

THEORETICAL PREREQUISITES FOR DEVELOPING A PROGRAM TO FOSTER SYSTEMIC ROLE FUNCTIONING IN POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION

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Abstract. *This article examines the concept of systemic role functioning in postgraduate education from an interdisciplinary perspective. A specialist's systemic role functioning is viewed as an integrative professional and personal formation: a dynamic, reflectively regulated system of professional roles. The practical significance of systemic role functioning lies in designing individual learning pathways in postgraduate education.*

Keywords: *psychology; pedagogy; educational communication; postgraduate education; continuing professional education programs; personality; systemic role functioning.*

Current issues in education include research into the challenges of contemporary lifelong learning: the rapid obsolescence of knowledge, the need to respond flexibly to changes in the labor market, the diversity of learners' experience and competencies, and the practice-oriented nature of instruction. On the one hand, labor-market dynamics and the challenges of lifelong learning require specialists to develop professional flexibility: readiness and ability to master and perform new functions, build productive interactions across areas of competence, and adjust their approaches to work in response to change. On the other hand, psychological and educational research and the practice of postgraduate education have yet to develop an adequate conceptual framework or educational methods for deliberately cultivating this complex capacity. Attempts to address the problem by adding more knowledge or developing isolated communication skills are insufficient: they do not reach the level of a specialist's role self-organization or help the specialist build an internal frame of reference for navigating multiple professional positions and demands. To bridge this gap, the present study proposes and substantiates the construct of a specialist's systemic role functioning. This category is intended to overcome the limitations of the concepts of "competence" and "skill," which mainly describe static elements of preparedness. Systemic role functioning is understood as a dynamic, consciously regulated system of capacities that enables a specialist to identify, understand, integrate, and productively enact a set of professional roles appropriate to the context of the work. Its development entails a qualitative transformation of professional awareness and behavior.

The theoretical basis for an original program to develop systemic role functioning (hereafter SRF) in postgraduate education is established through an interdisciplinary approach. Social-psychological role theories [1; 2] offer a way to understand the mechanisms through which social prescriptions are internalized and enacted. The activity approach developed in the works of A. N. Leontiev [10] and S. L. Rubinstein [19] provides a methodological basis for examining how roles are embodied in the concrete structure of professional actions. Research on reflective mechanisms and professional development [3; 11–14] helps explain the internal conditions for the conscious management of one's role repertoire. The principles of contextual and active learning formulated by A. A. Verbitsky [3] point to educational opportunities for creating an environment conducive to such development. Ethical principles for creating and applying original methods in psychology must also be observed [22].

Developing a program to foster SRF involves four main tasks: (1) to describe the distinctive features of postgraduate education as a social and educational context in which the development of SRF becomes especially relevant and takes on specific meaning; (2) to analyze the SRF concept theoretically and synthesize its meaning, structure, and key components; (3) to substantiate the importance of developed SRF for professional adaptability, effectiveness, and learning success among participants in advanced training and retraining programs; and (4) to develop a theoretical model of a specialist's SRF as formed through postgraduate education.

The contemporary system of professional education, including its postgraduate segment, operates amid a radical transformation of work and career patterns. Stable, linear career paths are giving way to nonlinear, project-based, and hybrid forms of employment, in which success depends less on the depth of expertise in a narrow field than on the ability to adapt quickly, collaborate across functions, and deliberately redirect one's professional activity [21]. This shift creates several interrelated challenges. Taken together, the need to act under uncertainty, readiness to change professional functions, and attention to each adult learner's distinctive educational needs call for the development of a complex capacity for professional self-organization within a changing landscape of roles. The traditional discourse of lifelong learning is insufficient [21]. What is needed is a concept of educational outcomes that ensures a continuing, meaningful transformation of professional practice and thinking, rather than merely a continuous inflow of information. This approach makes it necessary to seek new psychological and educational constructs; one such innovative construct is a specialist's systemic role functioning.

The individual responding to these social and economic challenges is an adult enrolled in postgraduate education with an established professional history. Such a learner's psychological profile differs fundamentally from that of a student in initial higher education. The key resource, and at the same time the object of transformation, is not unrealized personal potential but accumulated professional experience: an

established system of meanings, behavioral patterns, and, most importantly for this study, internalized professional roles. The motivation of participants in advanced training and retraining programs is strongly oriented toward practical meaning [4; 5; 17]. This feature is directly linked to experience as the primary resource for learning [4]. The main internal contradiction facing a learner is the conflict between an established professional identity and the need to transform it. For a participant in a continuing professional education program, professional identity has crystallized and is a source of stability and self-respect. A request for further education may indicate a crisis in this established identity: it may no longer meet new demands or provide the satisfaction it once did. Effective learning at this stage is possible only through conscious, reflective, activity-based work to reorganize one's role repertoire. An educational environment capable of meeting the learner's needs should provide information together with a safe space for experimenting with roles, reflecting, and making meaning. The identified need for role transformation requires a reconsideration of the foundations of education itself: its goals, criteria of success, and basic pedagogical principles. Recognizing learners as active architects of their professional development logically entails moving from a paradigm of "transmission and assimilation" to one of "support and facilitation" of the growth of their systemic role functioning.

The first principle in designing a program to develop a specialist's SRF is contextuality and the grounding of learning content in real problems. Education is organized around complex, current problems in professional practice that learners encounter [4; 5; 18]. The second principle is reflective, activity-based engagement. Passive reception of information must be replaced by a cycle of "action – analysis – adjustment." Case studies, project work, role-playing, and simulations create a safe space for trying out new role models and receiving immediate feedback. Reflection turns external experience into an internal resource, developing the reflective and evaluative component of SRF [20; 23]. The third principle is individualization and reliance on the learner's own experience. A uniform program cannot be effective for a heterogeneous group. A learning pathway must adapt flexibly to the learner's existing role repertoire, career goals, and cognitive styles. To that end, programs use elements of self-assessment, such as reviewing one's own competencies and roles, and develop individual learning projects from program modules directly connected to real workplace tasks. For learners, education thus becomes a practice of consciously designing their professional development, directly contributing to the adaptive component of SRF. These principles also define new criteria for the effectiveness of postgraduate education. They shift the focus from testing knowledge to assessing qualitative changes in professional activity and thinking across four components: cognitive, reflective and evaluative, behavioral, and adaptive. An effective postgraduate education system aimed at developing SRF is a deliberately organized environment for reflection and activity. Its principles and criteria are implemented through specific psychological and educational content defined by the category of systemic role functioning. Introducing this construct follows logically from the need to bridge a methodological gap between

the sociological understanding of a role as a socially assigned position [1; 2; 9], the psychological study of activity as goal-directed action by the individual [16], and the educational task of preparing a person for the integrated fulfillment of professional responsibilities. The theoretical justification for SRF results from an analysis at three levels. The first considers its sociological and social-psychological foundations: classical and contemporary theories of social roles (E. Goffman, T. Parsons, R. Merton, and G. M. Andreeva). The activity approach (A. N. Leontiev and S. L. Rubinstein) allows the analysis to move from social positions to the internal structure of activity, where a role becomes a set of specific actions, operations, and meanings. The third, integrative level addresses the conscious management of one's role repertoire. The ability to reflect on, evaluate, and flexibly reorganize professional roles in response to environmental challenges constitutes the essence of SRF. Analysis at this level draws on the psychology of reflection (A. V. Karpov) [6; 7; 12; 13; 15], the theory of conscious self-regulation (V. I. Morosanova), and research on professional development (E. A. Klimov) [8]. It is the reflective and evaluative component that turns a collection of roles from a situational set of masks into an integrated, internally connected system that the individual can manage. A specialist's systemic role functioning (SRF) may therefore be defined as an integrative professional and personal formation: a dynamic, reflectively regulated system of internalized professional roles that enables purposeful, adaptive, and effective work under changing conditions. The practical significance of SRF is realized in the design of individual learning pathways in postgraduate education.

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