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Communicative Competence as a Component of the Professional Development of Psychology Students

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Abstract: The paper analyzes the issue of communicative competence as an element of the professional development of students studying psychology. It is established that in order to become a professional psychologist, a person should possess a number of essential psychological skills, such as communicative competence realized in the possession of verbal and nonverbal means of communication, ability to initiate and maintain contact. Based on this, the aim of the article was to conduct an empirical study on the communicative competence features as a component of the professional development of upcoming psychologists. A set of psychodiagnostic methods was selected, which helped to study the main parameters of communicative competence, features of professional orientation and motivation of future professional activity. The obtained results were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The sample included 72 Bachelor's degree psychology students studying at Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. The research consisted of two stages. The first stage incorporated the assessment of communicative competence, based on which the sample of subjects was divided into 3 subgroups according to their level of communicative competence development. The second stage analyzed the features of professional motivation and attitude to one's own professional development of psychology students with different levels of communicative competence development. The results demonstrate that students with a high level of communicative competence in comparison with students with medium and low levels of communicative competence in the structure of professional motivation are dominated by intrinsic motivation, which indicates that for such students their future profession itself is very important. Moreover, these students have a clear idea of their future professional activity, are more professionally oriented, which will contribute to their successful professional development.

Keywords: communicative competence, communicative knowledge, communicative abilities, psychology students, professional development, professional training, professional motivation, professional orientation.

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Introduction

The dynamic development of various spheres of modern society determines the qualitative transformation of professional training requirements for specialists in any field of activity. Thus, the majority of employers are currently increasing the demand for such professionals who not only have a high level of professional knowledge, skills and abilities, which ensures the performance of activities at the required professional level, but who is also capable of actively developing and improving as a specialist and as an individual. It should be noted that this becomes especially relevant in cases where the resource for professional activities is the personality of a specialist. One of such fields is the professional activity of a psychologist, which requires not only a high level of professional training, but also a significant personal development (Batsvlieva & Puz, 2017). In this regard, the issues related to the challenges of professional development in future psychologists while studying in higher education institutions are especially relevant, because it is well known that during this period a person not only masters his/her profession, but also defines one's life and worldview, learns effective interaction forms and behavioral patterns (Barchii, 2015; Puz & Shevchenko, 2018).

In order to successfully implement various forms of professional psychological activity, a higher education student should meet a number of requirements helping to develop various personal qualities and capacities. Among the latter, especially important is the formation of communicative competence, which involves mastering verbal and nonverbal means of communication, ability to initiate and maintain verbal contact.

It is common knowledge that communication is a complex multifaceted process of establishing and developing verbal contacts between people, generated by the need for joint activities and including the exchange of information, forming a common interaction strategy, perception and understanding of another person (Solovieva & Anikeeva, 2012). It should be noted that the concept of "communicative competence" is not new in psychology, but unambiguous interpretation of it is still absent today. Most often, communicative competence is seen as the ability to establish and maintain the necessary verbal communication with people; as a set of certain knowledge, skills and abilities ensuring the effective course of communicative process (Nyzovets, 2007).

Analysis of scientific literature has shown that communicative competence is mostly understood as the ability to effectively interact with regard to the peculiarities of a communicative situation. Person's communicative competence is usually manifested through the interpretation of the concepts closest to it, particularly communicative abilities or communicative knowledge and skills (Korniiaka, 2009, 2011). Such scientists as O. O. Arshavska, M. M. Viatiutniev, D. I. Izarenkov, D. Kristel consider communicative competence as the ability to use language in one or another sphere of communication. According to M. M. Viatiutniev, communicative competence is the ability of an individual to use language creatively, purposefully, normatively in interaction with interlocutors (Cherezova, 2014).

When considering the manifestation of communicative competence, one should note its connection with the cognitive processes, in particular perception and thinking, which was also mentioned by J. Piaget, who noted that the inability to understand another person's point of view is conditioned by the exacerbation of subjectivism, inability to distinguish oneself from the environment, subjective unrealistic perception of reality, including the communicative situation, which is a real obstacle to effective communication. Today, this issue has become extremely relevant in connection with the active development of neuroscience as an interdisciplinary field, consisting of many areas including the research of functional activity of the brain organization of higher mental functions, neurophysiological mechanisms of mental processes and states, social behavior, and communication.

It is worthwhile to say that the low level of communicative competence may be due to the fact that communication partners possess ineffective cognitive processes and cognitive schemes of interpretation of the world picture, other people and their own personality. Therefore, the study of cognitive processes becomes extremely promising. These processes are the basis of speech communication and its neuroanatomical substrate. Along with the cognitive processes, analysis of functional interaction between local and general cognitive systems with the formation of appropriate cognitive schemes, as well as the study of general neural networks that support these processes are also perspective.

When investigating the cognitive aspects of communicative competence, of particular interest to researchers becomes the issue of cognitive styles relationship and manifestation features of communicative competence. In the studies of M. O. Kholodna, cognitive style is defined as an individual-unique way of processing (in the relevant brain structures) of information about their environment in the form of individual differences in perception, analysis, structuring, categorization of what is happening (Kholodna, 2004). Dominating cognitive styles form certain styles of cognitive response, which is of great importance for the process of interaction and communication.

According to such researchers as Y. B. Aleshina, R. S. Abramova, R. Kochiunas, communicative competence is "the professional core of psychologist's personality", as communication with people is the essence of this area of professional activity (Puz & Shevchenko, 2018). It should be emphasized that the formation of communicative competence allows psychologists to successfully initiate various verbal contacts for solving different communicative tasks, including transmission of information, establishing and maintaining communication, organizing and providing psychological assistance, etc. (Ivanova, 2013; Stetsenko, 2016).

Among the basic communicative knowledge and skills determining the communicative competence of a psychologist as a specialist, the following could be highlighted: 1) knowledge of the rules and regulations of various types of communication (business, interpersonal, everyday, etc.); 2) high level of speech development, which provides an opportunity to freely transmit and receive information during communication; 3) understanding nonverbal language; 4) ability to establish communication with people with regard to their gender, age, socio-cultural, and status characteristics; 5) ability to behave decently in any situation and use its specifics to achieve communicative goals; 6) ability to influence an interlocutor in such a way as to incline them to one's side, convince them of the strength of one's arguments; 7) ability to objectively assess an interlocutor or partner and choose one's own effective communication strategy; 8) ability to evoke in a communication partner a positive perception of own personality (Chuiko & Serhiienko, 2017).

Based on the above mentioned, it becomes clear that issues related to the study of communicative competence as an important component of the professional development of future psychologists are of particular practical importance, because further professional and personal development of psychologists depends on it.

Thus, **the aim** of the article was to study the features of communicative competence as an element of professional development in future psychologists.

Materials and Methods

The analysis of scientific literature showed that studying in higher education institutions not only contributes to professional and personal development of future psychologists, but also serves as basis for the formation of communicative competence (Korniiaka, 2011). It is at the stage of professional training that future specialists actively acquire individual experience in professional communication, develop communicative and organizational skills and abilities in the field of educational and professional communication.

To fulfill this task, the study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved assessment of the development of communicative competence as a complex psychological personality formation. The evaluation was performed using a set of psychodiagnostic methods and techniques.

Considering the specifics of professional activity of future psychologists and the peculiarities of communicative competence in the context of professional development of specialists in this field, we have identified the following major parameters for assessing the development of communicative competence in psychologists: ability to self-control; ability to listen and express one's thoughts; empathic abilities; communicative and organizational skills investigated by using appropriate psychodiagnostic techniques. In addition, we have evaluated the main criteria for the development of communicative competence of future psychologists in the motivational, cognitive, and context of business, instrumental communication. According to the results of the obtained data, the subjects were divided into 3 subgroups according to the identified level of communicative competence - high, medium, low.

The second stage identified professional motivation of future psychologists with different levels of communicative competence and their attitude to the process of their own professional development.

To diagnose the parameters of communicative competence in future psychologists and the peculiarities of their professional development, we used the following methods and techniques: "Diagnostic technique for assessing self-control in communication"; Tests "Ability to listen" and "Ability to express one's thoughts"; "Diagnosis of the level of empathic abilities"; "Study of communicative and organizational skills"; "Diagnosis of communicative competence in the field of business communication"; "Motivation of professional activity" modified by A. Rean; "Questionnaire" to determine the features of professional orientation and competence of by Kokun (Kokun, 2012). Fisher's angular transformation criterion (φ^*) was used for statistical analysis of the obtained results.

The empirical study was conducted at the training laboratory of the Department of Psychology of Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. The study sample consisted of 72 psychology students seeking their Bachelor's degree. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and agreed to participate in it.

Results and Discussion

According to the purpose of our study, the concept of communicative competence was determined as a set of communicative knowledge, skills, and abilities through which a subject realizes the goals and objectives of communicative and professional activities and achieves mutual understanding in the process of interaction.

Analysis of the results of "Diagnostic technique for assessing selfcontrol in communication" showed that a high level of communicative control, which indicates the ease of entering any role, ability to respond quickly to changes, feeling and even anticipating other people's impressions of oneself was diagnosed in 23.6% of subjects. The average level of communicative control, which is characterized by intemperance of emotional manifestations during communication, was found in 45.8% of students. Low communicative control determined by the inability of communicator to change behavior in accordance with the new conditions of the situation, was characteristic of 30.6% of respondents.

Analyzing the results of the test "Ability to listen" showed that the presence of a high development level of this skill, when interlocutor is always given the opportunity to speak, paying attention to the main facts during the conversation, there is no habit of interrupting, was diagnosed in 31.9% of the surveyed students. The average level of listening ability, at which an interlocutor is not always given the opportunity to speak fully and does not always pay attention to the subtext of the conversation, was found in 51.4% of respondents. A low level of listening skills, characterized by the habit of interrupting an interlocutor, irritation to any opposing views, imposing one's thoughts and views was diagnosed in 16.7% of the respondents.

Assessing the results of the test "Ability to express one's thoughts", we found that characteristic of 22.2% of students was a low level of this skill, which indicates an immature ability to express their own opinions, draw conclusions and highlight the main points. Characteristic for 43.1% of students was the presence of an average level of development of the ability to express thoughts, which is characterized by the ability to express own opinions and ask meaningful questions. A high level of development of the ability to express thoughts, which indicates the well-developed ability to fully express thoughts and make own statements was diagnosed in 34.7% of students.

The results of the diagnosis level of empathic abilities according to this method indicate that a high level of empathy was found in 18.1% of students. The average level of empathic abilities development was seen in 33.3% of students. Below average level of empathic abilities was characteristic for 27.8% of respondents. A very low level of empathic abilities was found in 20.8% of subjects.

Thus, the generalization of the obtained results showing the levels of empathic abilities development indicates a lack of future psychologists' ability to empathize with people around them, resulting in various difficulties in the process of mutual understanding with interlocutors. It should be noted that this fact necessitates the further development and correction of empathic abilities in those students, because, as it is known, they are one of the most relevant qualities of professional psychologists.

Having analyzed the results of diagnostics of the development of communicative and organizational skills according to the method of "Study of communicative and organizational skills" (Kokun, 2012), we have identified the following development features of the above components in future psychologists. Thus, a very high and high level of communicative skills, which are characterized by easy establishment of various contacts with strangers, tendency to defend one's opinion, unconstrained behavior in a group of strangers, ability to liven up any unfamiliar company was found in 11.1% and 15.3% of subjects, respectively. The average development level of communicative skills, which is determined by the desire to establish new contacts with others and expand the circle of acquaintances, was typical for 45.8% of psychology students. Below average and low development levels of communicative abilities determined by the lack of the desire to establish contacts, social isolation, poor orientation in an unfamiliar situation, were found in 18.1% and 9.7% of students, respectively.

Very high and high levels of organizational skills characterized by an ability to organize and desire to take an active part in organizing and conducting public events, were found in 9.7% and 16.7% of the subjects. The average level of organizational capacities, which is manifested in the ability, if necessary, to organize and participate in various activities, was diagnosed in 50.0% of respondents. Below average and low levels, characterized by the lack of own initiative to organize and participate in various activities, were found in 15.3% and 8.3% of students.

Having utilized the method "Diagnosis of communicative competence in the field of business communication", we obtained empirical data on the general development level of communicative competence of future psychologists, as well as the degree of development of motivational, cognitive, and instrumental criteria of communicative competence. Thus, based on the results of this methodology, we found that a very high level of communicative competence in the field of business communication was not found in any of the study participants. Among the respondents, high level of communicative competence was found in 15.3% of subjects, average level with a tendency to high – in 12.5% of surveyed students, the average level – in 41.6%, average level with a tendency to low – in 13.9%, low level – in 16.7%. A very low level of communicative competence was not detected.

Assessment of the motivational criterion of communicative competence shows that the development level of the motive of self-improvement in the field of business communication and the interest level in this area has some differences among the students. A high development level of self-improvement motive, which is determined by a clear awareness of the direction of individual self-improvement and a strong desire for realization, was diagnosed in 19.4% of the students. The average level was typical for 52.8% of respondents. The obtained data show that such students are fully aware of the importance of self-improvement in the communicative sphere and strive to increase the level of their communicative development. Low level of self-improvement, which is manifested in the fact that though a person is aware of the importance of self-improvement, he/she still does nothing for it, was found in 22.2% of the surveyed students. Undeveloped self-improvement motive in the field of communication was characteristic of only 5.6% of respondents.

Interest in the field of business communication at a high level was found in 31.9% of students. Characteristic of such students is the presence of a dominant interest in communication within the future professional activity. The average level of interest within the sphere of business communication, which is manifested in a steady interest in various types of business communications and relationships, as well as in the demonstration of communication skills during interaction, was diagnosed in 43.1% of respondents. Low level of interest in the field of business communication, which is manifested in the lack of desire to engage in various business communications, lack of desire for individual growth in the professional communication sphere, was found in 25.0% of students. Absolute lack of interest in the field of business cont in any student among the study groups.

Having assessed the cognitive criterion of the development of communicative competence in future psychologists according to this method, we found the following features of the level of student knowledge about their own individual communicative features. Thus, 26.4% of subjects

were diagnosed with a high awareness level of their own communicative potential, 40.3% – an average level of knowledge of individual communicative features, 33.3% – a low level.

Analysis of the level of building effective communication programs displays that a high level of communicative planning, in which a person is always clearly aware of the purpose of communication, has a clear communication plan, shows flexibility, empathy, easily changes their own communication programs, was typical for 23.6% of students. The average level of communicative planning, which is manifested in the fact that a person takes into account the peculiarities of the communicative situation and communicative features of interlocutors but has some difficulties in restructuring their own communicative program, was found in 48.6% of students. A low level of communicative planning, which is characterized by impulsiveness and inconsistency in the manifestation of communicative actions was found in 27.8% of students.

The analysis of the instrumental criterion of the development of communicative competence, particularly communicative creativity and adequacy in the field of business communication, testifies to the following levels of formation of these components in psychology students. High level of communicative creativity, at which a person has significant creative potential, freely expresses it in business communication, strives for creative self-realization in professional communicative creativity is typical for 44.4% of respondents. A low level of communicative creativity, when a person constantly adheres to already tested ways of behavior and has almost no creative approach to business communication, was found in 29.2% of students.

The results obtained in terms of adequacy in the field of business communication indicate that a high level of adequacy, at which communicative actions always meet the requirements of the communicative situation, verbal and nonverbal behavior always coincide, and a person responds quickly to any changes in the communicative process was established in 23.6% of students. The average level of adequacy, at which communicative actions meet the requirements of the communicative situation, but any change of conditions significantly complicates the communication process, was diagnosed in 44.4% of students. A low level of adequacy, which is characterized by difficulties in the manifestation of spontaneity and improvization during communication in a constantly changing environment, was found in 32.0% of respondents.

Summarizing the presented results according to the method "Diagnosis of communicative competence in the field of business communication", we can observe the uneven development of both individual criteria and the general level of communicative competence in the field of business communication among psychology students. In our opinion, this may be due to the fact that the subjects are at different stages of mastering the profession and they still lack the necessary communicative experience. However, the results indicate the need to create special conditions during the educational process that will promote the effective acquisition of professional communication knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Based on the analysis of the main parameters of communicative competence, we divided the study participants according to their levels of communicative competence, into three subgroups (Table 1).

(11 (2))		
High level of	Average level of	Low level of
communicative	communicative	communicative competence
competence	competence	
19	31	22
(26,4%)	(43,1%)	(30,5%)

Table 1. Levels of communicative competence development in psychology students (n = 72)

Subgroup I, with a high level of communicative competence, included 26.4% of students. It should be noted that the characteristic features of these subjects are ample knowledge of situational communication norms, positive attitude to interlocutor, well-developed communication and organizational skills, ability to respond empathetically, ability to empathize, capacity to consistently express thoughts and listen, achieve mutual understanding during professional and interpersonal interaction.

Subgroup II, with an average level of communicative competence, included 43.1% of respondents displaying presence of an ability to logically express their own thoughts, but insufficiently developed ability to listen, as well as an average level of self-control in communication. Such subjects have an idea of the importance of empathy in the professional activities of psychologists but are not always able to respond empathetically during interpersonal and professional communication.

Subgroup III, with a low level of communicative competence, included 30.5% of students who were diagnosed with insufficient communication skills, some difficulties in establishing communicative

contacts with people, low level of self-control in communication, inability to empathize and listen.

The next stage of our study was to identify the characteristics of the attitude of psychology students with different levels of communicative competence to vocational training, and the features of their professional motivation.

Using the "Questionnaire" (Kokun, 2012), we identified the characteristics of the relationship of future psychologists with teachers and classmates, which reflect the interactive abilities of the subjects. Thus, among students of subgroup I very good relations developed by 47.4% of respondents, good relations – 31.6%, mediocre – 21.0%. Among the students of the second subgroup, very good relations were noted in 22.6% of participants, good – in 41.9%, mediocre – in 29.1%, bad – in 6.4%. Among students of subgroup III very good relations were observed in 13.6% of respondents, good – in 40.9%, mediocre – in 27.3%, bad – in 18.2% (ϕ^* emp = 2.439, p <0.01).

52.6% of participants of subgroup I, 25.8% – subgroup II, 18.2% – subgroup III noted full self-compliance with the requirements of the profession. Overall compliance of abilities with the requirements of the future profession was noted by 31.6% of students of subgroup I, 54.8% – of subgroup II, 36.4% – of subgroup III. Insufficient compliance with the requirements of the profession was noted by 15.8% of students with a high level of communicative competence, 19.4% of students with a medium level of communicative competence and 45.4% of students with a low level of communicative competence (φ * emp = 2.369, p <0.01).

A high level of interest in education was observed in 26.3% of students of subgroup I, 12.9% of students of subgroup II and 9.1% of students of subgroup III. 42.1% of students of subgroup I, 29.0% of students of subgroup II, 13.6% of students of subgroup III were found above the average level. The average level of interest in studying was typical for 31.6% of students with a high level of communicative competence, 38.7% of students with an average level of interest was found in 19.4% of participants in subgroup II and 40.9% of participants in subgroup III respectively (φ * emp = 1,482, p < 0.05).

Presence of thorough knowledge about the conditions and features of the future profession was found in 73.7% of participants of subgroup I, 64.5% of participants in subgroup II, and among 36.4% of students of subgroup III (φ * emp = 2.459, p < 0.01).

Readiness to work in one's field of occupation was seen in 78.9% of participants of the first subgroup, 67.7% of participants in the second subgroup and 31.8% of participants of the third subgroup ($\varphi * emp = 3.158$, p < 0.01).

Assessment of current professional knowledge and skills indicates that their high level is inherent in 84.2% of students in subgroup I, 61.3% – students of subgroup II and 45.4% of students in subgroup III (ϕ * emp = 2.692, p <0.01).

Among the motives that determine the attractiveness of the chosen future profession, students of subgroup I most often indicated "getting satisfaction from it" (42.1%), "realize one's abilities" (26.3%), and "make a career" (31.6%). Subgroup II students noted "realization of abilities" (25.8%), "having a prestigious job" (38.7%) and "making a career" (35.5%). Students of subgroup III noted "having a prestigious job" (27.3%), "earn a lot" (40.9%) and "not overstrain at work" (31.8%).

Thus, having analyzed the answers to the questions proposed by the Questionnaire, we can note the fact that the student with different levels of communicative competence have characteristic differences in relationships with classmates and teachers, as well as in their attitude to their future professional activities.

Having investigated the motivation of professional activity in psychology students with different levels of communicative competence according to the method by K. Zamfir (modified by A. Rean) (Kokun, 2012), we found the following results. Among the proposed motives of professional activity, students with a high level of communicative competence (subgroup I) chose the motive of the most complete selfrealization in this field of activity (52.6%); second place was taken by the motive of satisfaction with the process and the result of work (26.3%); the motive of the desire for career growth took the third place (21.1%).

Students with an average level of communicative competence (subgroup II) preferred such motives as the motive of satisfaction with the process and the result (41.9%), the motive of achieving social prestige and respect from others (32.3%), the motive of the most complete self-realization within this activity (25.8%).

Characteristic of students with a low level of communicative competence (subgroup III) was the choice of such motives as the desire to avoid criticism from management or colleagues (27.3%), the motive of "earning money" (40.9%) and the motive of "avoiding possible trouble or punishment" (31.8%).

The analysis of professional motivational complexes showed that among psychology students with a high level of communicative competence (I subgroup, n = 19) the average indicators of internal motivation (IM) were equal to 4.2 points; average indicators of external positive motivation (EPM) – 3.5 points; average indicators of external negative motivation (ENM) – 2.8 points.

The average professional motivational complex of the students with a high level of communicative competence can be represented in a following manner: IM (4.2) > EPM(3.5) > ENM(2.8). The ratio of the presented values allows to conclude that there is an optimal motivational complex in which the structure of professional motivation is dominated by internal motivation indicating that for such students their future activities are important themselves.

Among psychology students with an average level of communicative competence (II subgroup, n = 31), the average indicators of intrinsic motivation were equal to 3.5 points; average indicators of external positive motivation – 3.1 points; average indicators of external negative motivation – 2.9 points.

The average professional motivational complex of the students with an average level of communicative competence can be represented as follows: IM (3,5) > EPM(3,1) > ENM(2,9). The presented indicators for each type of motivation allow to conclude that there is an optimal type of professional motivation. However, it should be noted that the indicator of the degree of expression of internal motivation is not much higher than the indicator of external positive motivation, which indicates that importance for such students is not in the activity itself, but also in the desire to advance in work and attain social prestige.

Analysis of the types of motivation of professional activity in students with a low level of communicative competence (III subgroup, n = 22) showed that the average indicators of intrinsic motivation were equal to 2.7 points; average indicators of external positive motivation – 3.3 points; average indicators of external negative motivation – 3.6 points.

The average professional motivational complex of the students with a low level of communicative competence can be represented as follows: ENM (3,6) > EPM (3,3) > IM (2,7). The obtained indicators for each type of professional motivation allow to make a conclusion that there is a nonoptimal type. At the same time, the dominance of external negative motivation indicates that for such students it is important to avoid criticism and various negative comments from others, as well as to focus on avoiding possible punishments or troubles. High values in terms of external positive motivation should also be noted, which indicates the predominance of motives of social prestige, the desire for career growth.

Thus, summarizing the results of the study, it can be noted that students with high level of communicative competence compared to students with medium and low levels are more professionally oriented, which will certainly contribute to a more effective process of their professional development.

Conclusions

1. Communicative competence is a complex integral personal feature of a future psychologist, which reflects the student's focus on professional tasks and attitude to the chosen profession, to oneself and to others. Development of communicative competence in future psychologists at the stage of professional training involves not only the acquisition of a set of relevant communicative knowledge, skills and abilities, but also the willingness to use them adequately and effectively while performing professional tasks.

2. The results of the empirical study indicate an insufficient level of communicative competence development among the students in general, which may be due to a number of factors, including training duration, individual psychological characteristics, marriage, age, general and professional communication experience etc. Analysis of the assessment of differences in the development of communicative competence and its components among the surveyed students demonstrates that there are significant differences between the level of communicative competence formation and professional orientation of upcoming psychologists.

3. Given the importance of communicative competence in the professional activity of a psychologist, it is advisable to continue researching various aspects of the communicative competence formation in future psychologists, thereby taking into consideration current research in the field of neuroscience and introducing different socio-psychological trainings into the educational process that will help students master their communication skills, increase emotional sensitivity, empathy, create a favorable socio-psychological atmosphere in the group, which will obviously be of great importance for the development of not only the purely communicative competence of psychologists, but also their professional competence and personal growth.

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