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**REFLECTION AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF PSYCHOLOGISTS:
A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN RESEARCH
AND THE SPIRAL MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT**

Анотація. У статті здійснено теоретичний аналіз зарубіжних і вітчизняних досліджень, присвячених проблемі взаємозв'язку рефлексії та професійної ідентичності психолога. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростанням вимог до професійної діяльності фахівців допоміжних професій в умовах сучасного соціального та освітнього середовища, що характеризується високим рівнем невизначеності, складністю професійних завдань та необхідністю постійного професійного розвитку.

У роботі проаналізовано основні теоретичні підходи до розуміння рефлексії як багатовимірного психологічного феномена, що включає когнітивні, особистісні та регулятивні компоненти, а також професійної ідентичності як динамічної системи, що формується у процесі професіоналізації особистості. Показано, що у сучасній науці ці феномени переважно досліджуються фрагментарно, без цілісного бачення їх взаємозв'язку.

Обґрунтовано, що рефлексія виступає системоутворюючим механізмом, який забезпечує інтеграцію професійного досвіду у цілісну структуру професійної ідентичності. Визначено, що саме рефлексія забезпечує перехід від функціонування до розвитку, сприяє формуванню смислів професійної діяльності та узгодженню між образом “Я” і реальною професійною практикою.

У статті запропоновано спіральну модель розвитку професійної ідентичності психолога, яка відображає процес як послідовність взаємопов'язаних етапів, що розгортаються внаслідок накопичення та рефлексивної інтеграції досвіду. Особливістю моделі є виділення рівнів рефлексивного процесу, а також вищого рівня професійного розвитку, пов'язаного зі структуризацією та передачею досвіду.

Отримані результати можуть бути використані у процесі професійної підготовки психологів, супервізії та післядипломної освіти, а також у подальших емпіричних дослідженнях розвитку професійної ідентичності.

Ключові слова: рефлексія, професійна ідентичність, професійний розвиток, рефлексивна інтеграція досвіду, професійне становлення, психолог, спіральна модель розвитку.

Abstract. This article presents a theoretical analysis of foreign and domestic studies devoted to the relationship between reflection and professional identity in psychologists. The relevance of the study stems from the growing demands on the professional activities of specialists in support professions within the context of the modern social and educational environment, which is characterized by a high level of uncertainty, the complexity of professional tasks, and the need for continuous professional development.

The paper analyzes the main theoretical approaches to understanding reflection as a multidimensional psychological phenomenon that includes cognitive, personal, and regulatory components, as well as professional identity as a dynamic system formed in the process of professionalization. It is shown that in modern science, these phenomena are predominantly studied in a fragmented manner, without a holistic view of their interconnection.

It is argued that reflection acts as a system-forming mechanism that ensures the integration of professional experience into the holistic structure of professional identity. It is determined that it is reflection that ensures the transition from functioning to development, contributes to the formation of the meaning of professional activity, and facilitates alignment between the “self” image and actual professional practice.

This article proposes a spiral model of the development of a psychologist's professional identity, which depicts the process as a sequence of interrelated stages that unfold as a result of the accumulation and reflective integration of experience. A distinctive feature of the model is the identification of levels of the reflective process, as well as a higher level of professional development associated with the structuring and transmission of experience.

The results obtained can be used in the process of professional training for psychologists, supervision, and postgraduate education, as well as in further empirical studies of professional identity development.

Keywords: *reflection, professional identity, professional development, reflective integration of experience, professional formation, psychologist, spiral model of development/*

Statement of the problem.

The issue of developing professional identity among professionals in support roles, particularly psychologists, is becoming particularly relevant in the context of constant changes in today's social and educational environment. The increasing complexity of professional tasks, the need to work under conditions of uncertainty, and high levels of emotional stress place heightened demands not only on professional knowledge but also on the personal characteristics of the specialist.

In this context, the capacity for reflection takes on particular significance, as it is viewed as a key mechanism of professional development. It is reflection that ensures awareness of one's own activities, analysis of professional experience, and the formation of an individual professional stance.

In contemporary foreign studies, the issue of reflection and professional identity is examined within various theoretical approaches that reflect the multidimensional nature of these phenomena. At the same time, there is no single, unified position regarding their interconnection, which creates a need for theoretical generalization and systematization of existing scientific approaches.

Particular attention should be paid to the integration of reflection and professional identity as interrelated processes that determine the quality of a specialist's professional development. Despite a significant body of research, contemporary scholarship remains fragmented in its understanding of the role of reflection in the formation of professional identity.

This necessitates an analysis of current international research to identify the main approaches to understanding reflection and professional identity, as well as to determine their interrelationship.

The purpose of this article is to provide a theoretical analysis of contemporary foreign studies on reflection and professional identity, as well as to determine their interrelationship in the context of the professional development of specialists.

Presentation of the main material

In contemporary international research, reflection is viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon that is interpreted in various ways depending on the theoretical approach. One of the basic approaches is one in which reflection is interpreted as a process of making sense of experience and thinking about one's own activities [2].

This idea was further developed in the concept of reflective practice, where reflection is viewed as an integral component of professional activity. Within this approach, a distinction is made between reflection-in-action and reflection-after-action, which allows the professional not only to analyze actions already taken but also to adjust behavior directly during the course of activity [11].

In the transformational approach, reflection takes on a deeper meaning and is viewed as a mechanism for revising one's own beliefs and attitudes. In this case, it serves as a means of changing the person's conceptual structures and forming new ways of interpreting experience [7].

A separate area of contemporary research is concerned with viewing reflection as a metacognitive process. In this context, it involves awareness of one's own thinking, control over cognitive processes, and the ability to self-regulate one's activities [4; 13]. This approach emphasizes the regulatory function of reflection and its importance for the effective performance of professional tasks.

Studies on the levels of reflection emphasize that it can range from a superficial description of experience to a profound re-evaluation of it, involving a change in attitudes and ways of acting [8].

Summarizing these approaches, it can be argued that reflection is viewed as a complex process that combines cognitive, personal, and regulatory levels. It ensures not only the analysis of activity but also its reinterpretation, correction, and development.

Thus, in contemporary foreign studies, reflection emerges as a universal mechanism of professional development that allows for the integration of experience, adaptation to change, and the formation of an individual professional stance.

Foreign researchers view professional identity as a complex integrative construct formed through the interaction of personal and social factors. In classical psychological concepts, identity is interpreted as the result of personality development, providing a sense of integrity, continuity, and coherence of internal experience [3].

In contemporary approaches, professional identity is defined as a dynamic process that includes the formation of self-concept as a specialist, the internalization of professional values, norms, and roles, as well as the development of an individual style of professional activity. At the same time, it is emphasized that identity is not a static structure but is constantly transformed under the influence of experience and professional challenges [10].

A separate line of research focuses on the connection between professional identity and processes of self-regulation and psychological well-being. In particular, it is noted that a well-developed professional identity promotes internal coherence in one's activities, increases resilience to stressors, and ensures effective adaptation to change [11].

Contemporary research also emphasizes the role of professional identity as a factor in personal self-actualization. In this context, it is viewed as an integrative outcome of the combination of personal resources, professional experience, and value orientations, which determines a specialist's ability to realize their own potential in professional activity [6].

Thus, professional identity in contemporary science is viewed as a dynamic system that forms during the process of professional development and determines the nature and effectiveness of professional activity.

Reflection in the process of professional identity development.

In scientific approaches, professional identity is viewed not only as the result of professional development but also as a dynamic process that unfolds over time. In this context, the development of professional identity is defined as an irreversible, directed, and regular process of change, accompanied by the formation of new qualitative characteristics of the specialist's personality [13].

It is important to distinguish between the concepts of "development" and "functioning," where the latter involves the reproduction of existing structures without any qualitative transformation. The absence of professional identity development can lead to the stagnation of professional activity without renewal, which limits opportunities for professional growth and reduces the specialist's effectiveness [10, 13].

In this context, reflection takes on particular significance as a mechanism that facilitates the transition from functioning to development. It is reflection that allows one to comprehend the meaning of one's own activities, analyze professional experience, and imbue it with new meanings, thereby creating the conditions for the formation of a new quality of professional identity.

The development of professional identity is also linked to the specialist's gradual formation, which involves the accumulation of experience, its interpretation, and integration into a coherent system of self-perception as a professional. In this process, reflection acts as an internal mechanism that ensures alignment between personal characteristics, professional requirements, and actual work experience.

Thus, reflection can be viewed as a key condition for the development of professional identity, since it is precisely this process that brings about qualitative changes in the structure of a specialist's personality and facilitates the transition from the mere reproduction of activities to their conscious construction.

An analysis of current foreign and domestic research suggests that the issue of reflection and professional identity is addressed in the academic field primarily in a fragmented manner. On the one hand, reflection is studied as a mechanism for the awareness of experience, self-regulation, and professional development; on the other hand, professional identity is analyzed as a dynamic structure that forms during the process of professionalization.

At the same time, most studies lack a holistic view of their interconnection, which complicates the understanding of the mechanisms of a specialist's professional identity formation. This suggests that reflection performs not merely a supporting function in professional development but acts as a key internal mechanism that ensures the integration of various components of professional formation.

In the context of professional identity development, reflection can be viewed as a process that facilitates the transition from mere functioning to development, as it is precisely this process that enables the professional to move beyond the reproduction of established patterns of activity and to form new ways of understanding their own professional experience. Through reflection, a harmonization occurs between personal characteristics, professional requirements, and the actual conditions of practice.

Thus, reflection serves as a system-forming mechanism that “assembles” professional identity into a coherent structure. It ensures the integration of experience, the formation of meaning in professional activity, and the development of the specialist’s individual professional stance.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of reflection directly determines the nature of professional identity: if it is underdeveloped, the specialist may either remain in a state of functioning without qualitative changes or “get stuck” in internal experiences, whereas developed reflection ensures the ability to carry out professional activity in a structured, conscious, and holistic manner.

Based on the theoretical analysis conducted, it has been established that the process of developing a psychologist’s professional identity can be represented as a system of interrelated stages that are spiral in nature and reflect the gradual deepening of professional experience and its reflective integration.

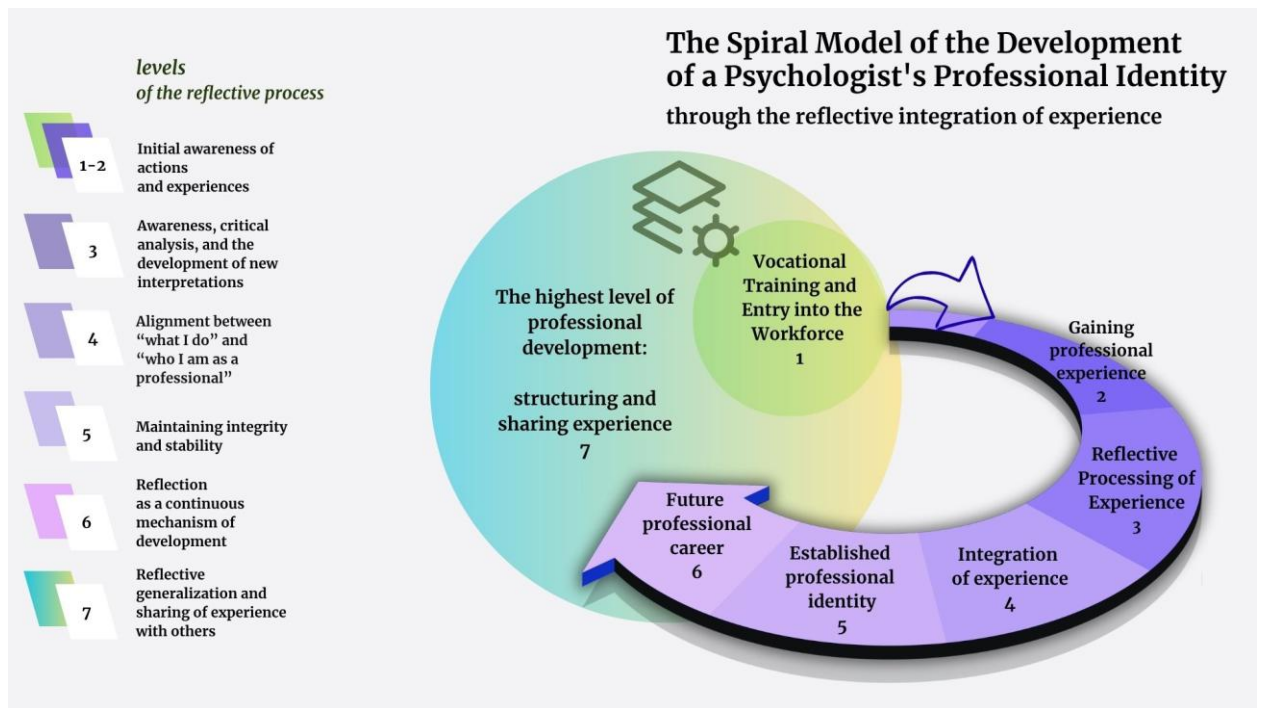
Table 1

Model of the Relationship Between Reflection and Professional Identity

№	Stages of the professional process	Process Overview:	The Role of Reflection	Outcome for identity
1	Professional training and entry into professional practice	Acquisition of knowledge, initial professional experience:	Initial awareness of actions and experiences	Initial formation of perceptions about the profession
2	Accumulation of professional experience	Performance of tasks, interaction, professional situations	Recording and acknowledging experiences	Expansion of professional experience
3	Reflective processing of experience	Analysis, reflection, reassessment	Awareness, critical analysis, and the formation of new interpretations	Development of a sense of purpose in one’s work
4	Integration of experience	Integrating experience with the “self” image	Alignment between “what I do” and “who I am as a professional”	Systematization of self-perceptions
5	Formed professional identity	The “professional self” image, values, roles, work style	Maintaining integrity and stability	Stable professional identity
6	Further professional practice	A new level of professional activity	Reflection as an ongoing mechanism for development	Transformation of identity
7	Structuring and transfer of experience	Mentoring, synthesizing experience	Reflective generalization and sharing of experience with others	Impact on the development of the professional environment

This article proposes a spiral model of the development of a psychologist’s professional identity through the reflective integration of experience, which aligns with the identified stages of the professional process and demonstrates that reflection serves as the central mechanism ensuring the transition between these stages and the integration of experience into a coherent structure of professional identity.

A graphical representation of the proposed model is shown in D. 1.



D. 1. A spiral model of the development of a psychologist's professional identity (through the reflective integration of experience).

The proposed model demonstrates that the development of professional identity follows a spiral pattern and occurs as a result of the accumulation and reflective integration of experience. A distinctive feature of the model is the identification of a higher level of development associated with the structuring and transmission of professional experience, indicating a transition from individual development to influencing the professional environment.

Conclusions. As a result of the theoretical analysis of foreign and domestic studies, it has been established that reflection and professional identity are interrelated components of a psychologist's professional development, which in contemporary science are predominantly studied in a fragmented manner.

It was found that in various scientific approaches, reflection is viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes cognitive, personal, and regulatory components and facilitates the awareness, analysis, and reinterpretation of professional experience. Professional identity, in turn, is interpreted as a dynamic system formed through the interaction of personal characteristics, professional requirements, and social context.

It is argued that reflection serves not only as a tool for analyzing activity but also as a system-forming mechanism that ensures the integration of professional experience into the holistic structure of professional identity. It has been determined that it is reflection that ensures the transition from functioning to development, contributes to the formation of the meaning of professional activity, and facilitates alignment between the "self" image and actual professional practice.

A spiral model of the development of a psychologist's professional identity is proposed, which depicts the process as a sequence of interrelated stages that unfold as a result of the accumulation and reflective integration of experience. A distinctive feature of the model is the identification of levels of the reflective process, as well as a higher level of professional development associated with the structuring and transmission of experience, which indicates a transition from individual professional formation to influencing the professional environment.

It has been established that the level of reflection development determines the nature of professional identity formation: its insufficiency can lead to fragmentation of experience or getting stuck in internal experiences, whereas developed reflection ensures integrity, awareness, and the capacity for further professional development.

Prospects for further research are linked to the empirical verification of the proposed model, in particular the study of the characteristics of the development of reflection among psychologists at various stages of professional development.

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