Modern Health Improving Psychotechnologies of a Higher School Teacher’s Personality

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ABSTRACT
The article is devoted to a very important problem of contemporary society, the problem of searching for efficient methods of health improving psycho-technologies of a university teacher’s personality. The article contains the empirical research results of developing the key constituents of teachers’ social competence as an integrated personal construct, representing the system of knowledge about society, capabilities and skills of behavior accepted in society. The conclusions have been drawn that the component of a person’s psychological resilience can serve as a psychological quality providing a university teacher’s personality’s mental and physical health. Besides, a health improving orientation of a teacher’s personality has been identified that comprises the components of one’s own health, the needs in self-cognition, self-development, self-improvement of individual health as a condition of effective self-realization in the field of pedagogical activity. A social and psychological training course has been offered as the most effective method of health improving psycho-technologies of a university teacher’s personality (developed for a target group of people). The materials of the article can be useful to teachers, psychologists as well as executives of educational institutions of higher and secondary vocational education.

Keywords: health improving psycho-technologies, psycho-training, social competence of a teacher’s personality, resilience.

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INTRODUCTION

Unfavorable social and economic conditions that formed in the RF at the turn of the second and third millennia have led to a considerable decline of the social status of Russian university teachers. In the period of forming new economic relations an education was infrequently considered as a market service with unaltered high requirements of society for personal and professional qualities of a teacher. The state demanding a humane attitude to children from teachers treated teachers rather inhumanely.

According to scientists’ data, social, cultural and professional stress producing factors serve as a cause of fast «wearing out» of teachers’ organisms, their premature ageing leading to a psychosomatic pathology in 70–90% of teachers, and with the increase of teachers’ service years they experience aggravating psychopathological disorders of a neurotic and psychopathic character [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. Along with it, due attention is not paid to teachers’ health at the level of state, municipal institutions. Teachers, in their turn, ignore the rules of a healthy lifestyle themselves, they have neither a developed feeling of responsibility for their own health, nor formed value-meaning mindsets to maintain health as an inseparable part of the general cultural development, the fundamentals of long professional service and long life.

The problem of teachers’ health state has been focused on and studied profoundly in the last decade: the systems of psychological support are created for teachers as emotionally burning out professionals [7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14], their psychosomatic health recovery by medical and valeologic methods is offered [15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22].

A teacher being under extremely changing conditions of his existence needs the intensification of psychological resources that provide his psychological safety and can preserve health. A teacher’s professional activity is carried out in the circumstances of dynamic, unexpected, ambiguous and poly-functional situations. The use of health improving psycho-technologies in a teacher’s professional activity is an important objective of higher and post-university education [23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30].

METHODOLOGICAL BASES AND METHODS

The implementation of the national project «Education» that has been assigned a high priority and directed towards the improvement of resource and financial support for the educational system is not accompanied by the life quality rise of the teaching staff whose professional work is becoming intensified, also because of new professional duties. Contemporary teachers are under constant stress which is associated with mounting and contradicting requirements set to them from different customers of educational services: education controlling agencies, the state, parents and students. Under these conditions of increasing responsibility for activity results and emotional tension at the same time, being under great strain, with a feeling of the work value depreciation a teacher needs personal resources to preserve mental and psychical health, he needs it for professional development
and self-actualization, to overcome difficulties of various kinds. However, as the results of contemporary researches showed, not each teacher possesses sufficiently developed health preserving resources which leads to their vulnerability to professional deformations, emotional burnout, a decline of resilience. Trying to find technologies to give aid to teachers in overcoming difficulties and a steady build-up of a constructive way of their overcoming, we turned to the analysis of psychological characteristics that provide a university teacher’s personality’s psychical and physical health [31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37].

Further we assumed that social competence as an integrated personal construct representing the system of knowledge about society, capabilities and skills of behavior accepted in society can be such a resource. An integrated personal construct representing the system of relations demonstrated through personal qualities of a person, his motivation, value orientations, helps to integrate external and internal resources to achieve socially significant goals and to solve life problems. We tried to find this resource on the basis of studying a teacher’s personality’s social competence in difficult life situations.

The study was conducted at the Federal State Budget-Financed Higher Educational Institution «Ulyanovsk State University» (the city of Ulyanovsk) and at Federal State Budget-Financed Higher Educational Institution «Plekhanov State University of Economics» (the city of Moscow). One hundred and two university teachers took part in it.

To study social competence of a person we used the technique of a person’s social competence by N.V. Kalinina [38]. The approach that underlies this technique is that social competence is an important psychological novel construct of a person that helps to harmoniously and constructively solve problems of various crises. N.V. Kalinina [39] also associates teachers’ social competence with a success of accomplishing the social order of society, the state, a certain environment by them and suggests counting it as the main indicator of their activity performance. The author writes in particular: «Defining social competence as a set of knowledge and skills that provide the performance of social activity, personal qualities connected with the ability to assume responsibility and a certain level of spiritual culture comprising love, recognition, credibility, the model of a socially competent teacher can be presented as a set of the following signs:

- an ability to change stereotype presentations;
- the presence of inner freedom, priority of internal mindsets;
- an ability to give up dominating;
- an ability to accept a failure and correct life strategies;
- readiness for life changes;
- the formation of behavioral mobility;
- the presence of rational negativism and tolerance» [40, 41].
To study teachers’ personality resilience we used S. Maddi’s [42] resilience test (adapted by D.A. Leontyev, E.I. Rasskazova) [43]. The resilience test represents an adaptation of the questionnaire Hardiness Survey worked out by Salvatore Maddi, an American psychologist, whose theory and researches with few exceptions [44], until today have not been touched upon in Russian publications. A personal variable hardiness (the first of the authors of this manual in 2000 suggested using this characteristic in Russian as resilience) characterizes a measure of a person’s ability to withstand a stressful situation keeping internal balance and not reducing the performance of activity. This construct was identified in the course of researches in which the answer was sought to find to the following question: which psychological factors contribute to successful coping with stress and a decline (or even a prevention) of internal strain?

The notion of resilience introduced by Suzanne Kobasa and Salvatore Maddi [45] is at the intersection of theoretical views of existential psychology and applied field of psychology of stress and coping with it.

The applied character of resilience is determined by the role which this personal variable plays in a person’s successful counteraction to stressful situations, first of all, in professional activity. According to the research data, resilience is proved to be the key personal variable mediating the influence of stress producing factors (comprising chronic ones) in somatic and psychic health, on the success of the activity performance.

In a theoretical respect the notion of resilience fits into the system of concepts of the existential theory of personality, serving as operationalization of the concept “courage to be” introduced by P. Tillich, an existential philosopher [46]. This existential courage assumes the readiness to “act against” - against ontological anxiety, the anxiety of losing sense, against the feeling of “abandonment” (M. Heidegger). It is resilience that helps a person to endure intractable anxiety which accompanies the choice of the future, (uncertainty), but not the past (invariability) in the situation of the existential dilemma [47].

The conception of resilience, thus, makes it possible to unite the studies in the field of stress psychology with existential ideas of ontological anxiety and ways of coping with it. The conception of resilience practically offers an effective answer based on existential views to one of the most important problems of the end of the XX century, a problem of successful coping with stress and reduction (or even the prevention) of inner strain [48, 49, 50, 51].

RESULTS

On the basis of the conceptual data of the personality potential to cope with difficult life situations 8 main factors were identified (the groups of personal characteristics) that point to possibilities of overcoming difficult situations. They comprise: an ability to change stereotype presentations; inner freedom; priority of internal mindsets; the renunciation of domination; an ability to accept failure and correct life strategies; readiness for life changes; behavioral mobility; rational negativism and tolerance.
In the first group of personal characteristics «An ability to change stereotype presentation» according to the study results in 42 % of the teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 29 % — the level is higher than the average, in 26 % — the level is lower than the average and in 3 % of the interviewed the level is low.

Thus it is clear that although the teachers are prone to behave in difficult situations «as commonly accepted» resting on the tested rules and principles, but at the same time, can be capable of rethinking their habitual behavior and can flexibly make their own way in a real situation.

In the second group of personal characteristics «Inner freedom», according to the research results in 46 % this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 34 % — the level is higher than the average and in 20 % — the level is lower than the average. Consequently, 80 % of the interviewed are fairly free and at the same time are capable of reacting with subtlety to the situation requirements, in 20 %, as a rule, they strive to come up with expectations of the people around who are important to them which can be determined by their heightened feeling of responsibility.

In the third group of personal characteristics «Renunciation of domination», in view of the research results, in 34 % of teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 6 % — the level is higher than the average, in 46 % — the level is lower than the average and in 14 % of the interviewed the level is low. From here it follows that the teachers predominantly are the people whose behavior is based on domination, they strive to demonstrate their confidence at least outwardly. More likely, such values are determined by first of all, the specific character of their profession and position held.

In the fourth group of personal characteristics «Acceptance of failure», on the basis of the research results in 37 % of teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 9 % — the level is higher than the average, in 45 % — the level is higher than the average and in 9 % of the interviewed the level is low. According to the research results it turns out that only 8 % of the teachers are not sufficiently ready for the correction of life strategies, and the majority demonstrate readiness to solve tasks set by the situation taking into account of those life changes that have taken place.

In the fifth group of personal characteristics «Fear of losses and changes in life», according to the research results, in 29 % of the teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 6 % — the level is higher than the average, in 62% — the level is lower than the average and in 3% of the interviewed the level is low. It follows from these data that 94 % of the teachers on the whole are capable of controlling their condition, to the full extent they can use their time, knowledge, skills to cope with stresses in life. But 6 % of the interviewed experience a rather strong fear of losses in difficult life situations and overcome hardships with difficulty.
In the sixth group of personal characteristics «Deficit of behavioral mobility», according to the research results, in 40% of the teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 14% — the level is higher than the average, in 46% — the level is lower than the average. On the basis of the results it is clear that 60% of the interviewed experience difficulties in the skill to orient themselves fast and flexibly under changing conditions of the situation, the major part of the interviewed applies various behavioral strategies in dynamic conditions of the environment taking the prognosis of the situation development into account.

In the seventh group of personal characteristics «Rational negativism», in view of the research results, in 46% of the teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 20% — the level is higher than the average, in 14% — the level is lower than the average and in 20% of the interviewed the level is high. Such data suggest that only 46% of the teachers are capable of perceiving changes that take place calmly and sensibly and keep prudence and clarity while taking decisions which at first sight, cannot correspond to the conditions of the situation. All the rest, in all probability, due to the specific character of their profession are not prone to take non-standard decisions and demonstrate a sufficiently cynical view on the events that occur.

In the eighth group of personal characteristics «Tolerance», according to the research results, in 40% of the teachers this characteristic is developed at the average level, in 20% — the level is higher than the average, in 37% — the level is lower than the average and in 3% of the interviewed the level is low. Thus we see that 37% of the teachers demonstrate intolerance and in 3% of the interviewed it is fairly pronounced, i. e. they do not show tolerance and respectful attitude to other people, they are distinguished by the view of their own exclusiveness, strive to shift responsibility onto the people around and divide the world into «insiders» and «outsiders». This is largely explained by a developing emotional burnout, great strains.

The data obtained enabled us to find «growth points», as well as «sore points» in the development of a teacher’s personality’s social competence.

DISCUSSION

The study of interrelation between resilience and social competence of teachers was conducted on the basis of the analysis of correlation ties of teachers’ resilience values that were obtained with the use of Maddi’s test adapted by D.A. Leontyev, E. I. Rasskazova and values of a person’s social competence presented earlier with the use of Pearson’s coefficient [52].

The value obtained was 0,72, it is statistically significant at the 5% level and testifies to the direct relation between the studied components: the higher the value of a person’s social competence in a difficult life situation is the higher the value of his resilience. This gives us a
possibility to consider social competence in difficult life situations as the most important resource of a teacher’s personality’s resilience.

Thus on the basis of the data obtained we worked out the program of the social and psychological course as a modern method of a university teacher’s personality’s health improving psycho-technology.

Developing the program of the psychological training course we relied on the following provisions:

- a psychological training is a method that creates conditions to change self-consciousness;
- to change the process it is required to self-analyze the state (emotional, intellectual, behavioral, personal) «here and now»;
- correlation analysis of the research results showed the availability of the interrelation between the components of social competence and resources of resilience which has influence on the provision of psychological safety and the person’s health protection.

The model of a psycho-training course must include the following stages of a teacher’s behavior’s constructive change:

- motivation,
- cognitive,
- affective,
- behavioral.

The stage of the teacher’s motivational preparation for an active involvement in the process of changing his own behavior is one of the labor-intensive. A set of warm-up exercises contributes to the effectiveness of the group’s further work, motivational involvement in the process. The outcome of it is the identification of the problem significant for a teacher’s professional development.

At the stage of «motivational preparation» one should identify the «motive of a teacher»:
Type I – a teacher does not have a serious intention to change his behavior. He does not show his interest in new technologies offered, innovations, he is prone to exaggerate positive aspects of his activity;
Type II – a teacher starts considering seriously possible changes of his behavior, but the decision has not been taken yet;
Type III – a teacher intends to change his behavior in the nearest time and considers
the psychological training course as an important step in the direction of optimizing his
behavior.

At the stage of awareness the main process of changing is cognitive. Knowledge
obtained about the development of his personal structures enables a teacher to analyze his
strengths and weaknesses. Owing to the information increase teachers start being aware of
and assess possible ways of their professional growth. Training exercises directed towards
self-cognition increase the processes of self-analysis.

The stage of reassessment is accompanied by the increase in the use of not only
cognitive but affective processes of changing. At this stage in the process of performing
business games, discussions reassessment takes place in understanding the significance of
developing personal structures and their influence on the provision of psychological safety
and health protection. The choice and decision taking to act is the main result of this stage.

The stage of action is final. A teacher tries new ways of behavior resting on the
changing «I-conception». The main result of this stage is hardiness to the stimuli provoking
stereotype behavior and self encouragement for the ability to take constructive decisions.

Practical implementation of the technological model is carried out in different forms: as
a scientific and practical workshop, a training seminar, a coaching session.

Thus in our view the psychological training course represents the most effective
method of a health improving technology and directed to a teacher’s personality’s self-
consciousness change, meeting the requirements of psychological safety and health of a
teacher, the formation of positive personal powers that provide the change of behavior.

CONCLUSION

Thus on the basis of the data obtained in this research we can draw a conclusion that

1) A person’s psychological resilience component can serve as a psychological
characteristic that provide psychical and physical health of a university teacher’s personality.

2) Social competence as an integrated personal construct representing the system of
knowledge about society, capabilities and skills of behavior accepted in society can be a
resource for the provision of a person’s resilience. An integrated personal construct
representing the system of relations demonstrated through personal qualities of a person, his
motivation, value orientations, helps to integrate external and internal resources to achieve
socially significant goals and to solve life problems.

3) The health preserving orientation of a teacher’s personality is considered by us as
the orientation of a teacher to: his own health, linked with the need for self-cognition, self-
development, self-improvement of individual health as a condition of effective self-
realization in the field of teaching activity.
4) The most effective method of health preserving psycho-technologies of a university teacher’s personality, in our view, is (developed for a target audience) a social and psychological training course.

Besides, the humanistic orientation of a teacher’s profession determines a health improving influence of pedagogical activity; the subject’s position of the health improving activity makes a teacher carry out health improving patterns and norms of behavior; the achievement of psychosomatic well-being and wellness competence by the teacher is the result of activating his internal potential under specially created conditions of the health improving educational system. The model of developing health culture in practice is implemented in compliance with continuous valeologic, psychological and pedagogical education as the stages of activating teachers’ internal potential: a) a teacher’s awareness of his health improving mission by means of turning to the mechanism of the emotional and value self-analysis and hermeneutic interpretation; b) the creation of the positive image of one’s own «I» in self-consciousness of a teacher and achievement of psychological and emotional well-being by him with the use of methods and practices of psychological technologies – cognitive, a positive psycho-therapy and creative visualization; c) the formation of the teachers’ value attitude to health improving activity through comprehension of the experience of the teachers’ community and their mastery of health improving pedagogical technologies; d) development by teachers of their own projects of health improving activity in the educational process with the use of projecting, modeling methods and self-analysis mechanism.

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