

THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FACTORS ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Delia Mioara POPESCU¹

Ioana BULEP²

Viorel MIHALCIOIU³

ABSTRACT

The research focused on the impact of professional identity factors on the level of motivation shown by employees at the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste. In order to investigate the hypothesis, we used a questionnaire based survey, in which items were classified in dimensions according to their relevance. The study results offered a full picture regarding the existence of significant correlations between professional identity and motivation.

KEYWORDS: *professional identity, motivation, organizational management.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *D22*

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature review revealed that the management of cultural institutions has an important impact on the behavior of individuals who work in the institution. But the management style adopted is not the only aspect to be taken into account. Thus, our research sought to highlight how membership in professional organizations, various professional certifications, role perception, professional specialization, standards, interest in professional development, career development, skills of individuals, ie professional identity can have a impact on individuals' motivation manifested in the workplace. In order to understand the link between motivation and professional identity, a research using a questionnaire was conducted in the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste. The working hypothesis considered in this research has centered on the idea that an employee who has a well-defined professional identity in terms of the factors involved, shows high levels of motivation. Thus, we wanted to highlight the idea that professional identity plays a crucial role in terms of motivation.

Albert & Whetten (1985), referring to organizational and professional identity, set out to answer the following question "who are we in relation to the organization to which we belong." The approach of finding an answer to this question involves observing central, distinct and stable characteristics of an organization as they are perceived by members of an organization. Extending the principles for defining organizational identity, we can say that professional identity has to do with how the work, efforts, skills and knowledge a person has are perceived by himself and through the organization's needs (Witting, 2006).

Professional identity is a concept that from an economical point of view, refers to paid work, but while studying the concept we cannot ignore the symbolic and social side of it. The psychological

¹ University „Valahia” of Targoviste, Romania, depopescu@yahoo.com

² University „Valahia” of Targoviste, Romanian Academy, Romania, ioana.bulei@yahoo.com

³ University „Valahia” of Targoviste, Romania, mihalcioiu_viorel@yahoo.com

dimension of professional identity derives from personal and unique characteristics of each individual, but also from the affiliation to a particular group.

Professional identity is composed of a mix of identities that shape the roles that individuals adopt and how they behave when exercising their work duties. This represents only a part of the whole complex of personal identities an individual holds at a given time, but is very important in terms of professional activities. Quality of work represents a central factor around which the concept concentrates, consequently, we believe that the motivation for providing a high standard activity represents a good starting point for our research.

The relation individual-work was thoroughly discussed in various studies, most of them in social psychology and sociology (Riopel, 2006). Performing a gainful activity implies the existence of complex interactions that help in the observation of social and personal issues regarding identity.

Professional identity begins to develop when an individual begins to show interest in a particular activity, a particular field, evolving towards specialization and training, these processes are closely related to the individuals; ability of volition and aspirations.

2. FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

As mentioned in the previous lines, our research concentrated on understanding the link between professional identity and individual motivation. We considered relevant for our study to present, in the following lines some of the relevant factors underlying professional identity.

Starting from the idea that professional identity refers to the process by which individuals gradually assume a number of roles, we concentrated our attention on the essential factors involved in developing the concept of professional identity.

Organizational development refers to work identity formation and decision models on career choice. This process is affected by a number of factors, including education, career aspirations, professional attitudes, work experience, job satisfaction, working conditions. Professional development involves observing how individuals manage their careers within the organization, and beyond, and how organizations structure the career development of its members.

Also in the context of our discussion, it is important to refer to professional organizations, which usually have a non-profit nature, and are designed to support a particular profession, the interests of the people involved in the profession and the public interest. Though professional bodies often act to protect the public interest by maintaining and applying standards and ethics, they often act also as a union for the members of that association. Many professional bodies are involved in the development and monitoring of professional educational programs, and updating knowledge, thus making the process of professional certification in order to indicate that a person possesses qualifications in a specific field. Membership in a professional body, seen as a legal requirement, in some professions may be the primary step in order to have access to a profession.

On the other hand, professional certification represents an attribute gained by a person in order to certify that he or she is qualified to perform the duties of a particular job. Certification indicates that the person has a specific set of knowledge, skills, abilities recognized by the certification body. Professional certifications are offered by professional bodies and associations.

In the context of analyzing the concept of professional identity we consider competence as an important factor. Competence is a standard requirement that an individual must hold in order to perform properly a specific job. It comprises a combination of knowledge, behaviors and techniques used to improve performance. In general, competence is the state or quality of being adequate or well qualified, having the ability to perform a specific task. Competence can be observed in a particular situation in a particular context which is frequently subjected to change. In emergency contexts, competent people will react guided by behaviors that previously led to success. To be competent an individual must be able to interpret the situation in a particular context and have a repertoire of possible actions to be taken. Regardless of training, competence grows through

experience and through the ability to learn and adapt. Dreyfus and Dreyfus have introduced a classification in the development of competencies. The levels identified are: novice, beginner, practitioner, specialist, expert, virtuoso, master. The professional competence movement was initiated by David McClelland in the 1960s, in order to change the traditional view regarding competence, until then described using terms such as: ability, knowledge, attitude, and started focusing instead on concepts such as self-image, value, features and motivational dispositions, concepts that make the difference between normality and performance in the workplace. It should be noted that different competencies predict outstanding performance in different roles, and there are a limited number of competencies that predict outstanding performance in any job given. Thus, a certain competence for a role / job can not predict the outstanding performance of a different role. Lyle & Signe Spencer (1993), in their book "Competence at work" have called into question the issues proposed by McClelland (1973), rethinking the connection between skills and outstanding performance while bringing into question a wide range of skills identified in the hundreds of studies conducted on the subject until then.

More recent studies of authors such as Daniel Goleman (1995) in "Emotional Intelligence" and Rick Boyatzis, in the "Competent manager" (1982), have strengthened and emphasized the importance of skills as key predictors of performance at the highest levels.

Professional development often refers to verbal and tactile skills necessary to pursue a particular career or to general skills assimilated through education, including skills in the area of personal development. Professional development can be seen as preparation to keep up with changing technology, the practice of a profession or the concept of lifelong learning. Developing and implementing a professional development program is often the responsibility of human resources services and of the development department within an organization or corporation. In a broader perspective, professional development may include various types of formal vocational education programs and specializations in a particular area. In the field of informal programs or individualized professional development we can also include the concept of coaching. Proactive professional development ensures the creation of an organizational culture based on learning, increase individual and team competence, increased confidence and morale, resulting in increased efficiency, motivation, quality of services.

Professional specialization is a training done in a particular specialty within a profession. This professional specialization process may or may not lead to professional certification or professional licensing. This activity can be done for the sake of personal development, career development or professional reasons (Dent & Whitehead, 2002).

Another factor of concern regarding professional identity is the professional standard - specification on the minimum level of acceptable performance for a certain activity. In turn, to maintain high professional standards actors in organizations need to take into account certain factors, such as ongoing assessment; compliance with the rules of professional ethics; memberships in professional organizations; professional supervision; clear guidelines for action.

The formation and consolidation of professional identity depends in a certain manner on how individuals appropriate a given role. Thus role perception refers to the perception of work performed and also to the manner in which this behavior makes change visible.

The lack of a clearly defined role of the employees or the inconsistent perceptions about their responsibilities within the organization, are issues that can have a negative effect on morale and self-esteem of employees. Perception of the employees role acts as one of the most important components at the workplace and also plays a crucial role in the performance of an individual. A vague perception of the role can also lead to inefficiencies and poor use of individual potential. Consequently, the organization in the long term, may not only lose precious time but also some competent employees. It is therefore in the interest of the organization to provide the employees with a clear role to combat the growing competition in the global environment.

3. ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATION IN THE PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

For our study and for a better understanding of the relationship professional identity-motivation, we considered relevant the presentation of aspects regarding motivation, be it economical or professional.

3.1 Economic motivation

The financial motivation is based on financial stimulus. Although financial resources may or may not have incentive value they can gain motivational connotations through the fact they represent the means by which man meets most of its basic needs. It is considered useful to use various forms of remuneration in such a way as to satisfy as many needs. In addition, it was found that one and the same form of payment may have positive effects under certain circumstances, and in others it can be negative, so it is necessary to implement a proper remuneration system.

Based on empirical observation it was found that in the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste, economic stimuli acting as activators of economic motivation occupy an important place among the other categories of stimuli.

The applicable legislation system, in what concerns economic motivation aims at harmonizing the public sector payroll with the importance, responsibility and the complexity of activities. It also aims at setting the basic salary, and the monthly allowances based on the complexity and importance of the activity, following certain criteria: level of education and skills; social importance of work; complexity and diversity of activities; responsibility and the impact of decisions; exposure to risk factors; incompatibilities and conflicts of interest; difficulty of specific activities.

In the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste, the base salaries are differentiated by functions in relation to the training, experience and responsibility at work, and also by the level of complexity of the specific activity of each post. Within each function, base salaries are differentiated by grade according to the forms of education the employee graduated.

For staff holding a position of leadership, the basic wage differentiation is made using two wage levels corresponding to the two degrees or salary scales, containing compensation for a managerial position, seniority and hierarchy increases contained in the coefficients.

3.2 Professional motivation

Professional motivation has as source the actual work. It has its sources in the relation that man has with work at its special features. But work, seen as a complex human activity can be interpreted in several ways. Thus, we can simply interpret it as energy consumption in order to achieve a goal, a target, then we can interpret it in terms of the conditions in which it develops and through the perspective of its finality.

Three aspects have to be taken into consideration here:

- work seen as energy expenditure either physical or intellectual does not lead, as it is commonly supposed to, to a depletion of the body; within certain limits, the power consumption can be enjoyable in itself, becoming a true motivational source;
- working conditions is another parameter that can become a motivational stimulus;
- work purpose – a certain activity whose purpose is clear to group members and it is perceived as feasible, will motivate more than another whose purpose is vague or considered difficult to achieve.

Staff in the museum, in order to develop professional and personal skills, undergo training at a Professional training Centre operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. This center is concerned with training in fields such as museology, library, performing arts, conservation and restoration; recently they added programs in the fields of management and information technology. Many professionals in the cultural sector have been trained and eventually have received certificates of professional competence by participating at the Center's programs.

Also we have to take into consideration the fact that specialized personnel frequently attends events taking place in the country (scientific meetings, symposia, etc.), but also abroad, depending on the area in which they operate, but there is a pretty big inconvenience in what concerns the money allocated for these events.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research undertaken within the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste focused on highlighting the link between the composite factors of professional identity and the motivation for professional activity. The hypothesis considered in the research was the following: An employee who has a well-defined professional identity in terms of the factors involved, shows a higher level of motivation.

We considered important for our study a brief overview of the structure of personnel within the organization: the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste is a public body, under the supervision of Dâmbovița's County Council which has 67 posts and 12 departments. Appointment, dismissal, and termination of employment of the staff of the Museum is done respecting the laws applicable.

4.1. Sample size

The sample was composed of a total of 42 employees within the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste. The data collection period lasted between the 7th of July to the 17th of July 2014. A total of 60 questionnaires were offered for completion, of the total, 42 were returned, the response rate being 70%.

4.2. The structure of the questionnaire

The research conducted was an empirical one and it was based on a survey using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of 13 items that were elaborated using the study of literature. The items were divided into three dimensions, action that helped simplify the analysis of professional identity, motivation and of the structure of the sample, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The structure of the questionnaire

Dimensions of the questionnaire	Items
Professional Identity	Membership in professional bodies
	Professional certifications
	Role perception
	Professional training
	Compliance with standards
	Professional development
Motivation	Competences
	Motivation type
	Needs in the professional environment
	Motivational dominants
	Style of management
	Factors influencing motivation the least
Sample structure	Factors that help increase job performance
	Negative motivation
	Age
	Gender
	Level of education

Source: the authors' research

4.3. Results

4.3.1. The professional identity dimension

This dimension has been created based on seven survey items that were considered for analysis: membership in professional organizations, professional certifications, perception of role, specialization, compliance, professional development and skills. The scoring for the seven-item analysis was made on a Likert scale, rated from 1-5 (1-not important, 5-very important). We calculated a total score for the professional identity dimension for all 42 participants in the study.

4.3.2. The motivation dimension

The questionnaire investigated seven items that were combined to create the motivation dimension, as follows: type of motivation, needs in the professional environment, the motivational dominant, management style, factors that influence motivation the least, factors that increase job performance, negative motivation. The items were rated on a Likert scale with five possible values. For each of the 42 respondents a total score for the motivation dimension was calculated.

4.3.3. The sample structure dimension

Regarding the structure of the sample it has been observed that in the National Museum "Curtea Domneasca" of Targoviste, most employees fall in the age range 31-56, ie a percentage of about 80%. Population over 56 is the most poorly represented - 10% of employees and the category 18 to 30 years - 11%. Gender structure shows that the female population is the majority - 77%, 23% of employees are represented by men. Regarding training, the classification had four categories: secondary education; university; Postgraduate, PhD. From the data analysis it was found that 35% of staff graduated a form of secondary education, university education had the highest value - 52%. Interesting to observe is the high percentage of individuals who have completed post-graduate or doctorate studies -13%.

In order to investigate the working hypothesis for the dimensions of professional identity and motivation the scores were divided into three categories, as presented in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2. Categories of values

	Total score obtained on the investigated dimension	Significance
1	7-16	Low value
2	17-25	Medium value
3	26-35	High value

Source: the authors' contribution

The working hypothesis assumed that there is a correlation between the values of the two dimensions, so that the higher the score for professional identity the higher the values for the motivation dimension. Data analysis for the two investigated dimensions (figure 1), by means of statistical parameters revealed that there is a high correlation coefficient between the two dimensions (0.78), which comes to confirm the working hypothesis.

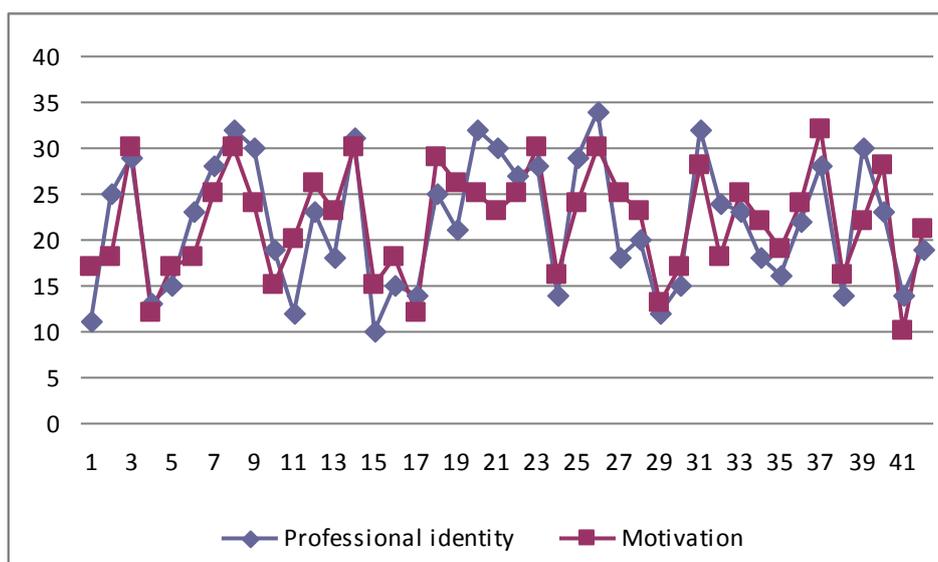


Figure 1. Title Scores obtained for the dimensions of professional identity and motivation

Source: authors' research

5. CONCLUSIONS

An educated and motivated workforce will always be the most important strategic advantage of the organization. Consequently, any institution that will be able to provide adequate leadership will be attractive to a well-trained workforce. Keeping and raising the level of training of employees is a task which, primarily falls into the hands of the organization's management.

Many managers believe that they can achieve an increase in productivity by investing in informatics systems, marketing and in the modernization of processes, however, it is important to point out that in an organization, especially in a public one "there is only one resource: people and, subsequently the management of these people ... the difference between mediocrity and excellence is the motivation. Motivation is the glue that binds together the objectives and strategies of the organization ... " (Sherman & Bihlander, 1992), but as we demonstrated through our research a well defined professional identity in terms of its factors constitutes a premise for motivation.

Managers have many strategies to motivate employees by involving them in work activities, resulting in both increased personal satisfaction and increased productivity. In general, the point is that a combination of these strategies leads to the best results.

The study of the correlation between the defining factors of professional identity and aspects linked to motivation wasn't meant to do anything else but highlight aspects that can contribute to long-term development of the individual, to the increase of the involvement level and to the increase in performance.

Currently, an effective economic strategy is not sufficient for the success of an organization, now it is absolutely necessary to practice an open and modern management that transforms the employee from a simple subordinate into an active and responsible partner. Managers need to understand the psychological issues if they want to motivate employees towards the successful achievement of organizational objectives that is why the concept of motivation is a key factor in the management of the organization. The task of the manager is to become a catalyst of the group by identifying and activating the motivations of employees. It is also important to direct employees towards work performance even if the process is complicated and of grave suability.

Professional identity could be reconstructed as long as professional practices will become once again recognized, but this process has to take into account the differences in judgment of the actors, the style of management and the degree to which these actors are motivated.

Organizations are systems in which individuals work in order to attain certain objectives. Even if this way of evaluating things tends to be instrumental, nonetheless we consider important the fact that human motivation represents the primary energy source in developing adaptive behaviors. These adaptive behaviors usually are built upon a system of value-based identification with a certain professional path. Developing a professional career requires a lot of commitment, energy, desire for auto actualization and motivation, as this process tends to be one extended throughout ones' life. Even if, many studies have been made both regarding motivation and professional identity, the aim of this paper was to observe if there is a connection between these two constructs. Identifying this correlation can help both us and other researchers in the development of methods, instruments and models in order to improve the interactions and the communication between employees and between employees and managers.

In the context of our research it is important to emphasize the fact that professional identity is a construct that can have important effects regarding the way employees interpret, react and understand managements' actions. Taking into consideration the constant pressures professionals have to face, the ever changing environment and the struggles in respect to professional development, we would consider useful for future researchers to concentrate their attention on topics related to professional identification. Another aspect tied to professional identity and that would be interesting, as well, to analyze is the impact organizational identification has on motivation of employees working in the public sector in Romania.

The contribution this paper brings is tied to the idea that motivation in the workplace depends, essentially, on the integration and absorption of personal, organizational and social values and that these values help build a strong professional identity.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was supported by the project "Excellence academic routes in the doctoral and postdoctoral research – READ" co-funded from the European Social Fund through the Development of Human Resources Operational Programme 2007-2013, contract no. POSDRU/159/1.5/S/137926

REFERENCES

- Boyatzis, R. (1982), *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*, New York, John Wiley & Sons.
- Dent, M., Whitehead S., (2002), *Managing Professional Identities: Knowledge, Performativity and the "New" Professional*, Routledge Chapman & Hall, available on-line at: http://books.google.ro/books?id=hWBp3q6VnmwC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Goleman, D. (1995), *Emotional intelligence*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York
- McClelland, D. C. (1973). *Testing for competence rather than for "intelligence"*. *American Psychologist*, 28, pp. 1-14.
- Stuart, A. & Whetten, D., (1985). *Organizational identity*. In Larry L. Cummings., and Barry M. Staw (eds.), *Research in organizational behavior. An annual series of analytical essays and critical reviews*, 263-295. Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Riopel, M.C. (2006). *Apprendre a enseigner: une identite professionnelle a developper*, available on-line at: http://books.google.ro/books?id=BiGGHKEEhSwC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.
- Sherman, A. & Bohlander, G., (1992) *Managing Human Resources*, South-Western Publishing Co
- Spencer, M.L. & Spencer, S.M. (1993), *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*, New York, John Wiley & Sons
- Stuart, A. & Whetten, D., (1985). *Organizational identity*. In Larry L. Cummings., and Barry M. Staw (eds.), *Research in organizational behavior. An annual series of analytical essays and critical reviews*, 263-295. Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Witting, M. (2006), *Relations between organizational identity, identification and organizational objectives: An empirical study in municipalities*. *Afstudeerartikel voor de opleiding Toegepaste Communicatiewetenschap, Universiteit Twente, Enschede*, available on-line at: http://essay.utwente.nl/55524/1/Scriptie_Witting.pdf.