

Conceptual Analysis of Significance of Psycho-Emotional Stability for the University Teacher Personality

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Abstract: High level of emotional intensity of teachers' work hinders their professional development, reducing the effectiveness. This causes a conflict with the current trends of growing requirements for the quality of education. However, development of psychological and emotional stability is not provided in the training of future university teachers. Partially, this is due to the lack of clear methodological approach to the description of psychological and emotional stability as an element of psychic system of a person in the literature. The gap is filled by this study, providing details on the basis of the example of professional activities of the university teachers. The paper presents a reflection on the theoretical approaches and experimental results of researches about the impact of emotions on the professional educators. Along with the experience of the author, these results and approaches allowed concluding about the theoretical construct of the place and role of psychological and emotional stability of the university teacher as a psychological protection of the individual from external and internal negative factors. The author has established the nature of the relation between psycho-emotional stability and other important professional qualities of the university teacher: psycho-emotional stability of the teacher is a primary condition for the development of positive professional qualities and is an obstacle for the negative ones. To demonstrate this relation it is suggested to use a circle method for presenting the psychological and emotional stability.

Key words: Psycho-emotional stability • Positive professional qualities • Professional educator

INTRODUCTION

The global financial crisis and the social and economic instability in many countries of the world have created a situation, when people live in the state of anxiety, frustration, irritability, depression, etc. Difficult life circumstances, crises, causing frustration, stresses and conflicts, put increased demands for the resources of the individual. This problem has become particularly acute for professional spheres. The problem of the influence of emotions on the human activities becomes ever more topical. Educational activity is not an exception in this case. Furthermore, the development of social and educational space exposes ever more growing demand for the teacher's work and personality. A particular challenge in this respect is professional work of the university teachers, since it is their students that reflect changes and crises of modern life.

The university teachers work in the conditions of social frustrating and stressful factors adversely impacting their mental adaptation. The high level of

frustration in teaching activities is connected, first, with social factors (dissatisfaction with social, material and family status). Second, these are the factors that eventually lead to lower subjective importance of the educational activities and the loss of active interest in such work (dissatisfaction with the level of education, prospects, emotional stress, potential conflicts specific for teaching activities at the university, communication problems, etc.). Stressfulness of teaching activities is conditioned by the measure and the number of difficulties in solving educational problems.

All these factors lead to the physical and neuropsychiatric diseases. This in turn is a major cause of neuroticism in students, who live much of his life in a stressful environment created, among others, by their teachers.

To date, there is a contradiction between the increasing intensity of sociometric professions, including teachers and unexplored psychological defense mechanisms that have a positive impact on the teachers and efficiency of their activities. This problem is

particularly acute today and is closely linked to high dynamism of the development of professional activities of the university teachers; continuous increase of education intensity; increasing requests to modern and efficient decision-making; accuracy of activities and operations; the lack of a proper level of higher social emotions; high mental loads; strain of such mental functions as memory and attention and control of emotions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Reviewing monographs, we studied the theoretical approaches and experimental results on the influence of emotions on the professional work of teachers. The materials of research were the works of psychologists in the field. Particular attention was drawn to the study of M.B. Ripski, J. LoCasale-Crash and L. Decor [1, p.27], who experimentally established the correlation between the emotional stability and some important professional qualities of the teacher.

The working definition of psychological and emotional stability was based on the author's position, reflected in the previous study [2]: a person is psycho-emotionally stable if his excitement, despite the strong stimuli, does not exceed the threshold value. Since this author's definition is not always in accordance with the conceptual field of emotional stability in other studies, in addition, studying various scientific approaches in this article we used the term emotional stability.

The analytical, logical and other scientific methods including the method of observation have enabled us to derive a theoretical construct of the place and role of the university teacher's psychological and emotional stability as psychological protection of the individual from external and internal negative factors.

RESULTS

In the process of teaching the psycho-emotional stability reduces the negative influence of strong emotional impact, prevents an extreme stress and contributes to preparedness to act in stressful situations.

As it is noted by A. Langle, "in the teacher's work, various emotional factors not associated with generally important conditions, but with the teachers' personalities and their unique emotional system, can cause emotional stress, even where the situation is far from the emotion" [3, p.55]. This is due to the fact that a teacher can be influenced by internal factors that cause negative emotions, including lack of response to the question of

how to educate the student. It is important for the teacher to be a double specialist: in the field of taught science (e.g. philosophy) and in the teaching techniques (proper questions of teaching).

J.E. Ormrod revealed the existence of a direct relationship between the emotional stability of the teacher and its impact on the emotional state and cognitive activity of students [4, p.77]. At that, the effectiveness of the teacher, in our opinion, is expressed in the success of students. Negative assessment of students is at the same time the assessment of the teacher and his teaching. With such an approach the especially important is an individual approach to remedial instruction, increasing emotional stress.

To characterize the specificity of formation of psychological and emotional stability in teachers it is necessary to identify the nature of teaching activities. The essence of such activities can be seen as a unity of purpose, motives, actions (operations) and the result.

Educational activity is associated with various stressful situations of high emotional saturation and cognitive complexity of interpersonal communication. Usually the work of professional educator is reckoned among the group of occupations such as "person-person". Among the specific determinants of the teacher's emotional stability a group of scientists identified the following: professional competence, communicativeness, stress resistance, absence of pronounced professional deformation and severe emotional burnout [1, p.28]. The experimental data established a direct relationship between emotional stability and performance characteristics of the teachers. This scientific result is considered very important and we assume that the authors found a direct relationship, but misinterpreted the cause-effect relationship. Let us dwell on these determinants to justify our conclusion.

Success in any activity depends on the level of professional competence of the person. On the one hand, the concept of competence is common and stable; it assimilates the existing and potential cognitive and practical concepts. On the other hand, the concept of competence is, in essence, mobile and historically volatile. The situation, goals and standards, cultural patterns, educational technologies, the students themselves, their needs and opportunities change; at that, the requirement of competence remains invariant. The stability of this value is achieved by rapid filling of competence.

In general, the scholars reckon competence among the general characteristics of the individual and do not associate it with disparate skills. At the heart of the

Western European models of competence [5, p. 46; 6, p.31] there are such features as the ability to independently find solutions to complex problems, the constant need to acquire new knowledge and skills, a positive view on proper personality, ability of harmonious communication and ability to behave in a group.

As a further determinant of considerable importance for the emotional stability of teachers, the researchers distinguish communicativeness.

In the process of communication the interchange of information, conditions and actions occurs and specific relationships between the participants of the educational process are established. In communication, the emotional properties are manifested and disclosed, as in the process of learning the norms, values and methods, the student develops as a person and as a subject of activity.

In social psychology, the term "communication" means any communication between people and all available ways of social relations. We share the position that the term "communication" becomes more common in relation to communication [7], as this typology is applicable to the analysis of the interaction at any level: in the dyad "teacher-student", "student-student", triad "teacher-student-student", in the intra-group and "teacher-training group" interaction.

The emotional component of communication determines and influences the change in the emotional state of the communicants, their mutual perception and relationships about joint activities addressing common challenges.

Communicative interaction provides the greatest sensitivity and openness to the mutual influence, when the rational-logical is added by intuitive and emotional personal features, facilitating the transform of impersonal information into the personally significant one that creates an optimal basis for positive changes in all aspects of the personality of each of the participants of the communication process.

As a determinative characteristic of communicativeness we accept the communicative focus on dialogic communication and clear empathic understanding, bringing together the ability to listen and be heard. For successful implementation of dialogic communication, above all, there is a need in the ability to identify and decenter, in empathy and reflection.

The profession of educators is one of the most stressful activities, which is included in the group of occupations with large stress factors; its increased emotiogenic situation is inherent to the very nature of pedagogical work.

The concept of emotional stress typically includes the initial emotional response, emerging under intense psychological pressure [8, p.315], or emotional and mental symptoms caused by physiological changes [9, p.155]. Such a broad interpretation of the stress, in fact, merging it with the concept of emotion, is excessive and is caused by the intent to fill the stress with specific qualitative content, like emotions, whereas stress is a high degree of emotion intensity (and not the emotion). We believe that such mental terms as "tension" and "stress" may omit the adjective "emotional", as they are never unemotional. Stress, in our opinion, is a high degree of emotional tension and therefore the resistance to it, in fact, is part of the psychological and emotional stability. In this regard, it is methodologically incorrect to consider their relationship and interaction.

The professional deformation of a teacher is developed due to long-term internal stress resulting from teaching activities, which leads to such qualities as moralizing, edification, insincerity in expression of feelings. In a situation of frustration, which arises in the course of professional activity, the teacher acquires different forms of psychic protection, expressed in stereotyped behaviors and self-doubt, which is a characteristic of professional deformation.

Analysis of the observations of personal professional experience has allowed us to conclude that in professional activities of the university teachers, there is a prevalence of the trend to impose their mode of "I" to students and colleagues. As a result, there is a neurosis-like need to exploit others and the desire to dominate others. In our view, the central character of the teacher is psychological qualities of the person; so the true teacher is characterized by the value attitude to the individual student, focusing on the interaction, empathy and compassion.

Another no less important manifestation of professional deformation, effecting the emotional stability of the teacher, is the burnout syndrome (combustion). H. Perlman, having summarized the many definitions of "burnout", distinguished three main components: the emotional and / or physical exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduction of professional achievements [10, p. 89].

In our view, the emotional burnout causes a situation, where educational problems are not solved and accumulate, which is dangerous both for teachers and students. Emotional burnout negatively affects the performance of professional activities and relationships with colleagues, as it leads to emotional and personal alienation, dissatisfaction with oneself, followed by

anxiety, depression, various psychosomatic disorders and inappropriate emotional response.

Studying the "burnout" of teachers, G. Fernet and A. Senecal found out that the phenomenon is "infectious": those who are prone to the burnout syndrome become cynical and pessimistic negativists; interacting at work with other educators, who are affected by the same stress, they can quickly turn into a group of "burning-out" people [11, p. 41]. Obviously, the consequences for the students are negative. Hence, in each institution the psychologist is a must; such specialist should have the authority and responsibility to prevent such a state among the university faculty. For example, it may be the Deputy Director (Dean) or Rector (depending on the number of teaching staff) for the psychological and pedagogical management.

It is possible to distinguish factors of a negative impact on teaching activities: external (objective) factors associated with the activities of the university teacher and internal (subjective) - the individual personality traits of a professional.

The objective factors include the drawbacks in the educational activity organization, its excessive regulation, the strong dependence of the teacher on administration, improper distribution of workload, undeveloped system of incentives, unclear prospects for professional growth, the non-inclusion of the teacher in the school management, the adverse social and psychological atmosphere among the teaching staff. Frequent conflicts with colleagues and supervisors and lack of support and solidarity in the group have a negative impact on the mental state of its members and provoke heavy feelings. Against this background, conflicts with the students and work with a group of subjects with different characters turn into a critical point of emotional intensity.

Among the subjective factors there are: first, a high level of neuroticism, which is manifested in the increased excitability, reactivity and high responsiveness, low threshold of distress and prevalence of negative emotional states. Second, the presence of mismatches in the value field results in inability to implement meaningful life goals, priority types of behavior, preferred course of action and / or significant personal qualities in the teachers' professional activities. Third, there is a low level of development of the individual system of deliberate self-regulation of emotions and behavior.

Leveling the influence of the external (objective) factors is possible only at a high psychological and emotional resistance to them. It is also a condition for the absence (displacement) of the internal (subjective)

factors. That is why we consider the availability of protection from the effects of adverse external and internal factors in professional activities as a primary professionally important trait of the teacher's character. The word "stability", by definition, involves the "resistance to...". Resistance to the negative effects allows preventing the development of negative psychic states in the teacher (professional deformation, emotional burnout, stress, etc.). Professional competence, communicativeness and other important properties of the individual professional educator occur only if the psychological and emotional stability is formed. The latter allows the teachers to carry out their activities and professionally grow beyond the influence of negative factors (Figure 1).

The circle in the figure presents the personality of the teacher. Psycho-emotional stability is presented by the circumference, which width reflects to what extent it is formed or unformed. Psycho-emotional stability is a thematic property of the professional teacher. If the teacher's personality is not formed, a shift towards unprofessional mentality occurs under the influence of penetrating internal and external negative factors.

The circle method for presenting the psycho-emotional stability is remarkable, because the growth of the quality and quantity of the positive teacher's traits within the person (the circle) should be preceded by the initial rise in psychological and emotional stability (the circumference). That is, for the personal growth, the teacher should first work on his psychological and emotional stability.

When psychological and emotional stability of the teacher is formed, he does not let emotion in (does not go through it), but analyzes it intellectually. To respond to the external negative factor the teachers use their emotional intelligence: the reaction is selected for a constructive resolution of the situation. If the source of the negative factor is the student, the emotional response is selected "for the benefit of the student".

Psycho-emotional stability is not only the professionally important quality for the teacher's work, but also the basis of the professional activity and the primary criterion of its effectiveness.

Based on the above, the scientific results of M.B. Ripski, D. Lokasal-Crash and L. Decor should be interpreted as follows. Psycho-emotional stability is an essential determinant of the teacher's professional competence, communicativeness, absence of severe professional deformation and emotional burnout.

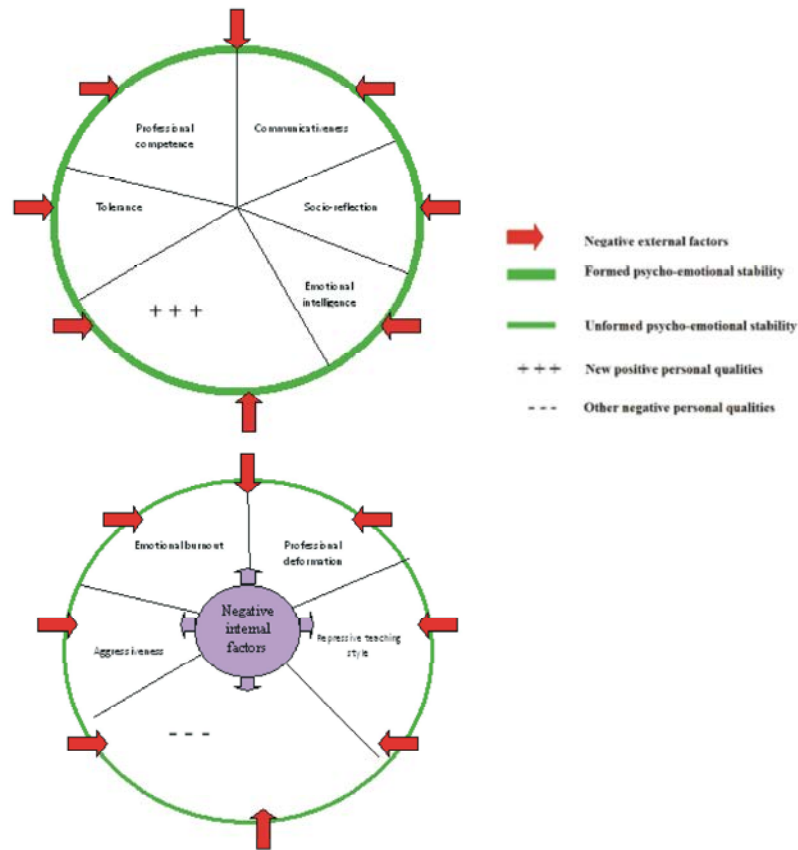


Fig. 1: Personality of the university teacher at formed and unformed psychological and emotional stability.
Source: Compiled by the author.

CONCLUSION

Psycho-emotional stability is non-susceptibility to destructive influence of internal and external factors on the level of mental reflection of the object of influence. At psychological and emotional stability the external indicators reflect a constructive internal emotional state of the person. Psycho-emotional stability is one of the factors of behavior and control of activities. Like any human individual feature, it is a system whose purpose is to preserve the integrity and identity of the person at the continuous external and internal changes.

Psycho-emotional stability is a characteristic of an adult and it presents such adult as an emotionally mature person. Psycho-emotional stability is reflected in the ability to prevent the state of over-excitement when performing complex activities and behaving in difficult circumstances. This is one of the psychological factors of safety, efficiency and success of activities. Prerequisites of psycho-emotional stability lie in the content of emotions, feelings and in the dynamics of the

psyche, in the content of needs, motives, will, in the awareness and willingness of the individual to perform various tasks.

Pedagogical work is a complex process that occurs in a state of chronic emotional stress, which is associated with a lot of stress factors, accompanying such activities. These are such specific features of work as high dynamism, time constraints, work overload, the complexity of emerging pedagogical situations, role ambiguity, social assessment, the need for frequent and intensive contact, interaction with different social groups, etc. The specificity of educational activities is conditioned by: larger number of emotional situations, variety of communications, a variety of contacts in communication and interaction, the constant need to make decisions, to find constructive ways to resolve the conflict, the need to consider the multidimensionality of professional activity, expressed in a combination of learning objectives, training, development and etc.

Psycho-emotional stability is the primary professionally significant quality of the teacher; it is an

indicator of professional development and readiness for teacher's work. Its formation deserves special attention at the stage of training of future teachers.

Psycho-emotional stability of the teacher is a necessary condition for the development of professional competence, communicativeness, absence of pronounced professional deformation and emotional burnout.

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