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Meaning-building Techniques for the Implementation of Students' Value-meaning Choice in the Educational Process

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Abstract

Introduction. The use of psychological techniques and technologies for the implementation of students' value-meaning choice in the educational process creates conditions for creative activity and self-disclosure of personal experience, thereby providing a personal-meaning orientation of the learning process. However, there is also a disadvantage of choice, namely, 'sacrificing' one alternative in favor of another in such situations. Therefore, the classification of meaning-building techniques for the implementation of a value-meaning choice also contains support technologies. This study reports the first development of a classification of meaning-building techniques capable of initiating students' value-meaning choice, as well as their testing in the educational process to increase students' motivation and develop their value-meaning sphere.

Methods. The study used the following psychological assessment tools: (a) the Meaning-in-Life Orientations test (MLO) by D. A. Leont'ev, (b) the inventory for Diagnosing the Orientation of Educational Motivation by T. D. Dubovitskaya, and (c) the Multidimensional Questionnaire of Personality Self-Realization (MQPSR) by S. I. Kudinov. The study involved students of the South-Russian State Polytechnic University (Novocherkassk) and the Don State Technical University (Rostov-on-Don). A total of 437 respondents participated in the study. **Results.** The results of the formative experiment in the experimental groups showed that according to the MLO test, the overall score of meaningfulness in life increased by 6.5 %; according to the 'life performance' subtest, the overall score of meaningfulness in life increased by 2.06 %. According to the MQPSR, the 'optimism' indicator increased by 3.6 %, and the 'pessimism' indicator, on the contrary, decreased by 2.3 %. Experimental results at the initial and final stages showed the effectiveness of the use of meaning-building techniques in the educational process and speak in favor of the performance and meaningfulness of their life paths. **Discussion.** The proposed classification of meaning-building techniques is focused not only on students' self-expression, creation of conditions for creativity, and actualization of subjective experience, but is also represented by technologies of psychological and pedagogical support, which are of particular importance in the act of choice.

Keywords

alienation, subjective experience, value-meaning choice, psychotechniques, meaning-building techniques, associative-figurative technologies, self-expression and creativity technologies, problem-oriented technologies, support technologies

Highlights

- Removal of alienation between the subjects of the educational process, increasing educational motivation, finding the meaning of educational activity is possible in the case of creating situations of choice.
- The presence of 'sacrificing' in situations of choice necessitates psychological and pedagogical support for some students.
- The introduction of emotional and sensual mechanisms for the initiation of a value-meaning choice (meaning-building techniques) creates conditions for the manifestation of internal sources of students' self-development and self-expression.

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Introduction

The meaning-building technique is a mechanism of psychological influence. The use of the meaning-building technique as an efficient modern learning technology is discussed in various publications (Abakumova & Zorina, 2017; Abakumova, Mironenkova, & Pen'kov, 2019; Abakumova, Pronenko, & Golubova, 2019; Elagina, Pen'kov, Solov'eva, & Marchenko, 2019; Zorina & Zelenov, 2016; Stakanova, 2018). Thanks to the inclusion of such psychological techniques in the learning process, it is possible to initiate students' personal meanings, reveal their inner world, and develop the emotional-volitional sphere. The importance of the use of meaning-building techniques in the educational process is explained by the ability to initiate students' meanings their direct connection with emotional-sensory sphere of an individual. "Meaning-building techniques may influence the meaning-based choice of an individual" (Abakumova, Mironenkova et al., 2019, p. 68). After all, the lack of creativity and choice can lead to alienation from learning (Osin, 2015; Barnhardt & Ginns, 2014; Jones, 2017; Tomaszek, 2020).

"Under the conditions of alienated activity, the emerging meanings exist to a greater extent at the egocentric level, which leads to irreversible consequences in society up to the loss of the values of relations" (Abakumova, Mironenkova et al., 2019, p. 67). Therefore, modeling situations of students' value-meaning choice is often of paramount importance.

However, until now there has been no empirical data on the change in the value-meaning sphere in the context of the use of meaning-based techniques in the educational process that initiate a meaning-based choice, as well as having the potential of psychological and pedagogical support for selective activity. Indeed, "subjective experience carries traces of an individual's life, but it also regulates further activity through the personal meaning that objects and phenomena of the external world acquire for each individual; therefore, such experience is always an individually

special form of expression of human manifestations" (Mironenkova, 2015, p. 47). In other words, subjective experience will be a basis for a meaning-based choice. Therefore, *this study aims* to highlight meaning-based techniques for the implementation of students' value-meaning choice in the educational process.

For the first time, I. V. Abakumova presented a classification of psychotechniques according to the principle of meaningfulness, thus distinguishing the following subgroups of meaning-based techniques: meaning-based techniques addressed to subjective experience; meaning-based techniques of dialogue; game techniques; meaning-based techniques of self-expression; meaning-based techniques of support; meaning-based techniques of creativity; and meaning-based techniques of a problematic nature (Abakumova & Zorina, 2017, p. 42).

Based on this classification, E. Stakanova presented a modified classification of meaning-based techniques for the educational environment, focusing on EFL teaching methods. At the same time, in the process of studying English, the author refers the following active methods to meaning-based techniques: projects, debate, role-playing games, creative work, essay, academic disputes, tasks that make you think, and language portfolio (Stakanova, 2018, p. 30). However, in this classification there are no meaning-based techniques aimed at students' subjective experience. After all, when learning a foreign language, the formation of the student's subjective position is impossible without relying on his/her subjective experience and the manifestation of his/her selective activity (Mironenkova & Susimenko, 2021). According to A. Yu. Aleksin, E. A. Pomel'nikova, and L. V. Sukhova, "discipline has the widest possibilities in terms of the professional development of a specialist and, above all, the possibilities of becoming a subject of professional self-development" (Aleksin, Pomel'nikova, & Sukhova, 2014).

That is why, for the development of subjectivity and the formation of the subjective position of the student, a classification of meaning-based techniques was developed to address the experience of the student on the basis of a value-meaning choice: associative-figurative technologies, technologies of self-expression, and creative technologies (Abakumova, Mironenkova et al., 2019). The proposed meaning-based techniques were tested in the educational process to increase motivation and develop the meaning-based sphere of students in mathematics classes. However, we admit that it can be applied in other disciplines, since it is based on the principle of meaningfulness, and *meanings are inherent in everyone*.

According to the alternative choice, it also has a disadvantage: 'sacrificing' one alternative in favor of another. Consequently, reframing as "changing the existing framework in which the situation is enclosed" can become an adequate technology for initiating situations of a meaning-based choice (Odintsova, 2012, p. 78). An individual begins to see the same situation in a positive perspective, the alternative is re-evaluated. A meaning-based choice is made on the basis of the reformulated meaning of the situation. Due to the essence of reframing, disadvantages of choice are minimized, which positively affects the state of mind of students. Reframing as a technology was developed within the theory of neurolinguistic programming (Bandler & Grinder, 1982) as a technique for positive perception and a mechanism for influencing personality behavior (Dilts, 2012; Kumar & Supriya, 2020). We refer this technology to the meaning-building techniques of support in the selection process.

In pedagogical research, the creation of a 'positive environment' seems to be an effective means of creating conditions for revealing creative abilities, increasing involvement in the educational process, and revealing personal potential (Li et al., 2017; Lake, 2013; Palanac, 2019; Brizhak, Kolesina,

& Mironenkova, 2020). In most cases, the technologies of self-help and psychological support are aimed at creating positive thinking. Positive thinking can be developed if the following three strategies are applied: positive affirmations, positive attitude, and positive perception (Slabinskii, 2014). Positive thinking is positively correlated with psychological well-being, including life satisfaction and happiness, and negatively – with stress, anxiety, depression, and anger (Wong, 2012). A number of researchers note that creativity also makes an individual happier – it has a positive effect on subjective well-being (Tan et al., 2019; Tan, Chuah, Lee, & Tan, 2021). Moreover, people are more open to changes when they are in a good mood (Vulpe & Dafinoiu, 2011). This determines the importance of paying attention to the emotional and sensory sphere of students.

From the whole set of meaning-based techniques, we have identified those aimed at: students' subjective experience, creativity, problematic nature of situations, specifics of the act of choice (sacrificing) (Table 1). These meaning-based techniques may play an important role in the meaning initiation of the value-meaning choice, making a significant contribution to meaning-based didactics.

Table 1

Meaning-based techniques for the implementation of students' value-meaning choice in the educational process

<u>Meaning-based technique (technology)</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Methods and techniques in the educational process</u>
Associative-figurative technologies	Association, personal-meaning generalization, work with images and context	Method of free associations, translation of theoretical material into figurative one, structural-logical schemes, symbolic vision, method of collision of images, color images, meaning immersion
Technologies of self-expression	Choice situations, personalization, living situations, self-reflection, gamification	The method of accustoming (empathy), imagination, the method of projects, the method of free choice, game, disidentification
Creative technologies	Creative assignments, essays, art technologies, art didactics technologies, installation, inversion, reframing	Figurative painting method, joint presentation, art therapy methods (music therapy, bibliotherapy, game therapy, park therapy, isotherapy, etc.), photo projects, linguistic constructs

Problem-based technologies	Tasks for meaning, mindfulness, insight, personal-meaning generalization, mind maps	Mindfulness, mental maps, introspection, discussion, tasks for life sensations, Bloom's taxonomy (daisy model)
Support technologies	Meaning reframing, context reframing, linguistic affirmations, emotional stroking, situations of success and recognition, life creation, value orientation	Metaphors, expressions with a universal quantifier, language structures that affect the perception of the individual, positive affirmations, attitudes towards self-affirmation, positive attitude, gratitude, students' essays about themselves

We should note that the same meaning techniques, appearing in different forms, can be used in different ways depending on the learning goal. For example, reframing can be used as a technique for disclosing the creative potential of students or as a technique for psychological and pedagogical support in order to reduce anxiety and fear (Mironenkova & Abakumova, 2021). Thus, O. A. Tamochkina suggests using framing and reframing to develop the creative potential of students. Frames (singling out) enable students to concentrate on the content and start the creative process by limiting students' thinking, thereby forcing them to think deeper (Tamochkina, 2019).

Methods

Students of the South-Russian State Polytechnic University and the Don State Technical University ($n = 437$) took part in the empirical study. We divided students into control ($n = 217$) and experimental groups ($n = 220$). The presented meaning-based techniques served as a basis for the training course (Table 1).

To identify actual meaning-based states and meaning-based orientations at the initial and final stages of the study, we used the Meaning-in-Life Orientations test (MLO) by D. A. Leont'ev (Leont'ev, 2000). To determine the level of internal motivation for the educational activity of students, we conducted a survey using the inventory for Diagnosing the Orientation of Educational Motivation by T. D. Dubovitskaya (Dubovitskaya, 2002). To determine specific characteristics of students' self-realization, we used the Multidimensional Questionnaire of Personality Self-Realization (MQPSR) by S. I. Kudinov (Kudinov, 2012). In our study we also used the methods of comparative and terminological analyses, generalization and systematization, and methods of mathematical and statistical processing of empirical data.

Results

At the formative stage, the MLO results showed that the overall score of life meaningfulness in the experimental groups increased by 6.5 %, while in the control groups it remained virtually at the same level.

At the final stage of the study in the experimental groups, the test data on the subscales of 'goal in life', 'process' and 'life performance' indicate that students perceive their life paths as interesting, emotionally rich, and filled with meaning; they are satisfied with self-realization and are characterized by the presence of purposefulness and focus on the future (Fig. 1).

At the final stage of the study, the results of our survey conducted using the inventory for Diagnosing the Orientation of Educational Motivation by T. D. Dubovitskaya confirmed the effectiveness of the use of meaning-based techniques for the implementation of choice. Thus, the percentage of students with intrinsic motivation increased by almost 15.7 %. There was an internal motivation for learning activities, which is confirmed by empirical data (Fig. 2).

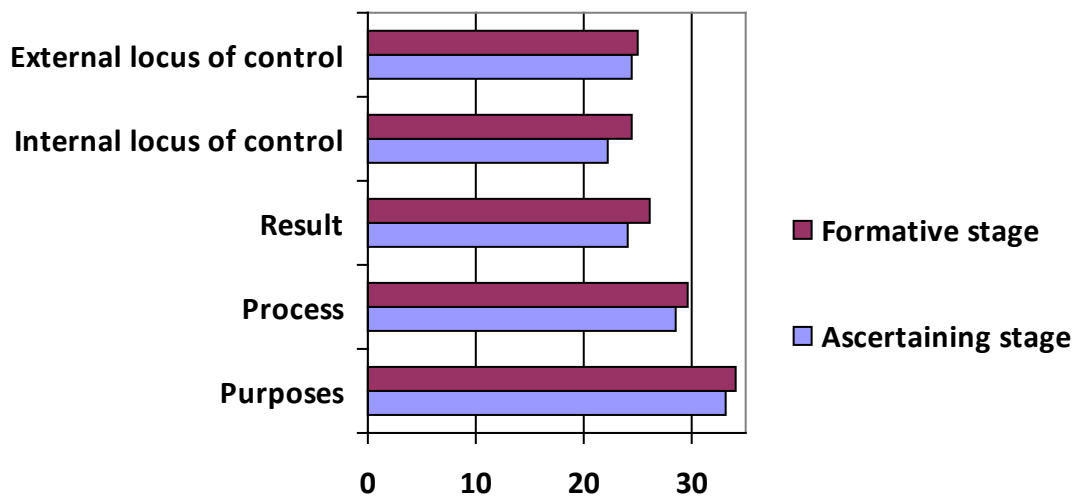


Figure 1. MLO mean scores at the ascertaining and formative stages in the experimental groups

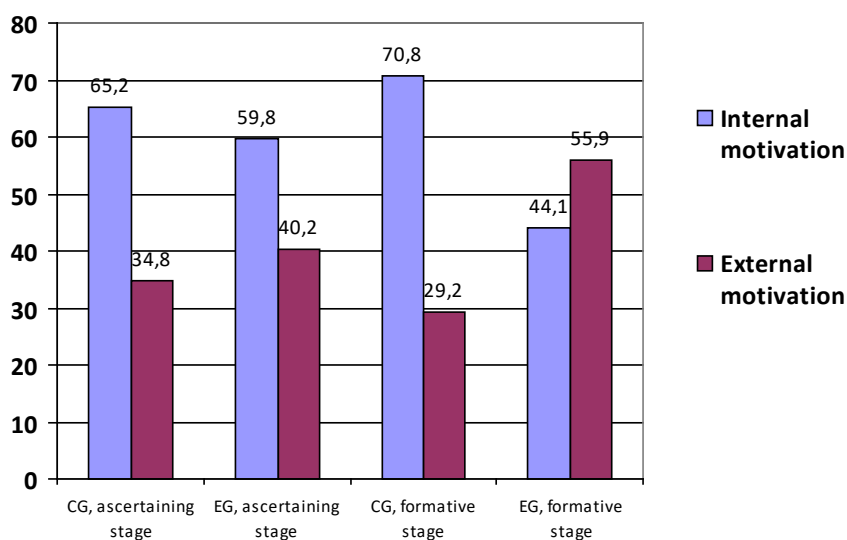


Figure 2. The results of diagnosing the orientation of educational motivation at the ascertaining and formative stages

To determine specific characteristics of students' self-realization, we used the Multidimensional Questionnaire of Personality Self-Realization (MQPSR) by S. I. Kudinov (Table 2). The questionnaire aims to identify two most important characteristics, especially with regard to situations of a value-meaning choice – self-realization and self-actualization. Self-realization as a manifestation of the student's personal potential is considered a personal basis for the manifestation of self-actualization.

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Mean scores and the level of severity for experimental groups</u>	<u>Mean scores and the level of severity for experimental groups</u>
Socio-corporate attitudes	18.7 (medium)	20.3 (high)
Subject-personal attitudes	21.8 (high)	20.4 (high)
Activity	19.8 (medium)	23.4 (high)
Inactivity	16.3 (medium)	12.1 (medium)
Optimism	17.8 (medium)	21.4 (high)
Pessimism	7.8 (low)	5.5 (low)
Internality	20.3 (high)	25.7 (high)
Externality	9.1 (low)	7.2 (low)
Sociometric motivation	17.6 (medium)	19.4 (medium)
Egocentric motivation	9.3 (low)	4.9 (low)
Creativity	22.7 (high)	28.5 (high)
Conservatism	13.5 (medium)	10.5 (medium)
Constructiveness	17.2 (medium)	19.7 (medium)
Destructiveness	9.3 (low)	6.9 (low)
Social Barriers	9.5 (low)	7.9 (low)
Personal barriers	11.7 (medium)	7.8 (low)

The MQPSR results indicated that there are statistically different characteristics in the experimental groups. The prevalence of the obtained scores in socio-corporate attitudes, sociometric and egocentric motivation confirms the conclusion that the model is related to group-centric or pro-social, ultimate meanings. Thus, in most cases, the motivating force for self-realization is not egocentric personal motives, but the desire to be realized for the good of a common cause or others, which could not be confirmed in the control groups. For example, in the experimental groups, the score of the indicator of egocentric motivation decreased by 4.4 %, and the level of subjective-personal attitudes decreased by 1.5 %. In the control groups, these indicators, on the contrary, increased – the value of the indicator of egocentric motivation increased by 3.1 %, and the level of subjective-personal attitudes increased by 2.4 %.

Average academic performance throughout the formative study showed an increase in the quality of student learning. Qualitative indicators of academic progress increased by 12 % in the experimental groups, and in the control groups increased slightly – by 3 %. A slight increase in the qualitative indicator of academic performance is determined, in our opinion, by the desire of students to receive scholarships. Thus, at the final stage, the processing of the academic data from the experimental groups showed an increase in academic performance in the disciplines that used meaning-based techniques for the implementation of a meaning-based choice, compared to the control groups which continued to study according to the traditional system of education.

Discussion

The comparative results of our study (MLO, inventory by T. D. Dubovitskaya, MQPSR, and academic results) in ascertaining and formative experiments indicate the general dynamics of the value-meaning development of students.

Our classification of meaning-based techniques for the implementation students' value-meaning choice has a number of advantages. It is focused on self-expression and self-actualization of students, creates conditions for actualization of subjective experience, aims at creating conditions for creativity, and contains the technologies of psychological and pedagogical support, which is very important for selective activities.

Among the latter, such technologies as meaning reframing, context reframing, linguistic affirmations, emotional stroking, and situations of success and recognition are of particular importance. This is how this study differs from the previous ones (Abakumova & Zorina, 2017; Abakumova, Mironenkova et al., 2019). In addition, the study refers to positive thinking, which is relevant due to the essence of choice. The creation of a 'positive environment' seems to be an effective means of creating conditions for the disclosure of creative abilities, increasing involvement in the educational process, and unlocking personal potential. In the experimental groups, the 'optimism' indicator increased by 3.6 %, 'pessimism' – decreased by 2.3 % (according to the MQPSR), and the indicator of life performance or satisfaction with self-realization increased by 2.06 % (according to the MLO subtest). This indicates that students are characterized by a positive assessment of their life paths and feel that their lives were productive and meaningful.

Thus, the presented meaning-based techniques are modern psychological and pedagogical technologies that reveal students' inner world and their personal and meaning potential. The ability to regulate the sensory-emotional and motivational-value expressions of students provides them a wide range of applications in the educational process.

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Author Contribution

N. N. Mironenkova worked with sources and wrote the overview part of the article, contributed to the experimental design of the study, collected the data, carried out statistical data processing, revised and prepared the manuscript for publication.

V. G. Pakhomova wrote the overview part of the article, developed diagnostic tools, collected the data, carried out statistical data processing, and prepared the draft of the manuscript.

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