

Service of Practical Psychology of Education: The Modern Condition and Prospects for Development

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Psychological service as an organized system of work exists in many countries and has an almost century-old history. In our country, school psychological service (in the wide sense - psychological help service in education) was the most deeply developed psychological trend.

During the ten years that have passed since the 1st Congress of Practical Psychologists of Education, the structure and directives of the service activity have changed substantially. These changes have a qualitative character.

Thus, today we can verify that in Russia, as a matter of fact, the foundations for psychological service have been laid. Primarily it is evidenced by:

- The presence of a legislative base for the existence and formation of service;
- The readiness of domestic psychology for providing the school practice with the necessary theoretical elaborations and specific psychological tools;
- Powerful personnel potential (there are presently almost sixty thousand psychologists working in the Russian educational system);
- A sufficiently developed system of training and retraining of psychological experts for educational institutions;
- An expansive system of practical centres for psychological help (over 700 centres of this type presently operate in the system of domestic education).

The basic trend toward the formation and development of practical psychology service in education in full measure can be illustrated by the example of the Moscow region.

As already mentioned in L.P. Kezina's statement, today, the system of psychological service in education, which provides psychological help at different levels to all people involved in education, is being actively formed in Moscow.

And it is right to speak about its two basic structural elements, which are, namely, the psychologico-medico-social centres for offering assistance to children and teenagers, and the staff of school psychologists working directly in educational institutions of all kinds.

Presently one of dynamically developing structural elements of psychological help in Moscow is the system of psychologico-medico-social centres. As was already mentioned, there are 35 educational institutions for children needing psychologico-pedagogical and medico-social help in the Moscow Department of Education. These institutions offer competent and complex help to all levels of population - children, teenagers, their parents, workers of educational services, employees of social protection bodies, etc.

Most of these centres (12 of 35) appeared recently, in 1999 – 2002, i.e. during the last three years. In a system with these kinds of psychological support centres, some new perspective "growing-points" are appearing, such as, service of early help (early detection and treatment), psychological service for sick children and handicapped children (in a system of home-training schools), service in a system of open schools, service of emergency psychological help, etc.

Thereupon, it is necessary to note the work of The Center for Emergency Psychological Help (CEPH) at Moscow Municipal Psychological and Pedagogical University (head E.V.Burmistrova). This center has undertaken the coordination of psychological service activity in the state of emergency connected with the terrorist act on Melnikova Street in October of last year.

Owing to this fact, the service successfully managed extremely difficult tasks set by the current headquarters, the Government and Department of education of Moscow.

Moreover, close interaction between CEPH and antirecessionary departments facilitated the provision of psychological help to children, teachers and parents who were victims of the terrorist act.

To evaluate the process of the development of the practical psychology service in the capital system of education, an effective system of monitoring its development was created. In further discussions regarding trends of service development we will involve the latest data received on December, 2002 (1730 psychologists participated in this concrete inquiry).

Our data shows, that during the last five years the quantity of psychologists in the city has increased by several times (1997 - 606, 1999 - 1526, 2000 - 1630, 2002 - over 2000 men). Today, there are about 2000 psychologists in the educational system of Moscow (schools, nursery schools, special schools and psychologico-medico-social centers).

There are about two million children in Moscow, i.e. a ratio of almost 1000 children to one school psychologist. It is necessary to note, that till recently only people with pedagogical education were accepted as psychologists on the staff of schools. However, in recent years plenty of psychologists were trained, and now they are the skeleton staff of school psychologists.

Results of monitoring have painted a peculiarly generalized portrait of the service psychologist (in terms of education, experience in the job, etc.) and describe characteristic features of this contingent's experts working in educational institutions.

Using this data, 19.6 % of the psychologists working in the educational institutions of city have less than one year experience in work; 38.6 % (the most numerous group) – have from one to three years; and 15.1 % - have from three to five years of experience. Accordingly, this feature of personnel defines the basic problems of psychological service in Moscow today.

It is significant that, the basic group of clients that school psychologists work with is children of primary and middle school age –from 7 to 12 years of age. In second place are senior pupils (children from 12 to 18 years) and parents (practically an equal quantity of clients) and then - teachers. With children of 3-7 years, i.e. nursery school children; students; and small children - from birth till 3 years (they are listed in decreasing order), psychologists work very seldom.

The parents, who face certain problems of behaviour from a child (poor progress, lagging in intellectual and personal development, poor health, etc.) ask for psychological help more often. School teachers direct a child to the psychologist for a professional advice almost just as frequent as parents.

But often enough children ask for qualified psychological help on their

own initiative. All these facts indicate the distribution of information about psychological service available to citizens, the first development of trust toward the staff of psychological service, and correspondingly to the development of psychological culture within the population as a whole.

A school can hardly be found in Moscow, where parents and teachers never seek for help. As we have already mentioned, adults involved in the process of training and education of a child, when facing a problem, often ask experts for help. Having received the qualified advice of a psychological expert, teachers and parents themselves continue to interact with the child and correct his development.

It is obvious, that the cultural and educational directives of school psychological service - working with families, and with our young people (their problems and hardships) have exclusive value and make their essential contribution to effective education, primarily due to energization of the quality and content of interactions in the "teacher - child - parent" system.

The structure of teacher-psychologist's activity is also rather indicative. In this structure: Diagnostics takes 16 % of working time; Corrective work - 15 %; Developing lessons - 15 %; Consultation - 15 %; Psychological education - 14 %; Psychological preventive maintenance - 13 %; Scientific and methodical work - 12 %.

At the same time, despite the considerable break-through in developments regarding service of practical psychology of education, there are a lot of real problems. They are, namely: low salary (79.7 % of cases); lack of means of work (equipment) (72.2 %); problems with premises (59 %); problems in establishing a career (34.2 %). At the present time we also ascertain that, psychologists and other service professionals leave schools and PMS (psychologico-medico-social) - centres, many teachers and school administration misunderstand the role, place and value of psychological work, and the normative-legal guarantee of activity of both, psychologists and service, as a whole is lacking.

It is possible to denote two basic groups of reasons for the existing situation - external (towards the service) and internal crisis phenomena. Among the external reasons, the poor supply of scientific and methodological material are specified (the matter concerns a subject that we will discuss later in this article); absence of precise, efficient mechanisms of interaction between structural elements of service; imperfection of vertical management and the

normative-legal base that regulates activity of service and its separate structural elements as well (in practice, the absence of precise mechanisms of interaction between all divisions of service leads to uncoordinated actions, overlap, substitution and faulty operations in the work of both separate experts and the whole structure); assigning to the psychologists, responsibility for pedagogical mistakes; and charging the psychologists with administrative and managerial duties and methodological functions, etc.

Internal reasons are: absence of the precise and developed methodological basis for service activity, lack of various models of multilevel service for psychological support to the educational system, and an unsatisfactory training level of practical psychologists, etc.

It is necessary to note the separate means of work, as unfortunately, teachers-psychologists are not provided with centralized and standardized techniques. In the strict sense, every center and school service form banks of procedures at their own choosing. Many procedures are developed directly in the centers, starting from the current needs and orientation toward certain contingents of clients, but without proper conceptual scientific ground.

The majority of centres experience an absolute need for the provision of a standard bank of procedures adapted to age contingents that would allow for the improvement of differential diagnostics and the complex evaluation of children's psychologico-medico-social states. Presently the problem of the lack of a centralized provision for standard diagnostic procedures, and the need to raise the level of proficiency in the field of psychodiagnostics still remains unfulfilled. And more than 80 % of diagnostic tools that are available in the centres are the property of centres' experts.

Practical psychologists, facing numerous problems in their activity, consider the basic directives of school psychological service's work to be an improvement in the following ways. In the first place they put retraining and the elevating of professional skills of school psychologists (96.4 % of respondents); in the second place – provision of diagnostic and corrective procedures (96.1 % of schools); then next is the methodological help of highly skilled experts - supervisors (94.4 %); teachers worked with (88 %) and about 67.6 % of psychologists note the importance of the change in the organizational form of work (including the definition of the basic purposes and tasks of service, precise determination of school psychologist's rights and duties, his functions, effectiveness of his activity, etc.). The last-named more than others

testifies to separation of the existing scientifically proven approaches to service from the practical forms of its activity.

Exclusively significant is the fact, that practically all psychologists consider the foundation of associations of the psychologists working in education to be useful, assuming that this association will help to organize: the provision of literature and procedures; the exchange of experience; conferences and seminars; the provision of scientific and methodical support; and the defense of professional interests of psychologists of education. This circumstance deserves the raptest attention of participants of Congress.

These problems can be solved only with a corresponding supply of personnel. But it is a special problem of this Congress as well. At the same time, we believe, that the position of such institutes must be adopted by modern university organizations such as the Scientific and Educational Institution's (SEI's) "Progress", which is a unique example of the unification of fundamental academic science with a practice-oriented system of specialists' training and practice itself.

The structure of SEI "Psychology" includes:

- The Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education;
- Moscow Municipal Psychological and Pedagogical University;
- Moscow Social and Pedagogical College;
- The Center for Emergency Psychological Help;
- The Scientific and Methodical Centre of Practical Psychology Service;
- -Centres of Practical Psychology (educational institutions, psychologico-medico-social Centres);

Primary objectives of SEI "Psychology" are:

- methodological provision of substantial integration of science, education and practice;
- Development of a practice-oriented model of psychologists' training;
- Creation of a system of continuous psychological education;
- Realization of innovative models of education in practice;
- Creation of a unified information-methodical space in the field of psychology and education at regional and federal levels.

Fundamental problems of psychological science are developed by the laboratories of The Psychological institute of the Russian Academy of Education. And scientific departments of MMPPU, in their turn, develop applied

technologies of psychologist's work in the system of education (coordination of works is conducted in the framework of the institution of "Psychology", which unites these two establishments).

Given this situation, there is a direct way of applying developments to the educational space of a city since metropolitan education is particularly interested in these developments and above all has an effective mechanism for their application.

It is necessary to specify a strategy for conducting research and scientific-practical work aimed at providing practical psychology service. This strategy lies not only in close interaction between the departments of the university and the practical psychological centres, but also in building a general space for joint research and practical work, the education itself – working to train (purposeful, addressed) the personnel.

So, a similar strategy has led to the necessity in setting up university laboratories, which are grounded on the practical centres, combining research work with refining concrete technologies in the immediate and real educational environment.

At the same time, understanding that presently, Congress can bring up problems for service's development, I want to note the primary tasks in this matter.

In our opinion, all these tasks should be reflected in the complex program of developing practical psychology Service in the educational system, which defines this Service's tasks for five following years.

Formation of such program – is the major strategic task for development of present-day Service and our professional community.