

The Impact of Philosophical Trends on the Conceptualisation of an Educology of Vocation (A Paper in Philosophy of Educology)

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Introduction by Co-Editors

This article is one in philosophy of educology in that it considers philosophical trends in the conceptualisation of knowledge about vocational education and training, i.e. of an educology of vocation. It philosophically inquires into the nature an educology of vocation, finding: (1) existentialistic, humanistic, romantic, idealistic, and radical humanistic; (2) materialistic, behavioural, and libertarian, and; (3) progressive, pragmatic, post-modernistic, and critical thinking philosophical trends, as they relate to personality development in vocational education and training theory, programs, and curricula.

Introduction by Author

On the basis of psychologically and philosophically oriented scientific resources, this article analyses philosophical aspects of personality development in the context of an educology of vocation. A classification of philosophical trends of personality development in educology is presented, as they are involved in vocational education and training. Also presented is an investigation of the impact of philosophical trends in an educology of vocation, as these trends are oriented toward persons and their productivity and skill development in problem solving. Finally, perspectives for methodological research continuity in educology are foreseen and conclusions are presented.

Part 1 Background

In the background of rapid economical, social, and technological changes, the paradigmatic research of issues involved in an educology of vocation is advanced by exploring its philosophical basis. Such research can enrich vocational education and training theory and give impetus for new scientific investigations in educology. This enables vocational education and training practitioners to enlarge their decision possibilities and help to reconsolidate philosophical trends and main values that ground their working activities, in that “at an abstract ideal level, the interchange of scientific and practical areas causes a more rapid provision of knowledge than at a specific level of means and methods” (Astley and Zammuto, 1992, p. 444).

The development of an educology of vocation raises the following fundamental paradigmatic issues: (1) What philosophical trends function as the bases for the development of an educology of vocation? (2) Which direction of an educology of vocation should be chosen, one that is oriented by personality development or one oriented by personality productivity? (3) What aims should prevail in an educology of vocation, one giving priority to general- or one giving priority to special-mono-professional skill development?

Lithuanian scholars Laužackas (1999), Pukelis (1998), Šernas (1997), Kavaliauskiene (2001) and others emphasise the importance of a methodological and philosophical basis for an educology of vocation. Pukelis (1998) investigates the relationship between educology as a science and philosophy as a science and claims that trends in both of these sciences “try to relate thought and activity and foresee the methods and perspectives of the latter.” (p. 204)

A great number of foreign researchers, Swanson (1995), Russ-Eft (1996), Kuchinke (1998), etc., state that an educology of vocation, as an educology of vocational education and training programmes, should include the exploration of paradigmatic and philosophical foundations of vocational education and training.

The developers of vocational education and training strategy and of designs for curriculum have to analyse current vocational situation, and what is of utmost importance, they have to construct future perspectives for critically evaluating possible models of ideal systems for vocational education and training. It is at this normative level that paradigmatic issues arise and differences between alternative personality development trends originate from different philosophical traditions.

However, an educology of vocation, as an educology vocational education and training systems, lacks attempts to solve these paradigmatic issues with regard to a mature concept of personality development.

Therefore, the purpose of the research in this article is to carry out the analysis of philosophical trends of personality development in the context of an educology of vocational education and training. The pursuit of this purpose was guided by the following educologically oriented rationale:

- (1) the classification of philosophical trends of personality development being presented in the context of an educology of vocation as an educology of vocational education and training;
- (2) the investigation of the impact of person-oriented philosophical trends in educology being based upon the development of vocational education and training;
- (3) the exploration of the impact of productivity-oriented philosophical trend in educology being based upon the development of vocational education and training;
- (4) the examination of the impact of principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trends in educology being based upon the development of vocational education and training, and;
- (5) in the context of an educology of vocational education and training reform, the continuity in perspectives of methodological research being defined.

Within this educologically oriented research rationale, research methods were applied to aspects of the analysis of psychological and philosophical research literature in respect to information systematising, and structuring.

Part 2

The Classification of Philosophical Trends of Personality Development in the Context of an Educology of Vocational Education and Training

The theoretical and practical areas of vocational education and training oriented educological research are often grounded on various personality concepts that are difficult to define. A critical analysis and verification of the application possibilities of these concepts are necessary for theoreticians and practitioners developing the theoretical background of the curriculum in order to find more possibilities to carry out thoughtful solutions and refine scientific and practically oriented educological conclusions.

In vocational education and training educological theory, three alternative personality development trends are distinguished, all of which derive from different philosophical traditions, as follows:

- (1) Person-oriented philosophical trend in educology raising self-realisation and individuality issues as indicated by ideas originating in humanistic psychology and liberalism;
- (2) Productivity-oriented philosophical trend in educology concentrating on labour world tasks as indicated by ideas originating in behaviourism and libertinism;
- (3) Principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trend in educology directing the development of active, critical, and cognitive thinking skills of a person as indicated by ideas originating in cognitive psychology, progressivism, and pragmatism.

Every trend of personality development lays a constructive basis for the determination of the role and functions in educology for the profession of vocational education and training.

Theory and practice of the profession of vocational education and training, as based on an educology of vocation, can be related to one of these three different personality development philosophical trends. These trends can further be classified according to the classical theories of Kohlberg and Mayer (1972) which discern three different educologically oriented ideological movements, i.e. the ideology of romantic, the culture transmitting, and the progressive movements. Knowles (1984) expresses a similar idea emphasising the mechanical behaviouristic, cognitive, and humanistic educologically oriented models, each of them being related to a unique learning strategy and being based on “three different personality structure concepts” (p. 6).

These philosophical trends of personality development complement an educological theory of vocational education and training and each of them enriches the practice of the profession based on this theory. On the other hand, new ideas that have emerged out of a vocational education and training educological theory and practice can help to surmount the existing limitations of philosophical trends and adequately respond to the challenges of the rapidly changing world of work.

Table 1 illustrates the classification of different philosophical trends according to the core goal of personality development, applying the method of information systematisation and structuralisation. The core goals are those of person-oriented, productivity-oriented, and principal problem solving skill-oriented personality development. Each of these trends originated from different philosophical traditions and each creates specific assumptions about human nature, the working world, and the development of society.

Table 1. Classification of personality development philosophical trends according to educological goals

Feature of personality development philosophical trend	Personality development philosophical trends		
	Person-oriented philosophical trend of education	Productivity-oriented philosophical trend of education	Principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trend of education
Major theses defining personality development	Competent and effective self-education striving for personal identity and	Personality development is ensured by acquisition	Personality development is fostered by a “dialogue” between personal

	vocation discovery and fully-fledged self-realisation (Maslow, 1979)	of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes and values necessary to carry out work activity functions perfectly	cognitive structure and elements comprising the environment. Self-development through thinking stimulating activity
Concepts identifying a philosophical trend	Needs hierarchy Two factor theory	Role theory Quality of work activity	Problem solving Cognitive thinking

Other parts of the article describe the relationship between each of these philosophical trends, in an educology of vocational education and training systems, in regard to the determination of the merits and demerits, as well as the analysis, of their inter-discrepancies.

2. Person-oriented philosophical trend in educology

Person-oriented concept of educology as originated from the philosophical traditions of idealism, humanism, and romanticism (Fig. 1).

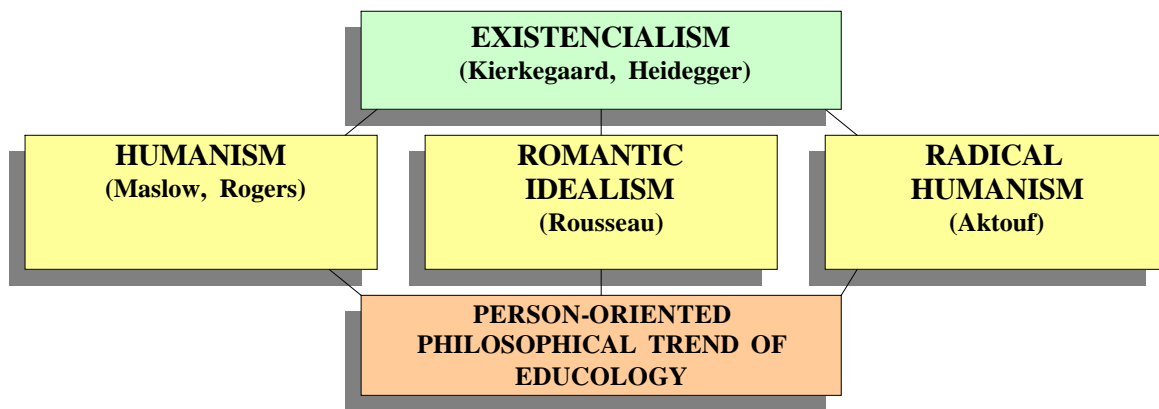


Fig.1. Philosophical origins of person-oriented educology

Romanticism is an intellectual movement that reached the apogee at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. (Flew, 1979) According to the followers of romanticism, the major personality development principles are based on internal personal growth and on strengthening the relationship with one's internal reality in consideration of the imperative by Kant (1724-1804) that a person should always be treated as an end in her/himself.

The founders of the humanism theory, Allport (1897-1967), Maslow (1908-1970), and Rogers (1902-1987), under the influence of the ideas of existentialism, transferred the principles of romanticism to contemporary educology, psychology, and sociology.

A great many Lithuanian researchers in an educology of vocation, as the educology of vocational education and training, are in favour of postulates oriented by humanism. The principles of this philosophical movement and attitude toward personality development are expressed in central positions of the normative documents of (1) Lithuanian Conception of Education (1992) and (2) Vocational Education and Training White Papers (1999). The major goal of an educology of vocational education and training is to develop a conscious, independent, active, and mature nature to meet national and state needs, lifelong learning needs, and universally creative personality needs, while actively participating in the processes involved in the development of a democratic society. (White Papers, 1999, p. 19) One of the four educological principles of Lithuanian education is that of a principle of humanism, stating

that it is necessary to create and implement “personal worthiness, respect for every individuality, freedom of choice, humanistic relationships based on values peculiar to all human beings at all stages of vocational education and training, and person-oriented teaching programmes that satisfy human needs” (White Papers, 1999, p. 21).

Foreign scholars also ground the development of contemporary theories in humanistic principles. Here are some of the major statements of these theories.

(1) Maslow (1970) as the founder of the human needs hierarchy theory that is based on a latent developmental sequence of person’s internal life, i.e. of a latent personality development, wherein, the goal of a person is self-actualisation;

(2) Herzberg’s (1966) two factor motivational theory as based on the model of cohering contradictory internal needs and external tasks in persons, revealing the psychological origin of the “major contradiction between the subjective and objective aspects of the vocation;” (Laužackas, 1999, p. 26)

(3) Deming (1982) and others as representatives of a total quality management theory grounded on the factual vocational preparation of their employees, wherein, their motivation is expressed by internal intention to perform efficiently.

Person-oriented philosophical trends in educology discover and reveal the qualities of inborn internal good, natural human health, and they search for methods of making personal sense and personal expression actual. Personality is considered active, rational, self-aware, and complex, having the empowered freedom to develop the awareness of dignity and the feeling of being responsible for making sense of one’s life. A student is fully allowed to reveal herself/himself in one’s work by whatever she/he has the potential to be. It is implied that every person tends to positive values, emphasizing the importance of person’s internal states and feelings and the importance of carrying out duties, aptitude, achievement, objectives, and responsibility. Other life factors do not satisfy the person by themselves, in that they are only important to the extent of internal personality growth and awareness and the experience of happiness and health.

With regard to educology of vocation institutions, the person-oriented philosophical trend in the educology of vocational education and training demands the creation of an environment that stimulates personality growth, in which every student can fully reveal and use her/his internal experience, inborn aptitude, and externally trained skills. In this respect, educology of vocation institutions fully perform their functions when all the obstacles for student’s self-expression are eliminated and a learning/teaching environment, based on openness and respect, is nurtured in which individual creativity can manifest itself. However, applying these merits in practice is bound to face the major hindrances of inertness and rigidity that are socially and individually entrenched in existing vocational education and training systems for a long time, hence, systems that are likely to resist new structural changes.

Aktouf (1992) maintains a radical humanistic point of view and insists that educology of vocational education and training institutions aim to “develop student’s attitude to working experience as a real self-continuation, a possibility for self-expression, and satisfaction of one’s personal needs and interests” (p. 419).

This philosophical trend in educology is based on striving for human development in which each person is responsible for her/himself, hence, responsible for developing her/his internal potential and other inner life experiences. This is the basis for the development of self-control and responsibility for her/his life experiences and independence in all spheres of work. Person-oriented philosophical trends in educology suggest accepting the disposition that students are the core priority of vocational education and training systems.

Focusing on the subjective-personal aspect of an educology of vocation, this philosophical trend in educology does not analyse the objective aspect, i.e. economic labour market demand aspect, in vocations. After the ideas of the person-oriented philosophical trends in educology have become methodological foundation of vocational education and training, the contradictions between the subjective and objective aspects of vocations have become more acute, as during the teaching/learning period a personal development goal is emphasised, whereas having gained the qualification and started work activity, the graduate encounters economic market laws which challenges he is not yet ready to accept. In the working world where laws of competition prevail, personality growth is not the major goal.

Part 3
Productivity-Oriented Philosophical Trend in Educology

This educologically oriented concept derives from behaviourism and libertarianism philosophy (Fig. 2).

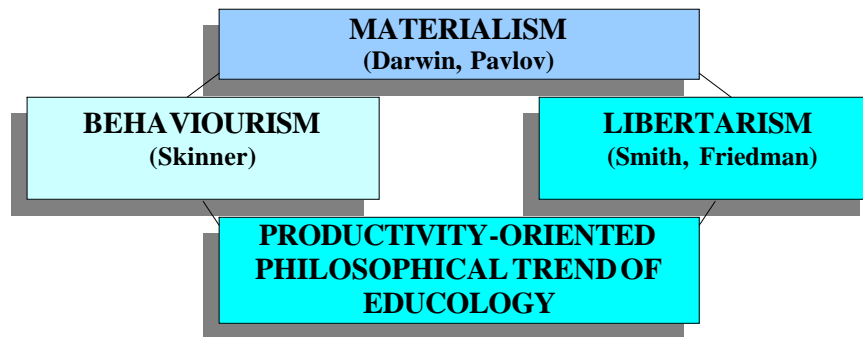


Fig. 2. Philosophical origin of productivity-oriented educology

If person-oriented philosophical trend of education focuses on personal needs and goals, productivity-oriented philosophical trend of education raises a different goal for personal development – enlarge the person’s productive capacities. Vocational educational and training goal is to transmit knowledge, rules of social behaviour, develop skills and abilities necessary to perform a vocational activity efficiently. Personal development is fostered by the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, skills, attitudes and values necessary to react properly to the demands and to satisfy external needs. This philosophical trend of education is closely related to role theory (Stryker and Statham, 1985). Personal development is evaluated according to the degree of correspondence of two factors – a measurable, valuable behaviour and expectations of the performed role, whereas in case of person-oriented approach it was evaluated by person’s feelings, thoughts or other internal states. Dooley (1940) expresses the position of productivity-oriented philosophical trend of education: “The purpose of vocational education and training is to increase labour productivity, i.e. solve productivity problem through person’s education. This method “helps a person to use what he has learnt in the work activity and acquire specific skills” (Swanson, Torraco, 1995, p. 2).

According to productivity-oriented philosophical trend of education, the major goal of education is to seek for personal development in order to satisfy working world demands. Working world is understood as a purpose-oriented entity, constructed, organised and governed to fulfil a set of objectives. A person’s goal is to help realise these objectives, whereas the goal of vocational education and training is to provide a future worker with necessary knowledge, abilities and skills to empower him to perform specific defined functions. The measure of personal development is the necessary level the employee achieves to perform his role and to help labour work institution to achieve its general goals.

This philosophical trend of education helps to rapidly find answers to clearly determined problems. Applying this philosophical trend of education, a vocational education and training institution can provide a student with knowledge, abilities and skills necessary to perform a clearly defined objective activity. Using productivity-oriented philosophical strategy of education, vocational education and training institution can provide a necessary help to the student by teaching; however, this requires necessary preconditions: clear aims, reliable and well-known methods and accessible resources to achieve them. Science of management, various theories of labour world development and industrial relationships are predominantly based on productivity-oriented philosophy of education.

This philosophical trend of education, having its major goal to increase the person's productivity, in a single-sided way focuses on the objective aspect of vocation, i.e. on carrying out the objectives of economic market, whereas the subjective aspect of the vocation is examined only as far as the achieving of this goal concerns. Thus, in this case, a person is one of the means necessary to carry out economic market objectives, i.e. a person is treated like an object. This unethical and inhuman attitude contradicts a personalistic norm that states that a person is a non-reductive subject and can never be treated like an object because of his innate dignity and unique internal experience (Wojtyla, 1997). Ignoring this personalistic norm in vocation-labour relationship creates theoretical assumptions for negative tendencies that open up a possibility to use and exploit a person; it also causes deformation of vocation choice motivation: On the one hand, it makes pure rational and pragmatic motives absolute; on the other hand, it suppresses inner personal incentives, as well as the discovery of individual vocation calling and self-realisation. When the ideas of productivity-oriented education become the methodological basis for vocational education and training strategy, the major vocation contradiction between a subjective and objective aspects of a vocation becomes more acute as learning/teaching emphasises the performance of specific objectives of the economic market and obtaining of knowledge, abilities and skills necessary for that purpose, whereas person's internal experience and needs are ignored.

Part 4
Principal Problem Solving Skill-Oriented Philosophical Trends in Educology

This educological concept was derived from philosophical trends of progressivism, cognitive thinking, pragmatism and postmodernism (Fig.3).

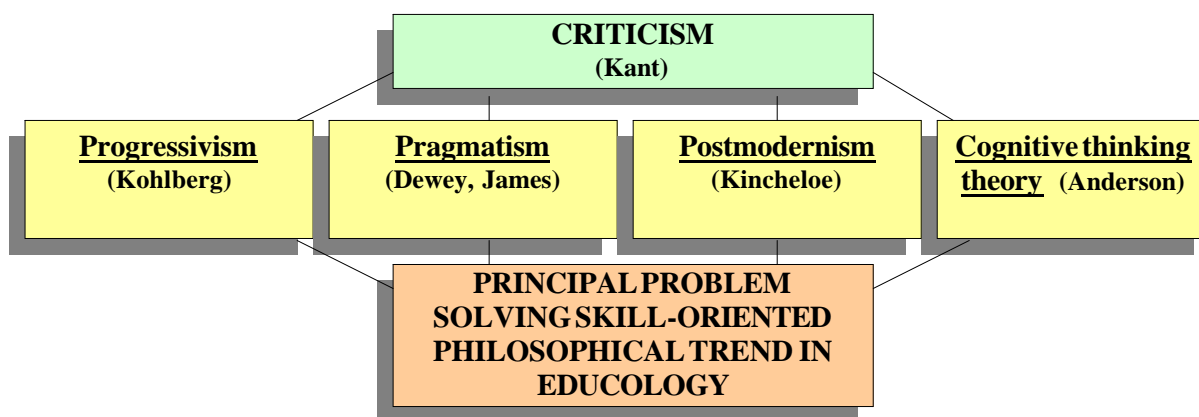


Fig. 3. Philosophical origin of principal problem solving skill-oriented educology

Principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trend of education emphasises not revealed, innate, latent personality features and possibilities; productivity-oriented model of education stresses the importance of the tuning of person's relationship with requirements of

external environment; whereas principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trend of education aims at solving the demerits of the former two educational strategies giving priority to the development of cognitive thinking.

The first component of the theoretical foundation of this educational philosophy is ideology of progressive education which indicates “active thinking changes caused by problem solving situation experience” (Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972, p. 455) as major personality development factors. This postulate reveals and discloses the principal concept of progressive trend of education. In a certain social problem-solving situation, progressivism emphasises the aspects of interaction and dynamism. It gives priority to experiential learning method and concentrates on active person’s participation in a problematic problem solving situation. A particular importance is attached neither to internalisation of aims and values nor to immediate reactions, impulses or emotions but to “models of actively changing reactions to problematic social situations” (Kohlberg and Mayer, 1972, p. 455). In this case it is aimed at finding a solution that would satisfy all the participants of the designed specific situation.

The second component of the theoretical foundation of this philosophy of education is cognitive psychology and its main assumption that cognition as a mental personality structural component internally organises separate systems, structuring the experience of our external world. Cognition selects information about the environment that surrounds a person, acquired experiences, the importance attached to this experience and the general perception of the world. However, these cognitive structures are not fixed, they tend to change. Cognitive personality development rises from a “dialogue” between personal cognitive structure and the elements that comprise the environment. In every situation the priority is given to thinking that helps to better integrate various needs of the participants and solutions and helps to discern the most important and optimal ones.

Bandura (1986) advocates for a similar trend; his social cognitive theory (SCT) suggests an alternative for traditional postulates, which base work activity on internal motives (e.g., various needs, strive for self-actualisation, etc.) or externally governed factors (e.g., encouragements, fear, etc.). According to that theory, person’s behaviour is determined not only by internal or external factors, it is created in a dynamic and mutual interaction between personal, environmental and behavioural factors. From the point of view of SCT, a person is an independent and active agent seeking to achieve various goals: some of them coincide with a concrete institution of the working world; some of them coincide with social, others with economic or personal goals. A person sets goals and standards, manages the behaviour related to the achievement of these goals, uses control and consciousness and displays human power (Bandura, 1997).

With the use of critical thinking and problem solving, major goals of principal problem solving skill-oriented education are formulated: functional optimisation of the situation; integration of internal and external needs; balance of inter-competitive statements.

Instead of defending the importance of self-development and achievement of external goals in the context of a certain problem situation requirements this educational method suggests a continuous correction of various parameters, requires courage to review earlier solutions, and, investigating the assumptions once more, constructively discuss the dynamically changing needs of all the situation participants.

In the principal problem solving skill-oriented philosophical trend of education, vocational education and training strategy merges with the concept of qualitative work activity, defined by Kincheloe (1995) as oriented to democratic self-control and responsibility for himself and others. In the social sphere, working world provides a possibility for every participant of the activity to express himself in a creative and responsible way. In this context integrity and

relationship between essentially different personal, social and natural worlds of an individual is an expression of humanism.

The major merit of this vocational education and training strategy is the preparation of the student to creatively solve the challenges of the working world and its systematic nature. In a rapidly changing world, a future employee, taking into account the resources, interests, and needs of all the participants of the process, makes efforts to find the solutions to complex democratic economic market problems and becomes capable of finding responses to the questions of global social justice and implementation of democratic values. This philosophical trend of education suggests solving complicated problems in a creative way and bears a potential to create situations where everybody can win. When economic and social goals intersect, a principal problem solving method represents value orientation. This vocational education and training strategy suggests treating the student as a creatively thinking explorer (Kincheloe, 1995) and aiming at ensuring real personality development and working potential growth owing to learning and experimentation. Besides, this philosophical trend in educology offers a new understanding of work activity, treating work as an interesting occupation that provides satisfaction and that stimulates creativity and efficiency. The use of a principal problem solving skill-oriented learning method can help find preconditions for reducing the major contradiction in vocations.

A personality development model requires a long lasting commitment which is often relative because of inert vocational education and training systems and traditions that have settled down during many years. Not all the students can apply a time-consuming problem solving based learning/teaching method in their pedagogical activity, on the other hand, not all the students are intellectually capable or subject efficient to rationally develop their cognitive thinking. Besides, some types of work do not require the use of broad-range high-level cognitive abilities and rational problem solving skills. For these reasons it is possible to conclude that a principal problem solving skill-oriented learning/teaching strategy can be applied in vocational education and training selectively.

Part 5 Conclusions

1. Vocational education and training theory distinguishes three alternative personality development strategic trends that derive from different philosophical traditions: (i) person-oriented education aiming at self-realisation and individuality and based on the ideas of humanistic psychology and liberalism; (ii) productivity-oriented education focusing on working world objectives and based on the ideals of behaviourism and libertarianism, and, (iii) principal problem solving skill-oriented education having the major aim to develop active, critical, and cognitive thinking skills of a person. The theoretical foundation of this education lies in the sources of cognitive psychology, progressivism, and pragmatism. Every trend of personality development creates a basis for determining the importance of roles and functions of a vocation.

2. The major goal of person-oriented education is to foster full-fledged dissemination of internal needs, intentions, and experiences of a person to ensure the discovery of one's identity, vocational calling, and overall achievement of self-actualisation. The main merits of this education are that favourable conditions are created for the student to reveal and use his inner experiences, inborn talents, and trained skills. The main demerit is lack of examination of the objective aspect of vocation, i.e. the aspect of economic labour market demand.

3. The major goal of productivity-oriented education is to increase the productive capacity of a person by them striving for personality development as it involves acquiring knowledge, abilities, skills, values, and social behaviour rules necessary in the vocation to satisfy working

world demands. The most important merit is education, i.e. the merit of a student becoming equipped with knowledge, abilities, and skills that are demanded by actively defined objective work activity. The major demerit is the single-sided focus on the objective aspect of the vocation, i.e. on carrying out economic market demands, wherein, the person is treated like an object, i.e. treated as one of the means necessary to fulfil the demands of the economic market.

4. The major goal of the principal problem solving skill-oriented education is to develop person's active, creative, and cognitive thinking skills for solving complicated problem situations and enabling a person to creatively face working world challenges and experience and to master the power of one's inner, personal, and human potential. The most important merit of such education is that of a student becoming prepared to creatively encounter and solve working world challenges. The major demerit is that this philosophical trend in educology has to be applied for vocational education and training selectively.

5. Vivid labour market changes, during the past years, demand more flexible employees who are open to innovations; who have more universal skills, and; who are able to adapt to more complicated technologies. With regard to these demands and changes, vocational education and training reform in Lithuania is oriented toward conducting experiences in the European Union countries, in which standards are designed, new strategies are created, and priorities are foreseen. The solutions to these fundamental, paradigmatic problematic objectives call for broad-range and more open methodological research of philosophical foundations in educology.

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