Psychological activity organization

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Institute of higher education as a social and organizational environment for youth drug-addiction prevention

The author of the article raises the important questions concerning the education and teaching of the students in the institutes of higher education. The need for democratic style of education is grounded. The author emphasizes the influence of social and organizational characteristics of the institute of higher education on the mental health of students.

The factors, influencing drug addiction, are analysed and necessity of preventive programs, such as guaranteed psychological support for students and development and application of the programs on stress control training, is noted.

Keywords: *education, approaches of educational process organization, mental health of students, stress, preventive programs.*

According to the Education Act of the Russian Federation, education is a purposeful learning process of training and education in the interests of person, society, and state accompanied by ascertaining of citizen's (trainee's) achievement of the educational standards (educational qualifications), set by the state.

According to A.A. Rehan [6], "... The ultimate goal of any educational system is teaching, education, and development of students' personality".

Teaching assumes an imparting of the composition of knowledge and skills, minimally sufficient to cope with a certain professional work. As for education, it means not only teaching, but also development of abilities of the student, his personality formation and his ability as a subject of activity.

In the history of pedagogics, the concept "education" had various meanings in one or another historical period. Since K. Levin's well-known experiments, carried out in 1938 and directed on the study of influence of communication style and management of teacher on the efficiency of teaching and education processes, the problem of studying the factors, influencing the development of student's personality and formation of interpersonal relations in the educational group, remains very topical. The educational accents in the educational programs have been changed in conjunction with development of psychology as a discipline [5]. They are:

- Significance of communication, care, and ability to listen (H. Gino, 1965);

- Education of the responsibility and internal discipline, ability to estimate the reality more objectively and to react adequately to the difficulties, tactfulness and ability to support (W. Glasser, 1965);

- Emphasis on social human nature, stress on competence and democratic principles of education (R. Dreikus, 1967);

- Attention to the educational influence efficiency, comprehension of the interdependency between student's behaviour and tutor's attitude, distinction between authority and authoritarianism, analysis of defense reactions of children to the adults' use of force (open disobedience, revengefulness, aggression, shrinkage into oneself, exasperation, humility, lie, uncommunicativeness, avoiding, etc.) (T. Gordon, 1970);

- The importance of positive relationships establishment, ability to formulate the behavioural purposes and to predict the consequences of behaviour, taking into consideration the results of research in the field of internal and external motivation influence on the learning efficiency (Dinkmeyer and McKay, 1976).

Today, the time of understanding, influence, and persuasion comes to take the place of the age of control and domination in education. In the authoritarian approach, randomness of identification the system of proclaimed moral values with the norms that tutor follows is emphasized.

Thus, the teacher considers himself to be a moral standard and relations between tutor and student are defined in terms of domination and submission.

Therefore, the authoritarian approach to the educational process organization is shown in the prevalence of the tend to teacher's full control over the purposes and the content of this process, communication in the educational process is reduced to questions and answers, no interaction between the participants is provided.

Democratic approach in education is based on the principles of equality and mutual respect. Equality here does not imply identity; the matter concerns an equality of human value and dignity of tutor and student.

The given approach supposes a possibility of choice and freedom of self-determination in the framework of the established norms and restrictions, concentrate attention on training a personal responsibility and self-discipline.

Within the bounds of democratic approach, cooperation between the teacher and students is supposed in positive educational environment development. Students show an internal self-discipline and need just the

minimal external control from the teacher's direction.

"For the mankind survival, traditional ways of social organization, based on direct compulsion, social and economic or national domination, should be rejected as inconsistent. And they should be replaced by ideas of joint development, socio-cultural tolerance, global social-and-ecological discipline and pragmatism, as well as institutional vested rights and morals in the international institutes" [4.]

Thus, in modern educational process, along with importance of the purposes, connected with impart of academic knowledge, development of student as a person and the subject of activity. As A.A. Rehan notes [6], it is an obligatory development of:

- Intelligence;
- Emotional sphere;
- Stressor stability;
- Self-reliance and self-acceptance;
- The positive attitude to the world and acceptance of others;
- Independence, autonomy;
- Motivations of self-actualization and self-perfection.

Analyzing the influence of educational environment on the learning efficiency, C. Rogers [7], has come to conclusion, that in personality developing situation high emphasis are placed on self-respect, personal choice opportunity, responsibility, and joy of creation training.

As an example of organization a sound educational environment, characterized by a positive psychological climate and successes in training in practice, Rogers describes the experiment, carried out in 1977 at St. Lawrence University. In the experiment took part the geology faculty, which, for a specified time, introduced into educational process some new rules:

In exchange for standard courses, an independent work at the projects was introduced.

Students independently estimated their work. There were no examinations. As the alternative means of their achievements' demonstration, students completed a kind of "portfolio" of their works.

The students were given an opportunity to take part in the matters related to the faculty management.

Subjects "geology" and "geography" have got maximum broad interpretation. Students independently developed their personal curriculum.

Instructors of all departments, together with students, have taken the responsibility for creation and retention of substantial store of knowledge and motivating educational environment for the benefit of everyone.

All events were based on the contract basis, students and teachers

have agreed not even try to put pressure upon anyone, not to manipulate or control anybody.

They have also come to an agreement about aspiration to create and support the open contacts, promoting mutual respect, friendship and mutual aid in relations.

The lateral administrative structure has offered the participants equal opportunities, prestige, and authorities. The duty of chairman was to coordinate, for the purpose of integration, the horizontally organized groups with broader university structures, organized in strict vertical hierarchy. Chairmanship anticipated rotation.

So, from professionally-oriented institution, the department was transformed to more liberal educational one, when to the general knowledge about the Earth is attached no less significance, than to vocational training of particular experts in the field of geology and geography.

Hence, those, who prepare themselves for business activity, politics or any other career, have an opportunity to extend their knowledge of the Earth.

In the course of five years, the changes, connected with the renewal of some courses, have been undertaken and the system of estimation of such parameters as contribution and participation was introduced into practice anew. As a result, the program has got a dual form, at which 60 % of students worked in the groups oriented on the projects and the rest were taught in more traditional manner.

In conditions of constantly growing amount of information, technological progress and fast changes in the world, the organizations are forced to be in the process of constant training.

E. Shane [8] considers the organizational culture as the trained one, with the purpose and in the direction of contradictions between stability and changes control.

Is it possible to stabilize the continuous training and changes? What will the culture, in which training is encouraged, look like? How the organizational culture can become a constantly trained system? In the answers to these questions there are following valuable conceptions:

- The world is controllable, and the training culture should contain base general representation, that the condition of environment, in which it exists, is manageable to a certain extent;

- Prediction and active solution of problems, as a consecutive process of training in contrast to specific decisions of private problems;

- Conception, that problems solutions are in the process of search for truth, which source can be science, experienced experts, and

experimentation; thus, knowledge and skills get a set of forms;

- Representation of the training, as an aspiration to survival and perfection, at which people have constructive intentions and are capable to training and changes;

- Situational approach in solving the questions about efficiency of the organization according to individualism or collectivism, orientation toward the problems, orientation towards relations, authoritarianism, and joint leadership, on the stipulation that they are based on confidence;

- Optimal time orientation for training is the near future;

- Assumption of communication and information importance for the teaching organization success;

- The training culture assumes a variety and interrelationship of subcultures of the organization;

- Importance of training to think systematically, linear logic denial in favour of complicated cognitive models.

Thus, organizational culture and organizational values determine a potential of the organization training, and consequently, its adaptability in the environment.

Influence of social and organizational characteristics of the institute of higher education on the mental health of students

In the course of last decade, one of the most complicated and significant problems of Russian society, which also touches upon high schools to a considerable degree, is the problem of health of young generation.

Under the Education Act of the Russian Federation, the right to get the education is one of the basic and indefeasible constitutional laws of citizens of the Russian Federation.

There is a close interrelation between the educational level and people's health. Educational level exerts influence on people's attitude to their health, increases a probability of choosing a "healthy" behaviour.

Connection between education and health is mediated by economic factors. Poverty and poor education correlate with the bad state of health. On the whole, the higher is educational level, the better is people's health. It should be noted, though, that good education usually implies high salary [2].

In economically developed countries, connection of education and health is also provided with the jus functioning. In the international papers, the right of health obliges governmental bodies to give the population all information about public health.

Thus, the right of health is interconnected with the right of education, as it is a question of education in the health-related spheres of life [1].

Today, the institutes of higher education, as social institutes, have sufficient experience and scientific potential to make their contribution into the solution of socially significant theoretical and applied problems in the field of public health.

Now, one of the most important problems of public health services in Russia is development of the concept of prevention of drug addiction among teenagers and young people, introduction of corresponding educational programs for students, and experts' training in the field of addictive behaviour prevention.

Prevention, in the wide sense of this conception, as its basic purpose, has an improvement of quality of life.

"Health", which is defined by the World Health Organization as a harmonic combination of physical, mental, and social well-being, in many respects is connected with quality of life.

The model of public health, which was developed by the World Health Organization, considers the use of psychoactive substances as a result of interaction between the person (user), drug (psychoactive substance), and the environment.

Research and analysis of considerable quantity of various factors, influencing drug addiction, as well as development and application of preventive programs are possible only on the basis of interaction among the experts of different professional spheres of activity.

At the level of the institutes of higher education, these problems demand the integration of efforts of many subdivisions, unification of administration, scientists, teachers, and students on the path to effective prevention of drug usage.

Under the present day's complicated social and economic conditions, drug usage prevention has become especially topical, in the framework of general problem of health.

It turned out, that students are the least socially protected category of the population. Social and economic conditions influence on the students' health can be described by using the stress conception, as it takes one of the first places among the factors, influencing the students' health.

So-called "vitamin" model of stress postulates, that the highest and lowest parameters of experienced stress (i.e. when people feel useless, or it seems to them, that activity, carried out by them, is not socially important) correlate with higher "susceptibility" to illness [2].

There is an average level of stress, which is considered to be optimal for the health maintenance. Some financial straits, housing problems, age

troubles, etc. can cause stress among students. Influence of stress can be shown in the loss of learning ability and, consequently, in poor academic progress.

J. Greenberg [2] allocates three groups of "risk" among students, according to the stress probability. They are: first-year students, senior students, and representatives of ethnic minority.

<u>First-year students</u>. Drastic changes in the way of life, caused by beginning of the independent life. A habitual life in parental house and entertainments with friends change into necessity to live in another city or even another country, in a hostel, learning to earn and spend money, taking care of oneself; getting new circle of acquaintance and friends.

Students have to master new roles and overcome difficulties, which can be connected:

- With the necessity of the emotional independence of family achievement;
- With a choice and preparation for professional acitvity;
- With preparation for family life;
- With the development of ethic system of values.

Among the factors of educational activity, causing stress at junior students, first of all should be named the following:

- **Examination stress (pre-examination anxiety state caused by uneasiness about possible failure, emotional reactions in the form of panic, and importance attached to the mark).**
- Academic "overload" – a state, caused by excess of subjects or their top-heavy complexity.
- Friendship and love (leaving the old friends, acquaintance with new friends and entering into new relations, looking for love and establishing relations with the members of the opposite sex).
- Jealousy (is the stressor for both: the one, who is jealous and the one, who arouses jealousy) and break-up (which is borne harder by those, who are forsaken and those, who are afraid to be forsaken).
- Sex (formation of the attitude to sex, distribution of the information about safe sex, risk of being infected with AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases).
- Violence (resistance to sexual harassment, violence prevention).
- Shyness overcoming.

<u>Senior students</u>, i.e. those, who have worked, have served in the army, and have got a family before entering institute. Main stressors for them are:

- Combining of study, work, and household duties;
- Being unsure of ability to handle the studies.

Stressors of students - <u>ethnic minority representatives</u> are basically connected with language barrier, racism demonstrations, and difficulties in adaptation to new cultural norms.

Institute of higher education as a social and organizational environment for preventive programs realization

As the basic directions, organization of preventive work in institute of higher education traditionally implies:
- Guarantee of psychological help for students;
- Development and application of programs on stress control training.
Today, the role of training programs is not reduced to the stress control; it is necessary to develop programs of training confident or assertive behaviour as well. Concept of self-affirmation (assertiveness) provides for tactics of carrying your point and asserting your rights by using logical argument, without accusations and aggression, considering interlocutor's opinion, and compromise willingly, if it is necessary.
Skill in self-affirmation is not understood as an aspiration to victory at any price, but means a self-esteem and respect for the others. Assertive behaviour helps in achieving the set objects, without causing damage to others. According to this concept, person should make his choice independently and be responsible for his deeds. Such behaviour accompanies moral certainty and inspires. The confidence is regarded as an aim and behaviour toward self.
On the grounds of his clinical experience, A. Lazarus' [3] considers four major grades of behaviour, which are united by the concept of assertive behaviour:
- Ability to say "No";
- Ability to talk openly about feelings and expectations;
- Ability to establish contacts, to start and to finish conversation;
- Ability to express positive and negative feelings openly.
These abilities exist not only at behavioural level, but at the level of cognitive processes as well, including aims and life philosophy. There are three variants of behaviour in the training programs:
- Uncertain (passive, without asserting one's rights, *a flight*): person tries to avoid the conflict by maintaining the status quo; lets others to make decisions for him; agrees with others, regardless of what he feels; procrastinates the time to avoid a necessity to solve a problem. But for all that, he feels like a victim, blaming others for things that happen to him.
- Aggressive (direct and indirect aggression, *a struggle*): person

behaves aggressively; tries to thrust his opinion on others, despite their feelings; behaves with hostility and unpredictably, flies into a rage. Such tactics lets to achieve the objects (within certain limits) owing to other people. Aggressive behaviour provides for a high degree of "risk", as the person is always in sight.

- Confident (assertive, *control, logic*): person is fair with himself and others; stands upon his rights, respecting the rights of others; is capable to social and emotional self-expression; is self-assured; is capable to behave rationally, as mature person. Such tactics helps to succeed, without causing damage to others, to make a choice, and to be responsible for your own deeds.

Social movements and student organizations can play an important role in realization of preventive programs in the drug addiction sphere.

Any social movement supposes a membership of it; therefore, public unions of students, such as public organizations, student centres and clubs can act as one of ways of self-identification in the positive context. Thus, the need of youth for an affiliation with a group is satisfied. Similar identification with the purposes, values and norms of referred group lets to get a positive social experience, which is transferred to other spheres of vital activity.

Public associations that incarnate the projects, concerned with pro-social behaviour development, at which respect, responsibility, objective appraisal of results, initiative, and support are welcomed, play the major function of future experts and citizens education. Public associations, in the framework of youth directions of their activity, can realize preventive programs in the field of addictive behaviour.

Organization of leisure within the limits of representations about healthy way of life.

In the given programs, the approach is based on proposing an alternative in satisfying the young people's aspiration to risk, and to search of pungent sensations and activity. These alternatives can be: sport, travel, and creative work.

Organization of educational programs directed to:

- increase of the level of knowledge about the negative influence of drugs, and consequences of their usage;

- increase of communicative competence, training in life skills and resistance to negative influences of contemporaries; ability to make perspective life plans;

- training of youth leaders, who express a desire for conducting an anti-drug agitation among contemporaries.

Public assistance programs realization. Such programs imply student

training in the bases of medico-social support of their life and educational activity.

Realization of programs of cooperation with other student movements and organizations, which have similar purposes.

Thus, institute of higher education as a social organization has many key factors and channels of influence, which can be successfully used for drug addiction prevention in student environment.

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