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**SOCIAL ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTIFICATION OF EDUCATORS
IN THE CONTEXT OF NETWORK COMMUNITIES**

**Annotation to the thesis research for
the scientific degree of Candidate of Sociological Sciences
in the specialty 22.00.04. – Social structure,
social institutions and processes**

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The relevance of the subject of thesis research. The rapid pace of development of ICT technologies, the emergence of the Internet with its ability to communicate by e-mail or using instant messengers, made it possible to change the forms of communication between people. Internet communities began to appear that have a consolidating potential that unites people on various grounds (professional affiliation, the presence of social problems and options for their solution, similar interests and hobbies, a way to satisfy the need for self-actualization). Today, there are various professional network communities integrated into such a social institution as education, differing from each other in methods and styles of work, as well as different coverage of certain categories of educators.

Transformation processes are taking place in Russian education at the present stage, which are due to the demands of the country's digital economy and the new requirements for teaching staff that arise in connection with this, especially during the pandemic and a partial transition to a remote work format. Professional network communities of educators are adapting to changes in the social environment, while in the context of the intensification of information interactions and the digitalization of everyday practices in the provision of educational services, they become not just a channel for the exchange of information important for educators, but also a marker of their professional identification, which is part of the formation process, structure of a professional group belonging to the system of secondary general, secondary vocational or higher education. Identification, on the one hand, is a social process of appropriating the distinctive features of a professional group of teachers, and in a broader sense of educators, "getting used to" a given social role, accepting value orientations, everyday interaction practices, and forming professionally important qualities. On the other hand, this is a result due to which people around can confidently correlate a particular person with a given professional group according to the characteristics of a social portrait, certain qualities, and behavior patterns of representatives of the pedagogical community.

Often, subject teachers of general educational organizations and teachers of secondary vocational education are characterized by social disunity, low orientation towards professional communication and exchange of experience, which becomes a contradiction in teacher work. The involvement of teachers in the activities of network communities of educators not only helps to overcome excessive professional autonomy, but also allows us to analyze such interaction as a vector exit from the group of "semi-professionals", according to Weber's interpretation.

New forms of interaction between educators are emerging that have an impact on professional identification through network communities. They open up a wide range of multi-level interactions between subject teachers and teachers of secondary vocational education - representatives of such an important social institution as education; broadcast information while participating in the production of new knowledge and educational products (DER, EER); allow users to expand their social and cultural capital; act as a resource for understanding commonly shared norms, attitudes, behaviors, values and role expectations; allow you to adequately respond to changes in the requirements of digitalization for mastering the profession of a teacher / teacher through the organization of social communications in the virtual space.

The share of teachers in the system of general and additional education for children who are members of digital professional communities should increase

from 12% (2019) to 70% (2024) (PASSPORT of the «Digital School» federal project), which is actively promoted by the pandemic. Obviously, there is an order from the state and society for the network interaction of teachers in professional network communities, but there is no mechanism for realizing the possibilities of such cooperation from the position of openness / closeness of the virtual environment, control over communication channels of data transmission. In this regard, the relevance of studying the professional identification of educators in the context of the functioning of professional network communities is increasing, setting the task for sociologists to identify the potential of this interaction in the virtual space system, its resource for professional self-identification, and the impact on self-actualization in the professional stratum.

All of the above determined the choice of the topic of the dissertation research.

The object of the dissertation research is the professional identification of educators. **The subject of the study** is the mechanisms of professional identification of subject teachers and teachers of secondary vocational education under the influence of the system of network communities.

The purpose of the study is a sociological reflection of the mechanisms of professional identification of teachers in the system of professional network communities.

To achieve this goal, **the following research tasks are put forward:**

1. to generalize the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the professional identification of teachers existing in domestic and foreign sociology; clarify the basic concepts of the sociological analysis of the professional identification of teachers in the era of digitalization;
2. to analyze the processes of digitalization in the socio-structural interactions of teachers, as a factor stimulating the overcoming of the autonomy of the pedagogical community through the exchange of experience and virtual communication;
3. to identify the factors of transformation of the professional identification of teachers in the system of network interaction;
4. determine the main elements and functions of professional network communities as a relatively new social institution;
5. to determine the strategies of virtual communication in online communities of teachers as a resource of professional identification;
6. to classify participants in professional network communities of teachers; characterize the competencies that subject teachers and teachers of secondary vocational education should have, carrying out social interactions in cyberspace, according to the proposed classification;
7. to develop a model of the social system of professional teacher network communities.

Research hypotheses. 1. In the context of digitalization and the widespread use of remote forms of work in the education system, participation in online communities is becoming a marker of the professional identity of subject teachers and teachers of secondary vocational education, while a projective trend is being built to shift the voluntariness of inclusion in these communities to mandatory. 2. In online communities, teachers build their networks of mutual assistance, and social cohesion

and solidarity will be formed in this field, while it is possible to produce practices of offline exclusion of those teachers who do not want to master new digital teaching methods. 3. In educational organizations, teachers of pre-retirement and retirement age often reproduce old methods of work, ignoring the practice of interacting with colleagues on the Internet, which in the future may serve as the basis for their exit from the professional group of educators.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study.

As a methodological basis for studying the problems of professional identification of educators, we used the concept of E. Durkheim's structural functionalism; the theory of structuring by E. Giddens; the theory of the social system by T. Parsons; the concept of symbolic interactionism by J. Mead, C. Cooley, G. Becker and E. Hoffmann; the theory of communicative action by J. Habermas; the concept of "social formation" by P. Szotomka; R. Baumeister's theory of identity; methodological principles of M. Weber's understanding sociology; dispositional theory of personality V.A. Yadov.

As a methodological basis for studying the problems of network communities of teachers, the candidate for a degree used the concept of "network society" by M. Castells, the theory of virtual communities by G. Rengold, the principle of pluralistic complementarity.

The empirical base of the thesis is represented by a set of author's research – a survey of educational workers of the Russian Federation and an in-depth expert interview; content analysis of texts / messages presented at the forums of professional network communities of educators; content analysis of websites of professional network communities of teachers; secondary analysis of data from research results on Russian teachers in the mirror of an international comparative study of the teaching corps on teaching and learning

The scientific novelty of the dissertation research is as follows:

1. Based on a systematic approach and a complex of sociological theories (structural functionalism, structuration theory, social systems theory, symbolic interactionism, communicative action theory, the concept of social formation, identity theory, dispositional personality theory), the author's interpretation suggests a model of professional identification of educators on macro -, meso- and microlevels of social reality.

2. It has been proven that professional communities, as products of the digitalization process, become a technological habitat, influencing professional identification, through virtual communication and exchange of experience, help to overcome the excessive autonomy of educators / teachers as a professional group.

3. The transformation factors of the educators professional identification in the system of network interaction are revealed: personal, socio-psychological, institutional. The personal factors influencing the micro-level of professional identification of educational workers include the personal interest (motivation) of an educator in mastering digital competencies, the level of responsibility of a teacher when interacting with colleagues in professional network communities, value orientations and expectations from participation in communicative interaction in these communities. The socio-psychological factors affecting the meso-level of professional identification of subject teachers and teachers of secondary professional organizations include mutual support of their colleagues in cyberspace, solidarity and professional cohesion, common attitudes and group values of the professional

network community of teachers. Institutional factors include the following factors: state order, forced distance, statuses and roles of teachers that exist in the network interaction of actors, regulatory and legal consolidation of the requirements for participation in network interaction, as well as fixed models of network interaction in professional teacher communities.

4. A set of features that mark the formation of a new social institution - professional network communities has been determined: 1) structural components: social actors - members of virtual network communities; social communities - professional groups of educational workers, whose interaction is built into the virtual space, structured, ordered, controlled by moderators; 2) functional components: adaptation of educators to the challenges of our time, due to the active digitalization of all spheres of life; goal achievement that satisfies the needs of teachers to create a network of mutual support and solidarity; maintenance of the model through the establishment of norms and values of the professional group, as well as integration within the framework of the structuring of the virtual site.

5. Strategies have been developed for virtual communication in online communities of educators as a resource for professional identification. A study conducted by the author showed that active forms of virtual communication include: participation in forums discussing various problems of modern education; participation in various master classes, promotions and competitions. Passive forms of virtual communication include: participation in webinars held in these communities; participating in community surveys; implementation of internal correspondence between community members. The author's interpretation of the definition of "professional network communities of teachers" is given as a network environment that implies solidarity and professional cohesion of educators, as a platform for professional identification.

6. On the basis of the conducted studies, the types of participants in professional network pedagogical communities were determined: by the time spent in the community (temporary and permanent users); on the activities carried out in the network community (administrators or community moderators, user-consumer, consultant, expert, methodologist); on interaction with other members of the community (altruist, egoist, provocateur, oppositionist), while identifying and characterizing the competencies of teachers that ensure the high-quality performance of their labor functions and contribute to professional identification through social interactions in cyberspace.

7. The author's model of the social system of professional pedagogical network communities has been developed, the main elements of which are users - representatives of the teaching community, means of social regulation, interaction practices, communication patterns, social resources.

The author's interpretation presents the scientific results of the dissertation research, formulated as **provisions submitted for protection**:

1. In the context of the transformation of the boundaries of the movement of information flows, the compaction of spatially-temporary distances, the blurring of barriers to gaining access to educational services in the digital environment, society clearly outlines new requirements for educators, changing the institutional definitions of the profession of a teacher, which, as expected, leaves an imprint on the process of professional identification. The theoretical foundations of sociological analysis made it possible to build the author's model of professional identification of educators at the macro-, meso- and microlevels of social reality: 1) at the societal level (using

the postulates of structural functionalism, structuration theory, social systems theory) it is determined by the status positions of educators in society, compliance with the social aspects of the state and society in relation to the activities of teachers / teachers, social order for educational services; 2) at the mesolevel (the ideas of symbolic interactionism, the theory of communicative action, the concept of social development) - is associated with motivational attitudes, interests and values, which eventually begin to be shared by all members of this professional group; 3) at the micro level (through the prism of identity theory, dispositional theory of personality) it manifests itself in the fact that a representative of a professional group of teachers / teachers is clearly aware of his belonging to a particular social stratum and tries to meet the role expectations of society as much as possible. As a result, the identification of educators in the era of digitalization is also understood as a social process, which includes such characteristics as the adoption of norms and values of a certain virtual professional community of teachers; participation in the daily practices of network interaction of this community, and the result due to which others can correlate a particular teacher with one or another teacher network community. Self-identification in this case is a static process (secondary in comparison with identification), which is carried out through the representation of the model of an ideal professional - a teacher / teacher, a positive or negative attitude towards this model, a motivational profile for mastering pedagogical activity, an orientation towards professional development.

2. Professional communities are a platform for the reproduction of the professional identification of teachers / lecturers through institutionalized interaction practices; as new forms of role exchange (transfer of the teacher from the position of the teacher to the position of the student); as social interaction necessary for virtual communication of actors; as a system for exchanging information and knowledge, broadcasting innovative professional experience; as a school of excellence and a condition for the teacher's creative activity, stimulating his professional growth. In the information society, professional network communities of educators, on the one hand, are a communication channel for the exchange of information significant for professional activities, on the other hand, they become an indicator that marks the level of professional identification of participants in these virtual associations. Teachers' network communities, being elements of the social structure of the information network, create a virtual reality that allows not only the self-presentation of participants in network communities, but also eliminates their status differences that exist in real life.

3. At present, the level of influence of personal and socio-psychological factors on the professional identification of educators is higher than institutional factors for a number of reasons: At the moment, there is no mechanism for realizing the possibilities of such cooperation from the position of openness / closeness of the virtual environment, control over communication channels for data transmission, which reduces pressure on teachers of the institutional environment; 2) teachers are mainly interested in mastering digital competencies in order, on the one hand, to meet the requirements that apply to a digital teacher / lecturer, and on the other hand, to be in trend, not standing out from the general mass of consumers of online content; 3) the majority of teachers who are in virtual network communities of educators are impressed by the professional community of interests, cohesion and mutual support that exists in these communities, which becomes a catalyst for professional identity.

4. The rapid pace of development of information and communication technologies has contributed to the emergence of new social institutions - professional network communities, participation in which for teachers / lecturers is a necessary requirement for improving professional skills, becoming at the same time a resource for professional identification. In these communities, the main elements that form the institutional framework are clearly defined: 1) actors - specific participants in network communities (subject teachers, preschool teachers, teachers of technical schools and colleges), who establish interactions with each other, forming their own network of support, mutual assistance, or simply becoming a background resource for expanding the virtual professional group; 2) social community - the professional network community itself, as well as the existing demand for these communities as a social order of educational institutions. The professional network community has its own system of values, norms and rules of conduct, for non-compliance with which one is threatened with a ban or exclusion; utilitarian cultural traits, respectively, related to common goals (ensuring a high quality of education through the professional development of teachers, modernization and informatization of the educational process); functions (communicative: interaction on professional issues, personal and professional communication; gnostic: access to the information field of the community, accumulation of professional information, exchange of experience; self-representation: reflection of one's professional activity, actualization of the self-concept of the teacher; demonstration of one's own professional background and potential) ; symbolic features (community interface, logos, network space structuring). Teachers / teachers are forced to adapt to the requirements of digitalization that are imposed on them by the state and society, building an individual digital adaptation strategy for themselves, and professional network communities of teachers are a universal means of solving this problem, at least only users have access to these network communities, belonging to this professional group, which allows delineating virtual boundaries between teachers / teachers and the rest of the world.

5. Professional network communities of teachers - a network environment that implies solidarity and professional cohesion, a system of qualified interaction between teachers through the exchange of scientific and practical experience with colleagues, improving the professional level of educators and forming a platform for professional identification. This is a special space (virtual reality) with a specific way of social interaction, as a result of which new connections arise, norms are formed, broadcast through various forms of communication. Educational workers of the Saratov region prefer more active forms of virtual communication: participation in various master classes (70,1%); in the work of forums (64,4%), where various problems of education are discussed; becoming participants in competitions (57,1%) than passive forms: participation in webinars (49,8%), surveys (39,2%) that are held in communities; carrying out internal correspondence with community members (35,1%). The materials from the community database are used by all members of the community. The strategies of virtual communication in online communities of teachers are influenced by their age. Thus, the teaching staff of pre-retirement and retirement age is poorly involved in the work of professional online communities, which is due to the low level of their ICT competence. They either use these services passively (by simply registering), or try to use young colleagues for these purposes, shifting some of the responsibility for actions in this environment to them, or boycott the administration's proposals for such interactions. Considering that the digital environment in the educational space has already become a platform for everyday interactions, such teachers automatically

begin to be pushed to the periphery of the professional space, and, ultimately, will be forced to leave the educational institution.

6. A teacher who carries out virtual interaction in professional network communities acts not only as an active or passive actor in network interactions, but is also an object and subject of social relations. All teachers / teachers registered in the virtual communities of educators can be distributed according to the author's classification for certain types of participants in these communities. By the time spent in the community, the main actors can be permanent, regularly participating in discussions, and temporary, i.e. recorded their one-time visit to the site. Most often, temporary visitors are teachers who, in a situation of pressure from the administration, were forced to enter the professional network community, since this position can be taken into account in reporting documents and when fixing indicators of an effective contract. Often, the vector of voluntariness in educational institutions begins to shift towards forced participation in such a digital environment. Each member of the professional teaching network community has a certain list of competencies. According to the activities carried out, the participants are divided into moderators (administrators), whose functionality is related to the moderation of records, inviting participants, tracking messages that comply with the rules and regulations of the community, followed by the possible imposition of sanctions, organizing events; experts who conduct an examination of the content posted by teachers / lecturers; consultants whose arsenal of actions is associated with comments and professional advice to community members; methodologists who help educators through their methodological developments and activities; consumer users, i.e. teachers using the posted materials for their own purposes. Most of the members of online communities assume the role of consumer users, passive absorbers of the hosted content. By interaction with other teachers, participants are divided into altruists who selflessly help colleagues; egoists who only consume information, while considering only their own opinion; oppositionists, most often criticizing some specific actions of other members of the community; provocateurs who can act as bullies on social networks, sometimes forcing colleagues to leave the group. The vast majority of participants are egoists who are more focused on obtaining the necessary material, rather than on its placement.

7. The model of the social system of professional teacher network communities includes: users - representatives of the community of educators (teachers, teachers, methodologists, head teachers, directors, social educators), means of social regulation (rules of interaction in the community, norms and sanctions), interaction practices (forms and mechanisms for using information in the community), communication patterns (models for the implementation of emotional dialogue, patterns of communication), social resources (time spent online, social navigation, content, social capital). The system of professional online communities itself is still at the stage of formation, because due to external influences, such as a pandemic, sanctions, restrictions on access to certain Internet resources, the ways in which social groups and social organizations interact in it are poorly regulated, promotion mechanisms are changing, and even the communities themselves are rather fragmented. However, the model proposed by us allows us to more clearly present the entire systemic nature of such a phenomenon as professional network communities, which are catalysts for the cohesion and solidarity of educators, and to determine the mechanisms for regulating this social institution.

Compliance of the topic of the thesis with the requirements of the Passport of specialties of the Higher Attestation Commission. The dissertation work was carried out within the framework of the specialty 22.00.04 "Social structure, social institutions and

processes" of scientific worker's passport of the Higher Attestation Commission of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (sociology). The problem is revealed from the position of p.5 "Transformational social-stratification processes of modern Russian society. The main ways of forming a new social structure", p. 11 "Social dynamics and adaptation of individual groups and strata in a transforming society", p. 21 "The role of social institutions in the transformation of the social structure of society", p. 26 "Social functions of the education system; functionality and dysfunctionality of vocational education. The labor market and vocational education", p. 28 "Social and production structures and transformation of social and structural relations. Group integration. Labor motivation in the system of qualification and content of the worker's labour. p. 33 "The subjective aspect of social stratification. Social identification, its main types: social group, social layer identification. Types of identification behavior".

The theoretical and practical significance of the study results lies in the fact that they contribute to the sociological analysis of the transformational processes taking place in the Russian education system at the present stage of modernization of educational institutions. The results of the study contribute to the expansion of scientific ideas about professional network communities of educators as a new social institution, as well as about the existing stratification in virtual teacher communities; identify key problems in the development of professional network communities of teachers; determine the barriers that prevent subject teachers and teachers of secondary vocational education from using the resources of teachers' virtual network communities, which expands the problematic field of the sociology of education.

The practical significance of the work - the obtained scientific results, theoretical provisions, conclusions, recommendations and proposals can be used to optimize the activities of professional network communities of educators, as well as in the educational activities of higher educational institutions when developing special courses on the sociology of education "Professional identification in the context of digitalization".

The reliability and validity of the study results arise from the use of consistent theoretical foundations formulated on the basis of scientifically based sociological concepts; a set of correctly selected research methods, an optimal combination of methods for interpreting the results of empirical research, confirmation of the validity of the results of the dissertation work was a comparison of the results of theoretical research and empirical data with studies of domestic and foreign authors on related topics.

The main provisions, results of the study, conclusions and recommendations set forth in the dissertation were reported at the V All-Russian Sociological Congress (VSC - 5), as part of the work of international, all-Russian, regional scientific and practical conferences.

Thesis structure. The thesis work consists of an introduction, two chapters (four paragraphs), a conclusion, a list of references and eight appendices.

The main research results were published in 15 scientific articles with a total volume of 5,1 printed pages.

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