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Studying of psychological safety in the educational environment of the post-conflict region

The article considers a feature of the educational space of the post-conflict region in the context of ensuring the psychological safety of students studying at institutes of higher education of the Chechen republic. The importance of safe educational space is topical now and especially in Chechnya where there were two military campaigns which caused heavy losses in the educational system. A research on studying of the educational environment psychological safety is carried out in the form of questioning among students for creation of safe educational space at institutes of higher education of the Chechen republic, promoting display of comfort and security among the Chechen youth.

Keywords: *psychological safety of students, educational environment, post-conflict region, security, psychological comfort at the institute of higher education.*

Today's sociocultural situation provides numerous examples of negative influence of external conditions on formation of a person's personality. Versions of violent acts in relation to the other are rather widespread in the modern world. If situations of overt physical violent acts are the subject which is unequivocally condemned and there is an intensive search of means of counteraction to them, psychological violence barely becomes a subject of discussion, both in public opinion, and in scientific researches. The problem of security concerning psychological violence in interaction of the educational environment participants gains a special topicality [6].

The problem of personal safety, safety of personality continues to remain a topical problem for psychology. It is caused by the most different authors' interest in studying of a person's base needs among which the special place is given to needs for self-preservation, safety, tension reduction. It is substantially connected to growth of a number of technogenic and natural disasters, with wide-ranging social changes in society, leading to destruction of habitual behavior stereotypes, to increase of information flow volume and the general acceleration of life. All these things break usual life conditions of people, frustrate the need for safety and security concerning the adverse effects endangering human life, health, confidence in the future.

Now there are reasons to assert that there was created the psychology of safety as a new direction of psychological researches and practical programs. Most successfully the development of this direction is carried out concerning psychological safety of the educational environment where the concept of psychological safety in education is created, the model of support of psychological safety in the educational institution is proved, the system of psychological technologies on its creation is suggested. Means of psychological diagnostics of the educational environment condition in a category of safety are developed and introduced.



The educational environment is a psychological-pedagogical reality containing specially organized conditions for personality formation, and also the possibilities of development included in social and spatial-subject environment; the psychological essence of this reality is a complex of activities-communicative acts and relationship of participants of the teaching and educational process. Fixing of this reality is possible through the system of relations of the subjects participating in it [6].

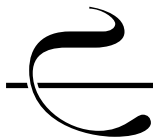
In the light of this subject matter importance it becomes obvious that the problem of safety should become one of priority directions in purposes of modern education. It is obvious that "for its realization such purpose including formation, development, both experience elements, and steady personal formations demands not only means of traditional educational process, but the whole moral, personal developing potential of education". The problem of psychological safety highlights a new side of the educational process mainly focused on development of sense, value sphere of pupils, the "substantial generalization" (V.V. Davydov) which allows to build a model of sense formative education, forming the sense orientation directing personality towards search of certain higher senses, towards formation of a sense of life orientation, towards achievement of psychological safety [5, p. 2].

However the situation of educational paradigm change, as well as any situation of changes, is characterized by participants' uncertainty state and feeling of insecurity and discomfort as a derivative of it. These conditions have two sources in the basis: the situation participants' dissatisfaction in the actual situation, on the one hand, and awareness of the difficulties connected with changes, on the other.

Modern education undergoes radical transformations leading to individualization, continuity, flexibility, openness of participants of the educational space. Modern educational process at the institute of higher education becomes a self-education process when a trainee chooses the individualized educational trajectory in the systematically developed educational environment independently.

An important contribution to understanding of the nature of psychological safety is made by I.A. Baeva, I.V. Abakumova, P.N. Ermakov, A.G. Asmolov, M.E. Zelenova, N.E. Kharlamenkova, V.V. Rubtsov, T.M. Krasnyanskaya, A.A. Rean, N.A. Lyz, G. Grachev, T.I. Kolesnikova, etc.

Modern approaches to studying of safety allow to characterize various criteria, levels and components in the structure of psychological safety of interacting subjects. As its main criterion they distinguish the person's physical structure integrity corresponding to norms of the stable organism functioning. Then there follows a group of the criteria concerning an individual-mental level where there enter such components as adequacy of reflection and relation to the world, mentality security, adaptability of functioning, security of the person's consciousness concerning different manipulative influences. At last, at a personal or subjective level as an object of research of safety psychology there are features of experience of social upheavals, and also consequences of emergency, physical or mental violence, arising owing to concrete events and behavioural acts which threaten own safety or safety of a person's relatives [7].



In modern psychological science the search of integrative psychological characteristics is even more emphasized. Within this direction it is possible to define psychological safety in the following way: it is an integrative characteristic of a subject reflecting a degree of satisfaction in his/her basic need for safety and determined by intensity of experience of wellbeing/ill-being. In the group of a person's basic needs the need for safety and protection against everything that threatens life and health is one of the first and defines social behavior of people, forming either of motives of behavior. Safety becomes an active and dominating mobilizer of human mentality resources at emergency: catastrophes and natural disasters, social upheavals, increase of crime. "This need is the most important person's condition of normal existence and development. In society it is realized through creation of certain organizational forms of social interaction, interrelations of private and group interests and ways of their achievement. Therefore we need to feel a relation with the world around, other people, belonging to certain social groups therefore so sharply we perceive changes, destruction of habitual communications, we take hard isolation and loneliness conditions" [4, p. 139–140].

Psychological safety is understood as a condition of the educational environment, free of psychological violence manifestations in interaction, promoting satisfaction of needs in the personal-confidential communication, creating the referential importance of the environment and providing mental health of the participants entering it.

The category of psychological safety of I. A. Baeva is defined by three aspects:

- 1) as a condition of the educational environment, free of psychological violence manifestations in interaction, promoting satisfaction of needs in the personal-confidential communication, creating the referential importance of the environment and providing mental health of the participants entering it;
- 2) as a system of the interpersonal relations which cause participants' feeling of belonging (the referential importance of the environment); convince a person of the fact that he/she is out of danger (absence of the above-mentioned threats); strengthen mental health;
- 3) as a system of measures directed on prevention of threats with a view of a productive stable development of personality.

The main threat in interaction of participants of the educational environment is a psychological trauma as a result of which there is damage to positive development and mental health, there is no base satisfaction of basic needs; that is there is an impediment to self-actualization.

Such interpersonal relations which cause participants' feeling of belonging (the referential importance of the environment) are considered as psychologically safe. The concept of security is closely connected with psychological safety. According to foreign researches, recognition of the referential importance of the educational environment (the relation to the environment) is a condition of feeling of identity with it along with respect, emotional support, feeling of value of each other, tolerance, trust and responsibility and can promote compensation in the educational environment of



the trainees who have been exposed to traumatizing and adverse conditions. A. Edmondson notes that, the better people know and understand each other in group, the higher the productivity of their collaboration and psychological safety in interpersonal relations is. Psychological safety is based on belief that the person will be accepted by a reference group, will have emotionally favorable relationship, will be protected from condemnation, rejection and suppression [6].

As T.M. Krasnyanskaya marks, personal ideas about psychological safety influence the specifics of subject identification manifestation; it is self-identification with the other (others), adoption of patterns of behavioural reactions, attitudes, styles of a certain life sphere safe living and overcoming of crisis situations [6].

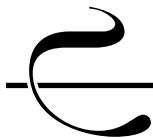
The enumerated approaches, distinguished criteria and levels allowed T.I. Kolesnikova to define safe personality as a "certain security of consciousness concerning influences capable to change mental conditions (against own will and desire) that can radically influence a person up to change of his/her course of life" [4, p. 139].

After end of military campaigns the educational system of the Chechen republic carries out tasks of modern education, promoting the educational system improvement; undoubtedly, many years the existing information vacuum interferes with modernization of the education system; despite available problems, there are positive results towards development of education of the Chechen republic in whole.

It is clear that today providing of the safe educational space is necessary, and especially in the Chechen republic as a post-conflict region, where there were two military campaigns; the importance of safety increases several times, after all the education system of the republic took heavy losses which were reflected in the educational system development. In this regard there was carried out a research in the form of questioning among students of two institutes of higher education of the Chechen republic (The Chechen State University and the Chechen State Teachers Training Institute) for studying of features of the educational environment in a context of psychological safety. Altogether 230 students of the second and third years of philological and physical-mathematical faculties took part in the questioning. The research goal is studying of features of safety of the educational environment of the Chechen republic at student's environment. The analysis of results of questioning shows that the students taken part in the research were at the age from 18 to 21 year, 98 girls and 132 young men.

On a question, "Do you think that training at the institute of higher education promotes your intellectual development?" there were answers: 68 % – in the affirmative, 25 % – in the negative and 7 % – don't know or no response; 25 % of students believes that training at the institute of higher education doesn't promote intellectual development.

As students consider the following measures are conducive to decrease in a level of self-destructive behavior: achievement of a vital purpose, adequate orientation in life situations, manifestation of positive emotions, statement of rational life plans. It points to the difficulty of definition of sense of life, life orientations among young people; it is possible because of living position essence vagueness.



Studying the students' opinion concerning existence of psychological comfort in the educational environment of the Chechen republic the following results were received: 32 % answered in the affirmative, 50 % – in the negative and 18 % – don't know or no response. Only the small part of students acknowledges the educational process comfortable environment.

Concerning a question of safety self-sufficiency existence in educational process the following results are received: 37 % answered in the affirmative, 41 % – in the negative and 22 % – don't know or no response. The most part of youth has no ability to self-sufficiency, generated by a conflict of motives complexity, multidirectional needs, not clear inclinations, desires, aspirations. The choice of a suitable strategy of psychological safety ensuring in each case can be complicated by incomplete, perverted, or stereotypic perception of a situation, personality and own resources of the subject of its overcoming.

On a question, "Do you have in your educational process "the teacher – the student" cooperation, directed on creation of developing space?" there were the following answers: 41 % answered in the affirmative, 50 % – in the negative and 9 % – don't know or no response. Half of the interrogated students acknowledge the absence of cooperation between the teacher and the student that, in turn, is reflected in the educational environment comfort.

Answering the questionnaire question, "Do you feel respect for own personality, for own psychological space from parents?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 89 % – Yes, 11 % – No. Answering the questionnaire question, "Do you feel respect for own personality, for own psychological space from teachers?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way answered in the following way: 27 % – Yes, 39 % – No and 34 % – Not always. Answering the questionnaire question, "Do you feel respect for own personality, for own psychological space from contemporaries?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 21 % – Yes, 20 % – No and 59 % – Not always. From the received quantitative results it is obvious that students' feeling of respect for own personality and for own psychological space from teachers is at a low level.

On a question, "Have you ever experienced brutal treatment, violence, psychological pressure from age-mates?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 28 % – Yes, 11 % – No, 31 % – Sometimes, 30 % – Don't know or no response. On a question, "Have you ever experienced brutal treatment, violence, psychological pressure from friends?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 26 % – Yes, 13 % – No, 35 % – Sometimes and 26 % – Don't know or no response. On a question, "Have you ever experienced brutal treatment, violence, psychological pressure from students of the same year?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 15 % – Yes, 60 % – No, 12 % – Sometimes and 13 % – Don't know or no response. On a question, "Have you ever experienced brutal treatment, violence, psychological pressure from teachers?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 43 % – Yes, 9 % – No, 40 % – Sometimes, 8 % – Don't know or no



response. On a question, "Have you ever experienced brutal treatment, violence, psychological pressure from members of your family?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 7 % – Yes, 77 % – No, 16 % – Sometimes. According to students, the most considerable brutal treatment and manifestation of psychological violence is observed from the teaching staff.

Answering the questionnaire question, "What kind of mood do you usually have at the institute of higher education?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 39 % – Bad, 55 % – Good and 6 % – Don't know or no response. The negative mood generally prevails among students of the institute of higher education of the Chechen republic.

Answering the questionnaire question, "Do you feel yourself protected against public insult, humiliation, compulsion to do something against your will, ignoring, odium at the institute of higher education?" the respondents' answers were distributed in the following way: 26 % of respondents feels to be protected, 65 % – feels to be unprotected and 9 % – don't know or no response. Security is one of important indicators of psychological safety manifestation; apparently, 65 % of students doesn't feel safety.

Training at the institute of higher education is considered as interesting by 51 % of students, uninteresting by 47 % and 2 % – don't know or no response. Students' interest display induces to believe that there is a comfortable environment, but in this research nearly half of students consider the educational process at the institute of higher education uninteresting.

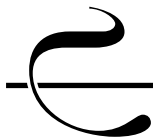
The carried-out questioning has revealed a low level of psychological safety of the post-conflict region educational space that is reflected in psychological comfort, brutal treatment, psychological violence, lack of interest to training, prevailing bad mood in study, public insult, humiliation, compulsion, ignoring, odium. Undoubtedly it demands the correctional developing work directed on creation of favorable psychological comfort in the educational environment of the Chechen republic.

The work on creation of psychological safety of the educational environment should be based on the humanistically focused technologies and norms of personal development. At the heart of such technologies there is the quality of the interaction process that leads to decrease in psychological tension, increases ability to self-control, "I" unity, i.e. affects mental health favorably.

The following features provide the interaction process quality:

- dialogical communication at the heart of which there is a "dialogue of personalities" (M. Bakhtin); its main attribute is the equality relation of interlocutors and mutual personal recognition;
- cooperation as the partner relation of two equal subjects excluding manipulation and authoritarianism, meaning mutual development of participants;
- refusal of psychological violence [6].

It is proved that psychological safety is the leading characteristic defining the educational environment developing character. It can act be a basis for projection



and modeling of psychological conditions of training and education, at the same time promoting strengthening and development of mental health of all participants of the teaching-educational process. Psychological safety can be also an indicator of efficiency of support service activity in the educational institution, minimizing efforts at a number of traditional directions of psychological work of the practical psychology service in education.

Decrease in psychological violence in interaction at the institute of higher education as a social institute can act as a preventive moment of decrease in destructive violent acts in society as a whole. Psychological safety, experienced by the participants as a condition of security concerning psychological violence, satisfaction of basic needs in the personal-confidential communication, realized in the referential importance of the educational institution, is a condition starting positive possibilities of mental and professional development of all participants of the educational process.

Creation of safe educational space in the post-conflict region at students' environment will allow to prevent manifestation of many negative models of behavior in the social environment, will provide safe comfortable educational space providing a full development of personality taking into account specific psychological features of each personality.

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