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# FEATURES OF PROFESSIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION OF STUDENTS AT AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITIES: EXPERIENCE OF VORONEZH STATE AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY

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**ABSTRACT**

Outdated stereotypes about the prestige of agricultural education and the prevailing negative image of work in agriculture, creating a shortage of young, qualified and promising agricultural specialists, bring to the fore the goal of meeting the personnel needs of the agricultural sector of the economy. The main risk of changing the positive trajectory of professional development and self-determination of students is the strictly regulated schedule of the educational process and the traditional form of practical training, that part of the educational process, after which the student confidently draws a conclusion about the correctness of his chosen profession and forms an opinion about the possibility of employment according to the qualifications obtained in learning process. The purpose of the study was to increase the level of professional orientation of students in accordance with the profile of the education received, prepare high-quality agricultural specialists and maintain a positive trajectory of professional self-determination of students. The methodology of the experiment was based on the organization of innovative production practice according to a special program (integrative special course) using information technologies familiar to modern youth. As a result of the implementation of the integrative special course, 80% of the students from among the experiment participants rated the organization of innovative practice as excellent, which gives hope for stimulating interest among students and generating interest in employment according to the qualifications obtained during the learning process.

## Introduction

Outdated stereotypes and the prevailing negative image of work in agriculture, the low prestige of agricultural education compared to other professions, have caused a shortage of young, qualified and promising specialists in the agro-industrial complex of the Russian Federation. The above problem has determined the primary goal for the country's leading agricultural universities – to meet the personnel needs of the agricultural sector of the economy ( Chudnova & Zorina, 2012; Klimova, Sharina & Chichimov, 2024).

In the course of a socio-psychological study of students of the Voronezh State Agrarian University, it was revealed that the main risk of changing the positive trajectory of professional development and self-determination of students is the framework schedule of the educational process and the traditional form of practical training, that part of the educational process, after which the student confidently concludes that the correctness of his chosen profession and forms an opinion about the possibilities of future employment in accordance with the profile of the education he receives (Zolotarev & Shmatko, 2016).

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In order to increase the level of professional orientation among students according to the qualifications received in the learning process, train high-quality agro-industrial specialists and maintain a positive trajectory of professional self-determination of students of the Voronezh State Agrarian University, a team of university employees developed an "integrative special course", the main task of which was the organization of innovative practical training. oriented training according to a special program using information technologies familiar to modern youth (Starikova & Bakhmutskaya, 2020; Moroz & Nazarova, 2022).

The participants in the experiment were 3rd year students of the Voronezh State Agrarian University, studying in the field of "Animal Science", in the amount of 26 people. Specialists of this profile are currently the most in demand in agricultural enterprises and organizations of the Voronezh region, however, their employment in their specialty is significantly lower than the personnel needs of the industry (Goncharenko & Kulikova, 2013).

**1. Project description**

Fundamentally, an integrative special course involves the sequential implementation of three main stages: practice-oriented training, stationary theoretical classes within the framework of the special course, final control of the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities (Leonova, Panasenko & Akvazba, 2022).

Stage 1 – organization of innovative practice-oriented training according to a special program using information technologies familiar to modern youth. In the process of undergoing organized production practice, the participants in the experimental group had to apply previously acquired theoretical knowledge and existing practical experience in the field of animal science and veterinary medicine, as well as delve into and try to solve additional real production problems (cases) assigned to them. Practice-oriented training for participants in the experimental group included independent alternating work in blocks of a livestock complex under the supervision of specialists and theoretical training on related topics.

Stage 2 – theoretical classes within the framework of an integrative special course, aimed at an in-depth study of production problems (cases) and the formation of professional competencies necessary for their correct solution. Teachers from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Husbandry Technology of the Voronezh State Agrarian University developed an individual plan for in-patient training for participants in the experimental group, including additional hours in certain specialized disciplines. Within 2 months after the practice-oriented training, interactive classes were held with the participants of the special course aimed at finding the right solution to production problems (cases) and the final formation of professional competencies.

Stage 3 – final control of the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities consisted of an integral assessment of the developed competencies of each participant in the experimental group and included assessment according to four main criteria: production assessment, assessment of the quality of filling out electronic diary forms for industrial practice, professional testing, group or individual interview (exam) to determine the correctness of solving the assigned production tasks (cases).

**2. Novelty and originality**

1) To implement the integrative special course, an advanced, high-tech agricultural company (EkoNiva Group of Companies) was selected, the material base and technical equipment of which made it possible to work on modern equipment, and the production facilities provided each participant in the experimental group with the necessary amount of work to develop professional competencies.

2) The structure of the selected agricultural organization has its own training and development department with specialized specialists in the field of industrial training (trainers, coaches). Together with specialists from this department of the company, an individual program of practice-oriented training was developed, including independent alternating work in blocks of a livestock complex under the supervision of production specialists and theoretical training on related topics.

3) For the convenience of communication between members of the experimental group in order to find the correct answers to the proposed production tasks (cases), as well as for operational control of the completion of tasks by the organizers of practice-oriented training, a special group of integrative participants was created on the basis of social networks and instant messengers a special course in which photos and video reports on the work done were posted, as well as forms of an electronic diary about practical training.

4) The proposed production tasks (cases) were based on real problems that arose in the conditions of the livestock complexes of the EkoNiva Group of Companies, which created an additional motivational impulse and stimulated interest in acquiring new knowledge, skills and abilities from students necessary to correctly solve the cases.

5) The developed forms of an electronic diary about practical training consisted of a traditional part (describing the content of the work performed by participants in the experimental group) and a reflective part (including a set of questions and feedback forms describing the tasks performed and the results obtained from practice-oriented training).

6) The developed individual curriculum for participants in the experimental group and the team method of implementing the integrative special course are associated with advanced professional training of students, that is, it allows project participants to obtain high-quality professional knowledge before ordinary students, to undergo easy moral and social adaptation to the conditions of practice-oriented training at the enterprise.

7) Organization and conduct of final monitoring of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities is aimed at consolidating the developed professional competencies and identifying the most talented participants in the experimental group.

**3. Results**

Through the phased implementation of an integrative special course, it was possible to change the passive position of students (listened, looked, talked) to an active one (clearly presented specific professional tasks; assessed the competencies necessary to solve them; determined what he lacks to fully solve these problems; planned with the help teachers and mentors on the path to mastering the necessary competencies; in a discussion with colleagues, he assessed the social cost of the path traveled) (Kazakevich, 2011; Panarin, Sidelnikov & Koval, 2017; Kalanchina, 2021).

The following conclusions indicate the fairly high quality results achieved in the implementation of the integrative special course:

• an anonymous express survey showed that about 80% of the experiment participants assessed the organization of practice-oriented training as excellent, which gives hope for stimulating interest among students and generating interest in employment according to the qualifications received;

• feedback from individual participants in the experimental group about the desire to extend practice-oriented training allows us to conclude that the organizers managed to stimulate interest among students and increase interest in further employment according to the qualifications obtained during the training process, which corresponds to the main goals of the integrative special course;

• at the initial stages of undergoing practice-oriented training, several students shared with the psychologist their discovery, which corresponds to the main goal of the project being implemented - this is the emerging desire to work in their chosen profession;

• the implementation of the practical part of the integrative special course made it possible to actually show and study all work processes (veterinary procedures) on a modern livestock complex and eradicate long-outdated stereotypes and prevailing opinions about work in agriculture;

• final control of acquired knowledge, skills and abilities has become an additional motivation for promising and talented youth to demonstrate their intellectual abilities, acquire new knowledge and future work in their profession;

• the integrative special course program made it possible to obtain high-quality professional knowledge before other students, which had a positive impact on the further study of the participants in the experimental group and their professional self-determination.

**Conclusion**

It is worth noting that the "integrative special course" is distinguished by its flexibility and wide replicability. Its positive result is aimed at additional motivation of students of all areas of training and specialties for future work in their profession, that is, it can be extended to all areas of a person's professional activity. The integrative special course acquires particular relevance in the context of the need to meet the personnel needs of the agricultural sector of the economy.

The essence of the further internal development of the integrative special course is the active involvement of Voronezh State Agrarian University students in various educational programs in the project, primarily in the areas of training "Agroengineering" and "Agronomy". Due to the fact that the jobs of the listed professions are located mainly in rural areas, testing the innovative mechanism of an integrative special course for this target audience is especially relevant and aimed at securing young specialists in the locations of agricultural companies.

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