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Psychological protection as the mechanism of forming teachers' professional deformation at preschool educational institutions

The article covers the main factors of developing professional deformations of the teachers working at preschool educational institutions. The mechanism of developing professional deformations in professional activity of a teacher is shown by the example of considering the strategies used for psychological protection. The article also points out the qualitative difference in displaying and expressing psychological protection depending on the professional age.

Key words: professional deformations, emotional burnout, psychological protection.

The problem of professional formation of personhood today is one of the mostly developed in psychology. It is interesting to deal with the problem considering person's life. Eventually the biographic approach to studying the person as a subject of his/her life in the national psychology is developed in the works of S.L. Rubinshtejn, B.G. Ananeva. An event serves as the analysis basic element – the elementary unit in the course of life. This approach states the uniqueness and originality of a man's life; first of all the necessity of studying personal development is proved, in the connection with man's experience of the events in his or her life. It is underlined by authors, that it is exactly the way of experiencing events by a person that determines his or her psychological destiny. So, S.L. Rubinshtejn marked: «Any man has his own history as the development of a person is mediated by the result of man's activity ... a line conducting from what the person was at one stage of his history, to what he has become on the following stage, passes through what he has done ... this is the key for understanding the development of personality – how it is formed, in the course its life» [8, p. 642].

S.L. Rubinshtejn, considering a man as «the subject of life», designates two basic ways of his existence. The first is life that does not exceed the direct connections and requirements of a situation, when the person is dependent on a situation and external control. The second way of existence – the philosophical appreciation of life connected with reflection.

The thesis about two ways of existence (S.L. Rubinshtejn) formed the methodological basis for constructing two models of professional development in the concept of professional development (by L.M. Mitina):



- the model of adaptive behavior when the person is focused on complying with mandated norms, rules and following them in professional sphere;
- the model of professional development when the person is able to exceed professional activity limits, to see the result of the work, to plan concrete prospects, and is capable of solving the problems rising independently.

It is possible to say that professional activity of a person always vectors the development of the person. Thus the question of professional influence on a person can't be solved unambiguously. Certainly, in the course of professional development a person, improving knowledge, skills, developing professional abilities, reaches the highest degree of skill, so we can talk about the phenomenon of professionalism. At the same time, many researchers consider some ways of negative professional influence on the personality of a specialist. In this case, it makes sense to talk about emotional burnout, and also about a problem of professional deformations.

Today in modern science there two definitely separated concepts: «emotional burnout» and «professional deformation». So, for example, L.M. Mitina considers the syndrome of emotional burnout as way of manifesting professional deformation, along with communicative difficulties, rigidity and the features of life orientations. According to B.S.Bratusja, emotional burnout can be considered as one of the newest mechanisms of psychological protection. There are scientists who divide these two concepts, considering that «the phenomenon of emotional burnout refers more to the case of full professional recession as it affects personality as a whole, destroying it and influencing negatively on the efficiency of labor » (V.E. Orel).

The interest in studying the problem of professional deformations is covered in the works of S.P. Beznosov, R.M. Granovskay, E.F. Zeer, A.K. Markova, S.L. Rubinshtejn, E.V. Rudenskiy, E.E. Symanjuk etc. Among all the problems of pedagogical profession, the least studied are the problems of professional deformation of teachers at preschool educational institutions. In this case the problem of studying professional deformations in the context of analysing professional activity of a teacher at preschool center is considered to be extremely actual.

The authors underline that any long-term professional activity leads to deformations reducing the efficiency of labor performing functions. The essence of professional deformations of the person lies in the self-modification of the person, when undesirable personal formations appear.

The questions connected with studying professional deformation, are becoming actual concerning professional activity of a teacher at preschool educational institution. Estimating the current situation in preschool education, it is possible to note, firstly, that the general falling in prestige of working in preschool education sphere (low salaries); secondly, reduction in quantity of young specialists; thirdly, inadequate growth of requirements from outside (both administration and parents) forces the teacher to be constantly under the pressure. Thus, the working conditions of the



teacher (adverse atmosphere at workplace, the low social status, destabilizing working conditions) can stimulate professional deformations. Besides, the modern educational situation is characterized by a number of contradictions.

- Today we observe rigid orientation of teachers towards realizing the personality-focused educational model against the increase in quantity of children in groups. Naturally, it creates the situation of emotional pressure and can stimulate professional deformation and the decrease in quality of work as a whole.
- The requirements of implementing interaction with children in « humanistic context» as a rule is difficultly combined with rigid authoritative position of administration
- Teachers are actively evolved into innovative activities and, frequently, they are not ready to follow the innovative mode. This can negatively affect not only the job satisfaction level, but also the professional self-esteem as a whole.
- All these facts complicate teacher's work and the teacher is put into the situation of excessive pressure. In this case the questions connected with the problems of professional deformation are becoming vital. Thus, the emotional intensity of work, according to many authors is one of the factors of the development of professional deformation (E.F. Zeer).

Except external factors, internal psychological determinants of professional deformations involve difficulties in setting goals, the low level of reflective possibilities, the usage of considerable quantity of psychological protection, and also, the labour object of teacher's professional activity. (S.P. Beznosov). Concerning a teacher a child becomes the "object" of professional activity. In order to receive maximally possible positive result, the teacher should be identified to some extent with the object of his professional activity. To understand the child better, the adult should look at the world through his eyes, understand his problems etc., in this case there is a chance that the child will feel comfortable near such a teacher.

A number of authors point out that the full understanding of professional goals; the appreciation of the professional role are the factors preventing the teacher from the professional deformation. At the same time, a considerable number of teachers at kindergartens are characterized by "dim" understanding of work goals, absence of concrete goal set, difficulties in ranging professional objectives. So, many teachers prefer to achieve goals set from outside (which aren't frequently analyzed and aren't accepted by them). Thus, the result of work depends, first of all, on the fact how much a teacher is focused on the goals set by the state and society (standard documents, the social control etc.), secondly, how the teacher can reach the goals within the limits of his own professional activity, and, at last, if he has "tools" for achieving these goals. Answering the question, why the educator in a kindergarten experiences difficulties in setting goals, it is possible to assume that any objective is defined by a system of values of a concrete person. Only when the system provides certain deep understanding, corresponds to general analysis of the situation, estimation of person's condition – only in this case the objectives



determine the direction of professional activity. So the questions connected with reflective possibilities of a teacher come to fore. The ability to analyze, monitor the consequences of personal decisions, define priorities directed by new problems, estimate the frames of personal abilities – all these things demand a certain level of pedagogical reflection. Thereby, it is possible to distinguish one more factor in developing professional deformations. The low level of teacher's reflective abilities which are not demanded fully in pedagogical activity and as a result vanishing. It is dangerous enough both for teachers and for children. S.P. Budnikova noticed that the reflection arises due to the necessity of change or activity development. In a problem situation when the solutions can be ambiguous. The possibility of esteeming the problem with the choice of ultimate solutions is becoming a matter of particular importance for a teacher. Thus, pedagogical reflection is a complex psychological phenomenon expressed in teacher's ability to take active research position concerning professional activity and himself as a subject for the purpose of critical analysis and estimation with the relation to the efficiency of pedagogical activity in developing child's personality. Thus, as it has been mentioned above, the low level of reflection complicates the process of teacher's independent goal setting, the choice of methods to achieve these goals and in many ways causes professional deformations.

Considering psychological protection in teacher's professional activity, first of all, it would be desirable to notice that the usage of psychological protection is, as a rule, a trigger for the development of professional deformations since it is one of the ways to compensate negative emotions, defuse tension and alarm by means of devaluing the importance of professional activity. Thus, psychological protection acts as one of inadequate ways of regulating behavior in unfavorable menacing (in terms of stability of valuable sphere) for a person situation. In the widest sense protection is any reaction of an organism to save itself and keep its integrity. Thus, these are any sort of reactions, a man chooses subconsciously to protect his internal mental structures, the "Ego" from the situations experienced as dangerous. Operating on an unconscious level and creating a situation of psychological safety for the person, protective mechanisms distort the reality, depriving the opportunity of orientating in real situations, and preventing from personal and professional growth. In situations of professional development the mechanism of psychological protection works in the case when a professional failure threatens to destroy personal reception as a professional, and thus helps to overcome difficulties with minimum losses for the person.

While studying the features of using psychological protection by teachers at pre-school educational institutions, the « Index of vital style» (R. Plutchik) technique was used. We surveyed two groups of teachers with different working experience: from 1–5 years; from 10–15 years. The total number of examinees was 120.

Research objective: to define qualitative differences in expression of psychological protection by teachers at preschool centers depending on work experience.



As a result of the research we found out that, that within the increase in pedagogical experience the representatives of the following profession demonstrate considerable qualitative differences in expressing psychological protection with a shift from immature protection to protection of more mature type.

Table 1

**The intensity of expressing psychological protection by teachers
with different pedagogical experience**

	1–5	10–15
Negation	85%	83%
Projection	76%	30%
Regress	18%	60%
Substitution	15%	15%
Repression	33%	26%
Intellectualization	3%	85%
Reaction formation	80%	73%
Compensation	35%	76%

So, in the group of teachers with work experience from 10 to 15 years, the greater intensity in expressing differently directed psychological protection methods was observed. It is possible to affirm that with the increase in pedagogical experience it is natural for a teacher to use a considerable number of various protective strategies. It is interesting to notice that in the group of young specialists, such strategies of psychological protection as rationalization and compensation were not practically found. While the teachers with long work experience demonstrate extreme variants of values (85 % – rationalization; 76 % – compensation). Both ways of protection belong to the late and cognitively complicated protective mechanisms which are developed and used, as a rule, deliberately. Rationalization is connected with the use of that part of perceived information in the process of thinking according to which, teacher's behavior looks well supervised and does not contradict objective circumstances. Thus the unacceptable part of information is specially transformed and after that is realized in already changed version. This form of protection uses sensible arguments in explanation of personally or socially unacceptable actions and desires. In this case, accepting quite reasonable and logical form, this type of psychological protection can contradict the facts and logical laws. It is possible to say that rationalization is always justificatory relation to the behavior and the principles. So, using the extreme forms of professional behavior, teachers see their actions as reasonable and having educational effect for a child. Thus, according to A. Guggenbul, having «the monopoly on the boundless power over children», the educator at a kindergarten, with deep faith of his own infallibility and virtue can interfere the creation of safe educational environment for children.



Such form of psychological protection as negation was observed among the specialists in both groups (1–5, 10–15). This type of protection shows up evasion from the disturbing information. In this case, a person doesn't perceive unpleasant events and thus avoids them. This type of protection promotes, according to E.F.Zeer, the development of learned helplessness when a person lives without maintaining resistance or taking up responsibility. And at last, the type of protection as regress was observed only among teachers with long work experience. In general regress is transition to less difficult, less structurally ordered ways of reaction. So, the teachers, who use this type of psychological protection, are characterized by infant body language, speech, involuntary actions etc.

So, as it is shown in the research, with the increase in work experience of teachers at preschool educational institutions certain dynamics in use of psychological protection is observed. The dynamics shows that the use of psychological protection moves from less mature and that is why "malicious" forms, to more mature. The basic danger is the following: occurring during the working life reality distortion can be so persuasive for a teacher that is able to cause psychological damage to children, destroying their feeling of psychological safety.

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