

# Innovative approaches of student professional self-presentation

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*Abstract* - Today, in 21<sup>st</sup> century the goal of Higher Education is not only to give knowledge to students that will satisfy the professional market needs, but also to prepare a specialist who will be able to effectively communicate with potential employer making accurate self-presentation. The researcher believed that the communication and mutual interaction process gives opportunity to correct personal behavior and create more favorable and advantageous impression.

In Yerevan State University (Armenia), we (Staff of Chair of General psychology and laboratory of Experimental psychology) developed and tested for 7 years an innovative method of self-presentation for students-psychologists. The method developed in the format of exhibition and called “EXPO- Psychological vernissage”. As a tool of marketing communication, the exhibition also serves as a mean to build public opinion. The goal of this innovative method is to implement the knowledge gained through education into practice, to increase the motivation of lower course student, to contribute to students’ professional orientation and to reinforce students-employers relations. Generalization of experience allows us to conclude the feasibility and expediency of the implementation of such an event, as an extracurricular activity and development of presentation skills useful and necessary in future.

*Key words* - self-presentation, student, communication, psychological vernissage, perception.

## I.

## II. INTRODUCTION

We live in an age where identity and its expression are the leading values of the individual and personal success - its top priority. The social nature of man, is expanded and expressed in the need for communication, acceptance, recognition, self-expression determines the importance of creating a favourable impression and constancy of interest to the skills of self-presentation. You can say that the success of self-presentation determines the social recognition and personal well-being.

Today, in 21<sup>st</sup> century the goal of Higher Education is not only to give knowledge to students that will satisfy the professional market needs, but also to prepare a specialist who will be able to effectively communicate with potential employer making accurate self-presentation. Student carrying the corporate culture of University must be competitive in today’s economic conditions of market. It is very important to have both professional knowledge and self-presentation skills for student as a potential specialist.

Researchers like Goffman, Snider, Cialdini were working on self-presentation issue [2], [4], [8]. Goffman first spoke on managing the impression and about its analysis. The researcher believed that the communication and mutual interaction process gives

opportunity to correct personal behavior and create more favorable and advantageous impression [8]. Self-presentation is an image making issue. Over the past decade, the concept of the image firmly established in our lives and in the consciousness of modern man more and more fixed idea about the image, as a certain value. The greatest interest in this phenomenon, however, is observed in the sphere of social communication and considered in the context of social psychology. Scientific research based on self-concept that Rogers described that people are actively moving away from the roles created by the expectations of others, and instead looks into them for validation[7]. Thus, the University must care not only about a better education but also about practical methods of future implementation of the mentioned knowledge.

Modern socio-economic situation generates a request to the ability to present themselves in a variety of situations: from employment situations to public speaking situations. The ability of the subject to form a favorable impression of themselves often can effectively implement a specific strategy for communication, becomes the basis for effective implementation of occupational plans, the organization of professional activities, which is reflected in the specific requirements for professional qualities of many of today's professionals.

### III. LAYOUT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the problem associated with the student's self-presentation as well as the need to establish contact between student and employers we have attempted to develop a program aimed to develop student's skills of communication and self-presentation. Researches have suggested that public events can have more impact on self-evaluations than private events. [3] So, in Yerevan State University (Armenia), we (department of general psychology) developed an innovative method of self-presentation for students-psychologists. The method developing in the format of exhibition we called "EXPO-Psychological vernissage". As a tool of marketing communication, the exhibition also serves as a mean to

build public opinion. Our target group was students from lower course from department of psychology, students from other departments and employers.

If perceived as a communication process the exhibition must include 4 elements- the sender of messages (student), the receiver of messages (employers, other students, lecturers), the message itself (presentation of skills via visual/audial means), feedback.

The most important advertising carriers of the exhibition were posters and the pavilions created by group of students. Posters, as we know are the type of information influence.

In the course of this communication should be considered as the possible development of effective skills and self-presentation skills of students, and must take into account the features and mechanisms of perception of information from the address, the target group.

Today, the impact on the information and features of its influence is said a lot and often. Informational influence is studied within the framework of psychology, sociology, political science, pedagogy and other sciences. In various scientific studies, however, changing the purpose - if for pedagogy, for example, it is important to study the features of the visual information as teaching materials in the teaching process, in terms of general psychology is important to study the features, mechanisms and laws of the perceptual process. In terms of perception of the exhibition material, it is necessary to analyze the peculiarities of perception in actual situation.[1] It is known that the process of perception has the following features: objectivity, selectivity, integrity and meaningfulness, apperception, constancy. According to the data we obtained in the experiment of 2015, which are presented in the article "The experiment evaluation of features of perception of visual information," the process of perception of the visual information presented in poster format or banner has the following features of perceptions:

1. Holistic understanding of the image, its naming, (What do I see?)
2. Naming structural elements that bear the imprint of a complete image, (What is the structure of it?)
3. Interpretation, (Why?)

In exhibition aimed at the student's self-presentation, it was found that there is a fourth step, namely the identification the poster with the student who presents it. This can be explained in our mental activity associations spatial contiguity, when objects or entities listed in the space next to each other, are perceived holistically. In this case, well-presented poster advertising served the student or group of students representing it. Inter alia, this group work format gave them opportunity to try and to test their team working skills. Next in the process of direct communication with audience, students presented their pavilions and received feedback.

Innovative approaches of student professional self-presentation are very important issue for psychology and other sciences. It is very important to have both professional knowledge and self-presentation skills for student as a potential specialist. The goal of this innovative method is to implement the knowledge gained through education into practice, to increase the motivation of lower course students, to contribute to students' professional orientation and to reinforce students-employers relations.

So, our innovative method called "EXPO - Psychological vernissage" that we have tested for many years in YSU (department of General psychology and laboratory of Experimental psychology) is a successful psychological and pedagogical mean of self-presentation of student. The main goal of the method is - to develop three levels of person self-presentation – emotional, cognitive and behavioral.

Emotional level – "EXPO - Psychological vernissage" is an effective method for removing communicational barriers and developing EQ of participants. It is known that EQ is the ability to manage

our own emotions without any conflict with others and recognize what others are experiencing emotionally. EQ defined by 4 attributes - self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. All of them are very important in process of communication and each of them determines its efficiency.

Cognitive level – the psychological vernissage is a model of situation where decision making process must be done in new and extremal situations for students. So, the psychological vernissage is an example of new, practice situation for participant where he or she can use knowledge that he or she has gained.

Behavioral level – the mentioned event gives an opportunity to develop also public behavioral skills in contact with employers, other students and visitors. Behavioral skills are public speaking, professional conversation.

The exhibition participants present their professional services, consulting, situation analysis through banners and video materials. In contrast to the fact that the exhibition mainly demonstrates the product or service that is representative of the organization, in the proposed format, all prepared by our results of operations - posters, Benner and OE are carriers of information about the knowledge and skills of a group of students, which represent Pavilion. On this basis, the students did not initially diagnosed by the criterion of necessary presentation skills, but rather any student participating in the opening day can form the skills of self-presentation and communication skills in organized exhibition. In the end, our experience shows that the students who were able to demonstrate the following professional and personal qualities were most effective:

- clear theoretical and practical knowledges;
- understanding of their own goals and knowledge about the target audience;
- possession of emotional intelligence, sociability and communicative;

- the confidence to behave in every situation, the possession of the art of persuasion, argumentation techniques and evidence key messages;
- ability to operate their knowledge and experience, clearly state the problem;
- flexibility to the circumstances;
- resistance to stress.

The post exhibition interviews with participants and the number of students who receive employment invitation (see table 2) show the effectiveness of the given method. Moreover, the interviews with graduates who defined themselves and work already show efficiency of the method and need to assimilate the primary experience. In our exhibition, an indicator of success becomes the sum of concluded contracts with an employer or a job offers. One method of monitoring results (from the standpoint of achieving the goal) in our case consists in counting the number of distributed information materials. Valuable information (especially when comparing different activities or data for many years) gives the ratio of the number of students at the booth with the number of serious contacts. This assessment may also be carried out by the number of negotiations and new stakeholders. The number of contacts must be in the appropriate ratio with a card file and the total number of invited visitors.

Statistical evaluation of the level of participants' communicative skills after using the mentioned method of self-presentation (by the data of first three years testing, 275 participants) also revealed highly significant changes ( $P < 0.001$ ). Therefore, we can assume that this is an important professional skill and it has a positive dynamics of development and can manifest itself in different communicative environment. In particular, it may be a psychologist following areas: organizational psychology, management psychology, consumer psychology and marketing, advertising and PR, political psychology, etc.

The event we are presented ("EXPO-Psychological vernissage") had positive dynamics of

visitors, participants (see figure 1), and positive dynamics of a job offers (see table 1).

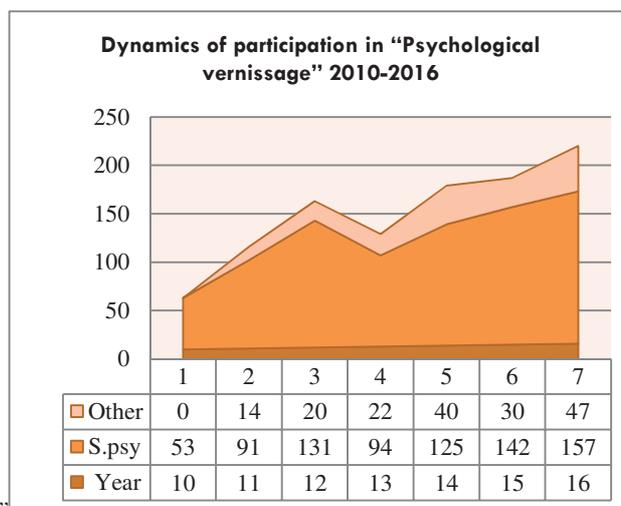


Figure 1: Indicators of participants in "EXPO-Psychological vernissage"

In consideration of the dynamics of the participants from other departments indicates the following features: a) the development of interdisciplinary interactions, b) increasing interest in the psychological function, c) weakening the borders between adjacent specializations (Table. 1).

TABLE 1. DYNAMICS OF CONCLUDED CONTRACTS WITH AN EMPLOYER OR A JOB OFFERS

N	Year	Participants	A job offers
1	2010	53	2
2	2011	105	7
3	2012	151	19
4	2013	116	12
5	2014	165	15
6	2015	170	17
7	2016	199	10
	Σ	959	82

As we have already said, in our exhibition, an indicator of success becomes the sum of concluded contracts with an employer or a job offers (see table 1). As we can see during 7 years that we were tested our innovative mean 82 students from 959 participants (it is about 8,5%) got an opportunity of self-presentation and a job offers.

Monitoring results of psychological vernissage must also include:

1. Determination of the amount of costs in connection with participation in the exhibition.
2. The study of the documentation concerning the work invitations to established contacts and information received.
3. The compilation of data for account of visitors.
4. The comparison of the composition of the stand visitors
  - The target groups, which focuses student
  - Data from previous exhibitions,
  - The results of the analysis of the composition of trade visitors, the organizers of the exhibition.
5. Assessment of the own exhibition and advertising activities related to the invitations.
6. Stand location analysis, its size and equipment.
7. Assessment of the skills and training of stand staff (students).
8. The analysis of the behavior of competitors (the other students).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that this method gives an opportunity to get professional (emotional, cognitive and behavioral) and communication skills and to identify the needs and expectations of employers. As we have already said, the mentioned method is an example of practice-oriented methods. It is also an active method of learning and self-presentation for students. It is very important that the skills that students can get in such events are relevant for the other kind of social and professional activity and mentioned skills become resources for student in his/her professional life.

Research by social psychologists has produced that people are induced to behave in a particular way, and their subsequent self-ratings show that they come to regard themselves as having the traits implied by their overt

behavior. [3] Thus, we can conclude that the above example of psycho-pedagogical events with the students is practical value and should improve through the implementation of innovative teaching methods.

Another conclusion can draw about the fact, that the "Psychological Vernissage" gives some key points for the development of emotional intelligence (Comparative results for the EI test by Bar-on). Although "regular" intelligence is important to success in student life, but EI is key to relating well to others and achieving their goals. Today many companies now use EQ testing to hire new staff.

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Generalization of experience allows us to conclude the feasibility and expediency of the implementation of such an event, as an extracurricular activity and development of presentation skills useful and necessary in future. So, we can be sure that the method called "EXPO - Psychological vernissage" can be used as an opportunity to maximize student's success. This conclusion applies to the form of organization of the event, during which encourages individual and group initiative by promoting professional dignity and opportunity.

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