even more serious is the fact that currently about 24 percent of students leave the education system prematurely, and only 20 percent of those high school graduates are university graduates, given that the education system should provide education for the masses, not just educating a small percentage. All these issues were highlighted at a seminar held in Braşov, attended by rectors, university professors and Euro-deputies. The aim was to find solutions to accelerate the reform in Romanian education [1].

Mr. P. D. Funeriu, Vice President of the Presidential Commission for Analysis and Development of Education and Research Policies in Romania presented some solutions for the revival of the education system. The first step has been made: developing the Education Pact. Among the most important measures mentioned in the Pact are the reorganization of the educational cycle, as

well as the implementation of a more flexible curriculum focused on the competences needed for the personal development and the economy of knowledge. For universities, some of the solutions could be their differentiation as well as the modernization of university management (this is the most difficult part). There is also a need to set up research institutes within universities, given that 80% of fundamental research is carried out in the Universities. Thus, the Romanian educational system becomes inadequate to current realities. Engineers learn from textbooks that were edited more than 40 years ago and students finish a Faculty not knowing anything about working in the real world. The unjustified absence of practical experiences in all higher education institutions makes the rupture between theory and the future job to be colossal.

Considering all of the above, the present paper proposes an analysis of how professional values are perceived and understood by students who are in the faculty now and who will soon face the challenge of finding a job.

### 2. THEORETICAL PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED THEME

#### 2.1 Theories and fundamental concepts

Our personal values are the principles we consider to be "normal," natural, which we almost never question, considering that "this is the way it should be". Our values are our benchmarks according to which we take, whether conscious or not, personal and professional decisions.

The difficulty in discovering the values is that they are not "seen", they are understood, and we can only discover them by patiently unravelling the veil with which our daily lives covers us. Examples of values are: performance, collegiality, pleasant family environment, independence, care for others, money, power, authority.

#### Value theories

P. Andrei views the value as a logical element of our knowledge, while R. Eisler, another philosopher states that there can be a psychology of the values, a critique of values or a theory of the moral values. [2]

R. Goldscheid says that the values are tightly connected to the field of knowledge and activity and

## *Professional Values in Higher Technical Education*

states that all three theories, the one of will, of knowledge and of value make up a whole.

Ed. von Hartmann believes that everything depends on a purpose, claiming that the quality of the value depends on the quality of the goal. [2]

W. Ostwald tries a more metaphysical theory of value, saying that the idea of value is surely related to life and conditioned by the particularities of life. He sees every being as a complex of energy and everything that happens in the world is just a dissipation of the existing free energy. [2]

One way for grouping the values is [2]:

- The validity of values:
  - Relative values
  - Absolute values
  - Subjective values
  - Objective values.
- The quality of values:
  - Positive values
  - Negative values
  - Own values
  - Values of the effects.
- The reasons that determined the values :
  - Accidental-transient values
  - Values of one's own.
- The values subject:
  - Economic
  - Ethical
  - Legal
  - Political.
- Values determined by constitutive and regulatory functions of social life:
  - Economic
  - Legal
  - Political
  - Ethical
- Values determined by the context in which social reality lives and evolves:
  - Historical
  - Aesthetic
  - Religious

Based on deep psychosocial research for two decades, D.E. Super has identified 15 professional values. [3] According to Professor S. Chelcea, these are the following:

1. Altruism - refers to professions that concern working with people and help improve their lives: human relationships, social assistance and education.
2. Aesthetic values - professions that allow the realization of aesthetic objects like art and design.
3. Intellectual Stimulation - Activities that offer the opportunity to learn something new and require independent thinking, abstract reflections.
4. Professional success - refers to executive jobs, finalized by concrete products and generating a sense of satisfaction through the good execution of professional tasks.
5. Independence - aims at occupations that allow the person to work from its own pace and apply its own ideas and concepts.

6. Prestige - refers to occupations with a high social status that provide importance and respect.

7. Leadership - Professions that give the opportunity to plan and organize the work of others.

8. Economic benefits - value associated with high-paid jobs, which reflects a tendency towards orientation after material gains.

9. Occupational safety - value associated with professions that are confident of maintaining them, ensuring the same type of work and guaranteeing material income.

10. Physical ambience - Occupations characterized by good working conditions, cleanliness, heat, lack of noise.

11. Relationships with the superiors - the choice of the job according to the leading members in the respective field.

12. Relationships with colleagues – choosing the work place on the basis of having good relations with the colleagues.

13. The way of life - value associated with the type of work that allows oneself leaving the life of its choosing, according to its dreams.

14. Variety - professions that allow diverse, varied, non-recurring activities, seeking personal satisfaction.

15. Creativity - Activities that enable the creation of new products and applying of new ideas.

## **2.2 Applicable methodologies in studying the proposed theme**

A Methodology is the set of methods and procedures used to harvest and interpret empirical data in order to build up and evaluate theoretical hypotheses about behaviour and psychic [4].

Methodologies may be experimental or non-experimental. From non-experimental ones, some of the most used ones are: the case study, natural observation, laboratory observation, interview and correlation studies.

## **3. PRACTICAL - APPLICATIVE PRESENTATION OF THE PROPOSED THEME**

### **3.1 Formulation of the hypothesis**

The hypothesis that the authors considered is that the subjects on which the test was conducted will be most interested in the material benefits of the chosen job. We suppose this, because from the discussions we had with them, most of them say they chose this profession because it is great in making good money. Some of them are already engaged in family business and wish to continue the legacy of their parents.

### **3.2 Description of the sample of the research**

The selected sample consists of 49 subjects, students of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Building Services. All subjects are between the ages of 18 and 25, of whom 91.8% are men and 8.16% are women (4 women and 45 males), 85.7% are urban and 14.3% rural (7 - rural, 42 - urban). All subjects are in their 1<sup>st</sup> year of college, graduate from high school and unmarried.

3.3 Presentation of the applied method

The method used to study this subject was the questionnaire. Discussions were also held on the subject, and students were informed about what they would do and how these results would be used, taking the questionnaire seriously and answering questions, thereby self-assessing their life and career ideas.

The applied questionnaire is called "Inventory of Professional Values" and was adapted by Professor Septimiu Chelcea in 1993. This test contains 45 statements on various aspects of professional life. These are rewards gained from working or due to the work [4].

The method grades points, from 1 to 5, depending on the importance the subjects give to each aspect of the work.

3.4 Psycho-pedagogical interpretation of the obtained results

Table 1

Professional values			
The value dimensions	Sum	Average	Rank
Lifestyle	700	14.286	1
Physical ambience	686	14.000	2
Economic benefits	666	13.592	3
Relationships with superiors	655	13.367	4
Creativity	650	13.265	5
Professional success	648	13.224	6
Independence	638	13.020	7
Prestige	633	12.918	8
Professional safety	627	12.796	9
Intellectual stimulation	595	12.143	10
Altruism	590	12.041	11
Lead	569	11.612	12
Aesthetics	558	11.388	13
Relations with colleagues	537	10.959	14
Variety	524	10.694	15

On the first place in terms of professional values for the subjects in this group was THE LIFESTYLE, as can be seen from Table 1, Fig. 1 and 2. From this, the authors can conclude that for the subjects, a job has to be economically satisfying enough to satisfy the desired way of life. It is understandable to be so, every person wants to live well, to be able to afford a lifestyle he can only dream about now.

PHYSICAL AMBIANCE is placed on the second place, which shows that subjects place great emphasis on physical comfort in the workplace. Ambience is important to be enjoyable, clean, noise - free and have appropriate work equipment.

The third place was taken by ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES, which again shows how important the material part is, the importance of money being felt and understood from a young age.

RELATIONS WITH SUPERIORS are also noted as very important, the subjects considering that a good relationship with the "boss" can lead to a stable, well paid job.

On the last places there were RELATIONS WITH THE COLLEAGUES, which shows the individuality of the subjects, they still do not emphasize the approach or the sympathies that are formed between those who work together, considering that everyone has his / her own part

and does it alone without having to have contacts with others. However, women put more emphasis on these relationships, as can be seen from the graph.

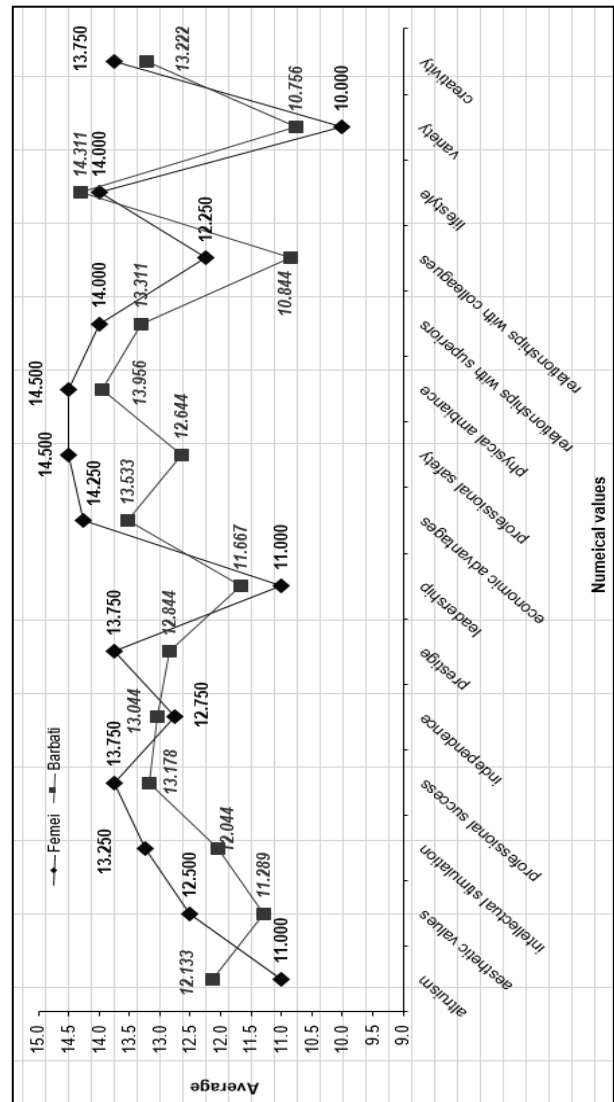


Fig. 1 Numerical values

The last place is the VARIETY, an office job, or where routine is the rule, does not scare the subjects as long as they have professional safety.

4. CONCLUSION - confirmation / refutation of the hypothesis and some solutions offered for the obtained hierarchy

The hypothesis formulated by the authors at first proved to be partially correct, the subjects being interested in the economic advantages, but in the form of LIFESTYLE. We think this value is the one that is normal to be first, because the current situation of the country leads to this hierarchy. Material safety, good working conditions, good relationships with superiors are things that lead to a good life from a material point of view.

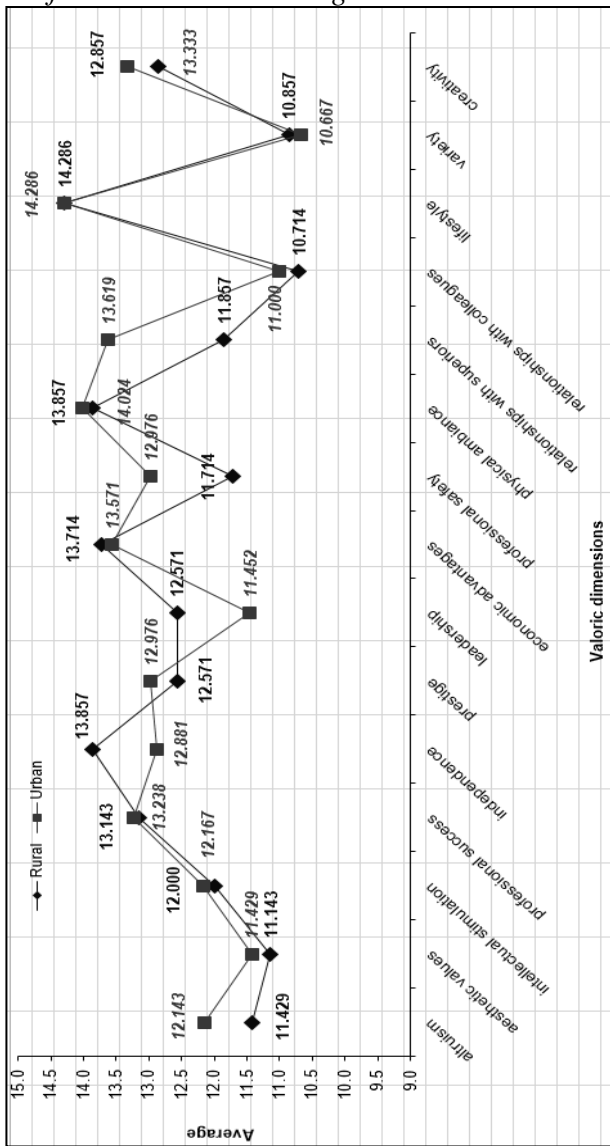


Fig. 2 Value dimensions

What concerns us is the fact that intellectual stimulation is so low (10) and that the creative side is left on a secondary plane. Relationships with the colleagues is placed on 14 which leads to a society where everyone is for themselves, each to know how to do its part without creating interpersonal relationships.

We consider, however, that this classification is changeable with time, because the subjects are still very young, have no experience of a job, so that they can appreciate the existence of a team of colleagues to work with.

The difference between rank 1 and 15 is not very high, however, which implies that the subjects consider all aspects of professional life to be important, many of whom consider them to be equally important.

As a solution, we are thinking about conducting the classes a little bit different than before, make students work in teams so they can understand the importance of teamwork and the value of a good relationship with their colleagues. Also, we could give them projects in which they have to come up with new ideas, so that they can have a feeling of satisfaction with diversity and understand that no routine work could give them such a fulfilment.

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