

Dynamics of Educational and Professional Attitudes Formation of Future Social Workers During Studying at Higher Educational Institution

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Abstract: The dynamics of formation of educational and professional attitudes of future social workers while studying at higher educational institution is viewed in the paper. During the study it has been found out that the concept of “attitude” means the readiness (perception of future events, forms of response to them, strategies for the professional tasks solution) of future social workers to carry out their own professional duties. The attitudes are closely connected with self-attitude – a structurally complex formation that contains a global feeling (for or against yourself), self-esteem, self-respect, auto-sympathy, self-interest, the expected attitudes of the others. In order to study the dynamics of formation of educational and professional attitudes of future social workers, we have conducted a diagnostic research among first-year students, Bachelors and Masters of the speciality “Social work” of Khmelnytsky National University. According to the results of the research, it has been found out that there is a positive dynamics of changes in the formation of educational and professional attitudes of students in the process of studying at higher educational institution. The need to work-out and introduce the program of formation of educational and professional attitudes of future social workers while studying at higher educational institution is defined by the fact that a certain number of Bachelors of the speciality “Social work” has rather weak indicators of formation of such important professional and personal attitudes as decisiveness, confidence in yourself and own strengths, independence, social importance, autonomy, self-control and control over important vital situations.

Keywords: *attitude, dynamics of formation of educational and professional attitudes, future social workers, higher educational institution, readiness for professional activity.*

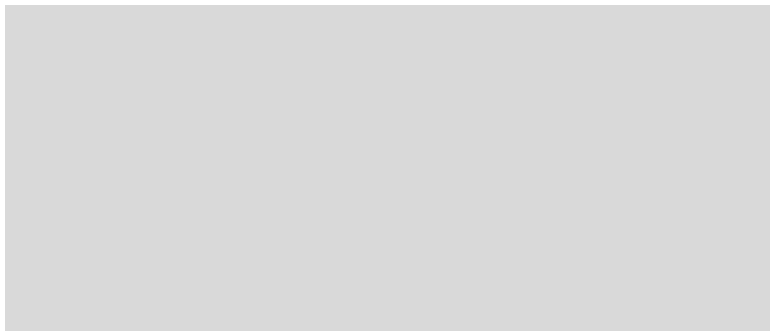
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1. Introduction

The updating of attention to the professional training of social workers in Ukraine is conditioned by the need to solve a number of social and psychological problems, which are characterized by a sharp decrease in the employment level, low labor market opportunities and increased competitiveness of graduates of higher educational institutions. All this exacerbates the problem of preparing future social workers for professional activity.

The need to improve the training of specialists at higher educational institutions is also due to the social and economic changes that have taken place in our society recently. The modernization of education stimulates the appeal of social workers to solving topical issues of higher education, one of which is the social and psychological aspect of professional training of students. The formation of a new social reality in Ukraine – mass problems in the social field, increasing demands on social workers – is a clear indication that a stable tendency of humanization and democratization of social life is developing in the conditions of solving social contradictions in the country. In the interests of improving the quality of social work, in the situation of its rapid increasing, it is necessary, first of all, to study the social and psychological features of preparing future social workers for professional activity.

Various aspects of training of future specialists in the social sphere are seen in researches of scientists. Their particular attention is paid to the formation of personal and professional qualities of future social workers. So, in particular, scientists point to the need for the presence of such specialists' traits as: responsiveness and kindness, diplomacy in relations with others, self-confidence, non-conformism, optimism in perception of reality, responsibility, sociability, empathy, high mental abilities, comprehensiveness of interests, mood stability, independence, initiative, professional motivation and passion for the process of professional activity (O. Vasylenko, Y. Grach, T. Gudz, L. Romanovska & T. Kravchyna, 2019: 289).

Ukrainian researchers N. Horishna, H. Slozanska, O. Soroka & L. Romanovska (2019) point to the importance of developing leadership skills of future social workers, the need of which, in their view, is increasingly becoming more essential. It is then that macro forces that affect practice of social work (including globalization, migration, psychophysiological differences between people, demographic population ageing, increasing income inequality between the rich and the poor) are becoming increasingly

apparent (N. Horishna, H. Slozanska, O. Soroka & L. Romanovska, 2019: 598).

Scholars also argue that the lack of leadership skills development training programs at both Bachelor's and Master's levels at higher educational institutions is a clear cause of a shortage of social workers in higher administrative positions (Austin & Ezell, 2004; Knee & Folsom). This situation is also due to the fact that, in the second half of the 20th century, instead of forming leadership qualities of social workers, their clinical and direct professional training took place (Thompson, Menefee, & Marley, 1999: 115).

In their turn, Romanian scientists E. Unguru & A. Sandu (2017) argue that supervision, which includes psychotherapy, coaching, personal development, counseling, etc., is a mandatory stage in the training of specialists in the social sphere. Supervision requires a certain level of self-reflexiveness by professionals in this field, a critical and constructive analysis of practice that would ensure its effectiveness and improve the quality of social services (E. Unguru & A. Sandu, 2017: 18).

H. Cleak, A. Roulston & A. Vreugdenhil, (2016) emphasize that changes in the field of public health and well-being of the population in the modern world have led to an increased number of loads and stresses for social workers and an urgent need for them (H. Cleak, A. Roulston & A. Vreugdenhil, 2016: 2).

In view of the above, particular attention is drawn to the problem of the future social workers' readiness (perception of future events, forms of responding to them, strategies for solving professional tasks) for performing their professional duties. This state of readiness is called "attitude".

Attitude means a willingness to provide a steadfast purposeful flow of activity with respect to a given object and enable it to perform the appropriate action more effectively (V. Morgun, & I. Titov, 2013).

Studies of such a mental phenomenon as "attitude" were most deeply carried out in the school of "attitudes and set" by D. Uznadze (O. Prangishvili, 1967; R. Natadze, 1960; V. Norakidze, 1966; D. Uznadze, 1961). Scientists interpreted the attitude as a holistic modification of the subject, manifested in his or her readiness for the certain activity (perception of future events, forms of response, strategies for solving the problem, etc.).

On the basis of these provisions O. Asmolov (1977) developed an activity theory of attitudes and set, which distinguishes three hierarchical levels of regulating the activity: semantic, targeted and operational attitudes. The basic properties of these attitudes are the derivation of the system of subject's activities, intentionality, independence from awareness, inability to

translate into meaning, insensitivity to verbal influences, formal manifestation in the form of “unmotivated deviations of behavior” (O. Asmolov & M. Koval’chuk, 1977: 227).

Attitudes as a social and psychological phenomenon were also studied by I. Ajzen, 1991; G. Andreeva, 1994; A. Asmolov & Koval’chuk, 1977; R. Beron & D. Richardson D. 2001; D. Katz, 1960; D. Majers, 1997; D. Uznadze, 1958.

D. Uznadze (1958) formulated the basic provisions of the general theory of attitude, in particular, pointed out the factors of the origin of the attitudes and set, described the methods of its purposeful experimental formation, analyzed its basic types and properties, formulated the law of change of the attitude.

M. Zabroc’kij (1998) considers that the attitude is readiness for certain activity, conditioned by the presence of the need and the objective situation of its satisfaction. As a short process and condition, the attitude is an expression of attention, and as a quality of personality – its direction (Zabroc’kij, 1998: 88).

Modern interpretative psychological vocabulary states that attitude is not a separate psychological process, but something holistic that has a central character. This is also reflected in the fact that the attitude, being formed in one sphere, passes on to the others. The attitude occurs when the individual interacts with the environment, when the need “meets” the situation of its satisfaction. On the basis of attitude that expresses the state of the whole subject, as such, activity can be activated without the participation of his\her emotional and volitional acts (Shapar, 2005: 556-557).

In social psychology, attitude is used to study the relevance of a person as a member of a group towards these and those certain social objects, investigate the mechanisms of regulation of social activity, predict possible forms of personality behavior in certain situations, etc. (Andreeva, 2001).

In the dispositional concept of personality’s social behavior by V. Yadov, attitudes (which are formed on the basis of the person’s need for communication, in situations of group activity) are placed only in the second place of the hierarchy (after elementary attitudes). Higher levels of dispositions, according to V. Yadov, are represented by basic social attitudes (orientation of interests of personality) and value-orientation dispositions (value orientations) (V. Yadov, 1994).

Using the notion of the attitude and position of the theory of dispositional regulation of social behavior, V. Yadov and I. Kohn formulate

the level concept of “I-image”, in which the self-image is seen as a system of attitudes, – each of which has cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Kon, 1978). In this case, the lower level of the “I-image” is made up of the unconscious (represented only in the experience) attitudes. In psychology, they are traditionally associated with well-being and emotional attitude to yourself. Awareness and self-esteem of individual properties and qualities that form a relatively holistic image are located above the lower level. Finally, this “I-image” fits into the general system of value orientations of the personality, which are connected with the awareness of the goals of his/her own livelihood and the means necessary to achieve these goals.

Thus, researches of scientists show that self-attitude is a structurally complex formation that contains a global feeling for or against yourself, as well as more specific parameters: self-respect, autosympathy, self-interest, the expected attitude of others. Therefore, all attitudes questionnaires are designed according to these ideas.

2.The problem and purpose of the study

The analysis of academic works shows that today, quite a few scientific works are devoted to the study of the formation of educational and professional attitudes as a state of readiness of future specialists to perform their professional duties.

In view of this, the purpose of the paper is to diagnose the dynamics of formation of educational and professional attitudes of future social work specialists at different stages of their studying at higher educational institution.

3.Research methods and methodology

The study used a set of methods:

1. Methods of theoretical level of knowledge (analysis, synthesis, classification, comparison and generalization of theoretical knowledge on the problem of research).

2. Methods of empirical level of knowledge (psychodiagnostic methodology: “Diagnosis of subjective control level” by J. Rotter (Rotter, J. V., Chance, J. E. & Phares, E. J., 1972), test-questionnaire “Assertiveness level study”, modified by V. Kaponi & T. Novak (1998), methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) by E. Klimov (1990).

J. Rotter's methodology “Diagnosis of subjective control level” is designed to assess the level of formation of students' subjective control over

various life situations. The methodology consists of 44 statements. The researched object must answer on a seven-point scale from – 3 “completely disagree” to +3 “completely agree”. Processing of results by this methodology is carried out on the general internality scale (Ig). The maximum positive level of matches on the scale (Ig) is 44. The more we find a number of matches in this methodology, the higher the characteristics of subjective control level is (Rotter, J. V., Chance, J. E. & Phares, E. J., 1972).

Test-questionnaire “Assertiveness level study”, modified by V. Kaponi & T. Novak is aimed at determining such scales as: scale A (independence, autonomy); scale B (confidence, determination, self-reliance); scale B (social desirability). The researched objects are asked to answer 24 questions that correspond to the mentioned scales.

Scale A (independence, autonomy):

7-8 points – the person is too independent and does not listen to what other people say. He/she is selfish, gives himself/herself a credit.

4-6 points – the person is quite independent, but, in his/her independence, still treats others’ opinions with attention and respect. He/she is independent, achieves the desired goal without harming others. This person evaluates himself/herself realistically.

0-3 points – the person is very dependent on others, not-independent and uncertain of himself/herself. He/she is not able to solve problems on his/her own, and can’t be responsible for himself/herself and his/her actions.

Scale B (confidence, determination, self-reliance):

7-8 points – the person knows exactly what he/she wants and achieves his/her goal, relying on own strengths. In the situation when there is a conflict of interest, the person is able to agree and find a compromise solution that satisfies both parties. He/she achieves his/her goal without manipulating opponents via a guilty conscience or any other method of emotional blackmail. Such person is self-confident, acts clearly and decisively.

4-6 points – is characterized by the presence of assertiveness in typical human situations, but the slightest change in circumstances destroys the person’s sense of self-confidence.

0-3 points – the fear of unforeseen situations is so strong that even, for example, winning the lottery, the person, above all, feels some doubts, fears.

Scale B (social desirability):

7-8 points – insincerity or inadequately inflated self-esteem (ego). But, most likely, falling into such standard “traps” indicates the low social

intelligence – the person does not understand the provocative nature of the issues. Such person tries to hide his/her low self-esteem naively, because it's bad, in his/her imagination. But it is good for him/her to be correct and confident. That is, it is a clear manifestation of social desirability.

3-6 points – indicates the intermediate position of the person in relation to those extreme values and their interpretation, which have already been described.

0-2 points – demonstrates truthfulness, sincerity or good social intelligence, because such person identifies traps and understands that it is unwise to fall into them (Kaponi, V. & Novak, T., 1998).

The methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) by E. Klimov is designed to diagnose aptitudes and professional interests in each of the 20 pairs of the proposed types of activities. Researched objects are given the opportunity to select only one type and put a “+” sign in the appropriate square of the answer sheet. The instruction to the participants of the study sounds like that: “Let's suppose that after appropriate training you will be able to perform any work. But if you had to choose between two options, which job/profession would you prefer?”

The types of professions defined by E. Klimov in the methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) are “man – man”, “man – sign system”, “man – nature”, “man – artistic image”, “man – technology”. The answer sheet is compiled in such a way that you can count the number of “+” signs in each of the 5 columns that correspond to a certain type of profession. As a result, we calculate which type of profession received the maximum number of “+” signs (Klimov, E., 1990).

3. Methods of quantitative and qualitative data processing (the coverage of research results using numerical (quantitative) indicators in the form of tables and figures and verbal (qualitative) explanation of the received results of the study).

3.1.Procedure and results of the study

Research and diagnostic work on determining the dynamics of the formation of educational and professional attitudes of students was carried out at Khmelnytsky National University. 79 students of the specialty “Social work” were involved in the study, namely: 23 first year students, 28 Bachelor students and 28 Master students.

The study was implemented in accordance with the plan of the scientific research work of the Department of Social Work and Pedagogics “Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Training Specialists in the Social

Sphere". To participate in the study, there was students' oral agreement for conducting a psycho-diagnostic study. It took place after studying. Personal information about its results remained unrevealed.

To study the individual characteristics of subjective control of future social workers over various life situations, we used the methodology "Diagnosis of the subjective control level" by J. Rotter (Rotter, J. V., Chance, J. E. & Phares, E. J., 1972). It should be noted that the processing of results by this methodology is carried out on the scale of general internality (Ig). The maximum positive level of coincidences on the scale (Ig) is 44. In this methodology, the bigger the number of coincidences is, the higher the characteristic of the level of subjective control is.

The high score on this scale corresponds to the high level of subjective control over any significant situations. Such people consider that most of the important events in their lives have been the result of their own actions and they can manage them and feel their own responsibility for these events. The low indicator on this scale corresponds to the low level of subjective control. Such people do not see a connection between their actions and the significant events of their lives. They do not consider themselves capable of controlling their development, and believe that most of them are the result of other people's cases or actions. Thus, people with low Ig characterize themselves as selfish, dependent, indecisive, and people with high SCL (subjective control level) consider themselves to be kind, independent, determined, benevolent.

We have conducted the "Diagnosis of Subjective Control Level" methodology by J. Rotter three times: with 23 first-year students, 28 Bachelor students and 28 Master students of the speciality "Social Work". The results of the study of subjective control levels of 23 first-year students are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Results of the study of subjective control levels of first-year students of the specialty "Social work"*

Subjective control Level	#	%
High	7	30,4
Average	10	43,5
Low	6	26,1

Source: Authors' own conception

Thus, on the basis of the conducted methodology “Diagnosis of the subjective control level ” we have found that the first-year students of the specialty “Social work” are dominated by average subjective control levels (43.5%). However, some students also have a low subjective control rate (26.1%). It means that these students find themselves unable to control important events in their lives, they are indecisive and dependent on others.

Next, we have conducted this methodology among 28 Bachelor students of the specialty “Social Work”. The results of its implementation are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Results of the study of subjective control levels of Bachelor students of specialty “Social work”*

Subjective control level	#	%
High	10	35,7
Average	13	46,4
Low	5	17,9

Source: Authors’ own conception

As can be seen from Table 2, the subjective control levels of Bachelors-students of specialty “Social work” are mostly high (35.7%) and average (46.4%) compared to their fellows – first-year students. However, there are also students who, while being in their fourth year of graduation, have low subjective control levels over life situations.

The results of this methodology among 28 future social workers who have taken Master’s courses have been important for our study. The data obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Results of the study of the subjective control levels of Master students of the specialty “Social work”*

Level of subjective control	#	%
High	16	57,1
Average	12	42,9
Low	0	0

Source: Authors' own conception

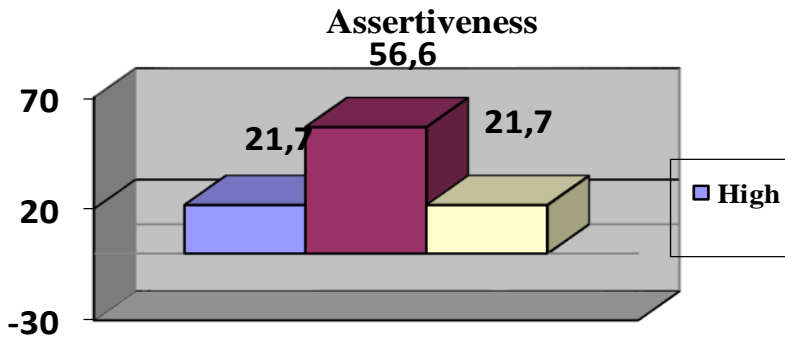
The results of the study show that, unlike their colleagues who study in the first year and for Bachelors, Master students of the specialty "Social work" have shown quite high levels of subjective control over important life situations. And, most importantly, there has been no one student among them who has had a low level of this indicator.

Thus, the results of the conducted methodology "Diagnosis of the subjective control level" by J. Rotter among the future social workers have shown that during their studies in the institution of higher education there is a positive dynamics of the formation of the subjective control level over life situations. However, even when being in graduate studies, some of them show relatively low levels of formation of the given indicator, that is, they do not show activity, determination and autonomy from the others.

We have decided to confirm the reliability of the obtained results with the help of the "Assertiveness Levels Study" test questionnaire, modified by V. Kapponi Kaponi, T. Novak (1998). This test aims to identify such personal traits of future specialists in the social sphere as independence, autonomy, confidence, determination, self-reliance and self-esteem (Caponi, Kaponi 1998).

The results of the study on the test of the questionnaire "Assertiveness Levels Study", modified by V. Kapponi Kaponi, T. Novak (1998), among 23 first-year students of the specialty "Social work" have found out that 5 of them have a high level of assertiveness (21.7%), 13 interviewed ones have an average assertiveness level (56.6%) and 5 students have demonstrated the low assertiveness level (21.7%). The results of this procedure are shown in Figure 1.

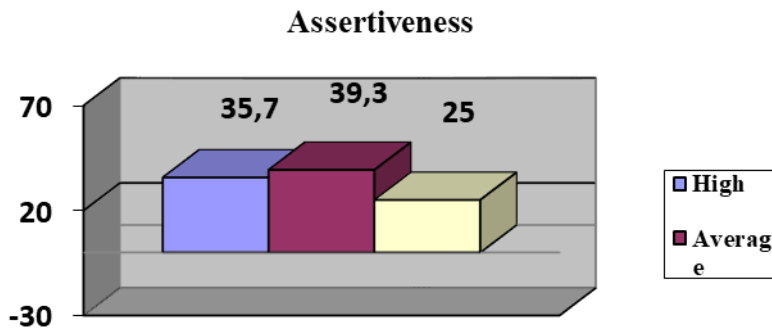
Figure 1. *Assertiveness levels of first-year students of the specialty "Social work" (%)*



Source: Source: Authors' own conception

The results of the "Assertiveness Level Study", modified by V. Kapponi Kaponi, T. Novak (1998), among 28 Bachelor students of the specialty "Social Work" are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Assertiveness levels of Bachelor students of specialty "Social work" (%)



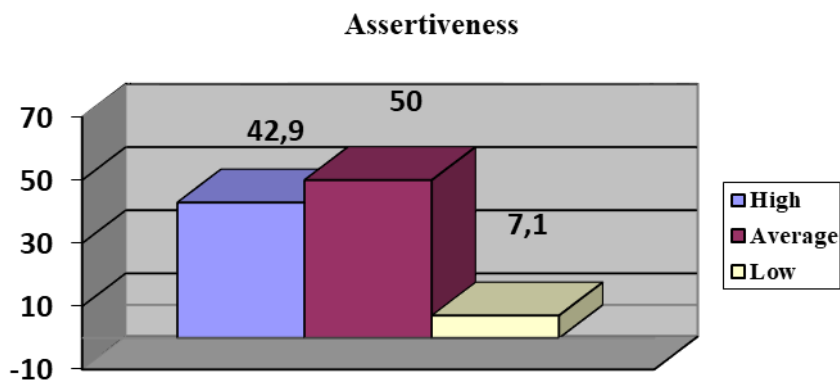
Source: Source: Authors' own conception

As you can see, these results have confirmed the data obtained by the methodology "Diagnosis of the level of subjective control" by J. Rotter:

10 Bachelor students have a high level of assertiveness (35.7%), 11 of them have shown an average level of assertiveness (39.3%) and 7 students are characterized by a low level of assertiveness (25%).

The results of the conducted methodology “Assertiveness Levels Study”, modified by V. Kapponi Kaponi, T. Novak (1998), among Master students of specialty “Social work” are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Assertiveness levels of Master students in Social Work (%)*



Source: Source: Authors' own conception

As can be seen from Figure 3, Master students' indicators of assertiveness, as well as indicators of subjective control over life situations, are mostly average (50%) and high (42.9%). All this demonstrates the positive dynamics of formation of their personal qualities while studying at higher educational institution.

With the help of E. Klimov's methodology "Differential Diagnostic Questionnaire" (DDQ) we have determined to what kind of professional activity students have the greatest inclinations. Types of professions defined by E. Klimov in the methodology "Differential Diagnostic Questionnaire" (DDQ) are: "man – man", "man – sign system", "man – nature", "man – artistic image", "man – technology" (Klimov, 1990).

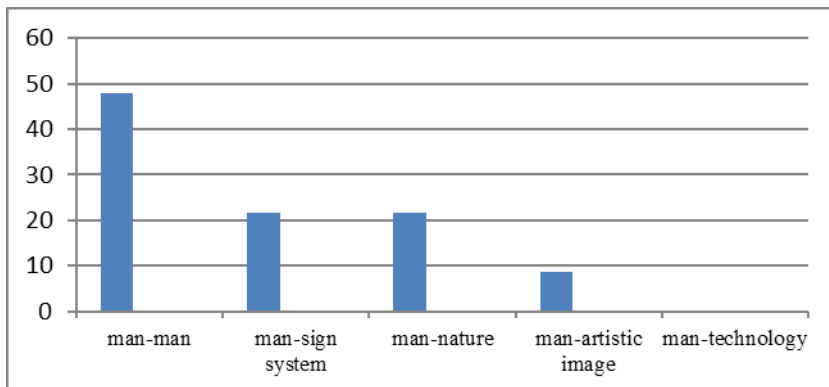
These professions have the following characteristics:

– occupations of the type "man – technology" are connected with interaction of the person with the technical objects;

- in the “man – nature” profession, the object of work is the natural systems – plants, animals, microorganisms and their conditions of existence;
- “man – man” professions are related to human interaction with other people;
- in the profession of type “man – artistic image” the object of work is the artistic images or their elements;
- in the profession of type “man – sign system” the object of work is the symbols and their signs-words, numbers, formulas, chemical symbols, notes, diagrams, graphs.

The results of the conducted methodology “Differential-Diagnostic Questionnaire” (DDQ) among 23 first-year students of the specialty “Social Work” have indicated that 11 students have shown an inclination for the profession of type “ man – man ”, 5 students have preferred the profession of type “ man – nature ”, 5 students have chosen a profession of “ man – artistic image ” type, 2 students have shown an inclination for the profession of type “ man – sign system ” and no student has chosen a profession of type “ man – technology ” (Figure 4).

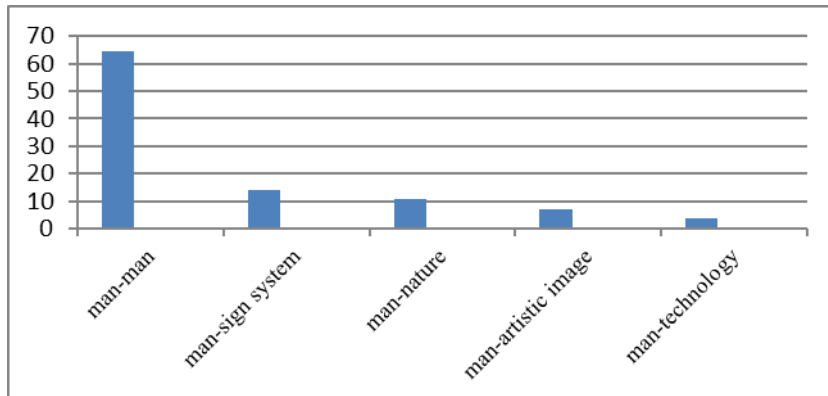
Figure 4. Results of the conducted methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) among first-year students of specialty “Social work” (%)



Source: Authors' own conception

The next stage of our study has been diagnostics of the levels of professional readiness of Bachelor students of the specialty “Social work” (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Results of the conducted methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) among Bachelor students of specialty “Social work” (%)

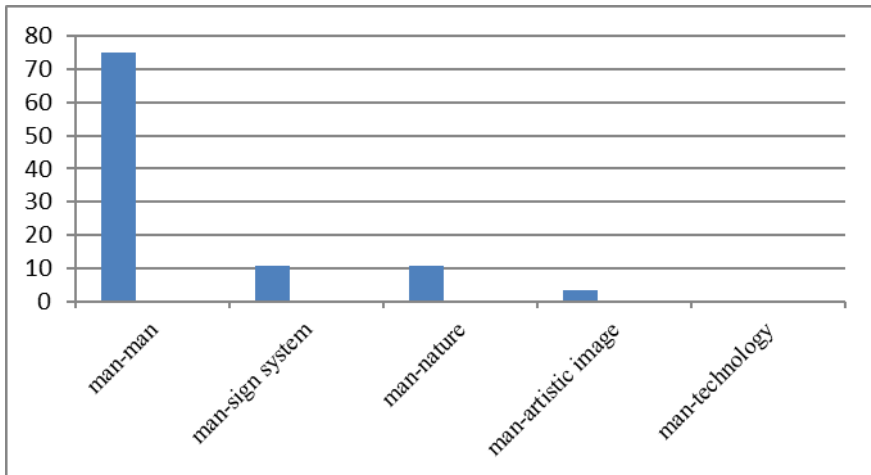


Source: Authors' own conception

The data given in Figure 5 indicate that most of the Bachelor students of the specialty “Social work” have professional skills, showing an inclination for the profession of social worker, which belongs to the type of professions “man – man”. However, a few students have shown an inclination for professions such as “man – nature” (14.3%), “man – artistic image” (10.7%), “man – sign system” (7.1%) and “man – technology”(3.6%).

Determining the levels of professional readiness for the chosen specialty of Master students has been quite important for our study. The results of the study are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Results of the conducted methodology “Differential-diagnostic questionnaire” (DDQ) among Master students of specialty “Social work” (%)



Source: Authors' own conception

Thus, the results of the study indicate that students studying for Master's degree program in a chosen specialty demonstrate a greater willingness for professional activity than their counterparts who attend junior courses.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the conducted research allow us to conclude that during studying at higher educational institution, we can observe not only students' positive dynamics of changes in formation of personal qualities, but also the development of their readiness for future professional activity. Thus, according to the results of the study, it has been found out that Master students of specialty "Social work" are more willing to perceive future events, forms of responding to them, strategies for solving professional problems, that is, to form educational and professional attitudes, than their colleagues, who study in junior courses.

In turn, the results of the study have shown that the first-year students have relatively low indicators of the formation of educational and professional attitudes. This phenomenon is understandable, because, being first-year students, students are not yet fully aware of their future professional responsibilities and functions; they do not see a connection between the theoretical knowledge acquired and future professional activities, they do not consider themselves able to control the development of events in their own lives.

However, the study has revealed that several Bachelor students also have relatively low levels of readiness for professional activity, that is, a low level of such skills formation as determination, self-confidence, independence, social significance, autonomy, self-control and control over important life situations.

Therefore, we see the prospects for further research in this area in the development and implementation of a program for the formation of educational and professional attitudes for future social workers while studying at higher educational institution.

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