

## Communication Style of Teachers and Psychological Health of Students

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**Abstract:** Nowadays Kazakhstan performs large-scale modernization of its system of higher vocational education. In the current context obtaining education in higher schools can be referred to a specific activity related high level of mental and physical loads, sharply increasing during examination periods. At the same time psychological health of students is significantly influenced by time shortage, necessity to assimilate large amounts of information in tight deadlines, increased requirements to solution of problematic situations, rigid control and daily scheduling. The article gives essential characteristic of the notions "pedagogical communication style" and "psychological health", analyzes peculiar features of educational environment of higher school, which can become risk factor for health of students. In addition, the article presents materials of empiric study into psychological health of students as a function of communication style of teachers. The obtained results make it possible to forecast probable violations of psychological health of students.

**Key words:** Pedagogical communication style • Psychological health • Educational environment of higher school • Model of communication behavior of teachers • Neurotization • Neuropsychic tolerance

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### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, in the age of scientific and technological advances, expansion of informational space, complication of all aspects of individual and social life, the problem of preservation of human health becomes more acute. The health has the major importance among the priorities of human life. The phenomenon of health is versatile, it covers a complex of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, medical--biological and sociocultural knowledge.

Initially the notion "psychological health" was introduced by S. Freud, who considered psychic disturbance as a consequence of intrapersonal conflicts, negatively influencing both on ill and healthy persons. All spectrum of negative emotional pains (depression, anxiety, etc.) is a subjective aspect of these conflicts, occurring within discrepancy of preset targets and means of their achievement. In psychology the problem of psychological health is described comprehensively by B.S. Bratus, who considers psychic health as a complex of internal human properties, providing harmony between

demands, efforts, values of person and society, which become background of efficient execution of professional and life strategy [1].

In educational environment of higher school it is possible to highlight a set of specific features, the combination of which can become a powerful risk factor for psychological health of students:

- higher school environment is characterized with existence of specific factors, related with training load. Thus, education in higher school requires from students significant intelligent, informational, psychoemotional stress (for instance, at examinations), which is accompanied with low physical activity [2]. Mental disorders are as prevalent among college students as same-aged non-students and these disorders appear to be increasing in number and severity [3];
- training in higher school is related with the problem of interpersonal relations, since this is the stage of active entry into social environment. Social adaptation is accompanied with the actions aimed at

achievement of recognition and high status in a group. Diversity of student community creates additional problems of social adaptation. Among stress causes, related with interrelations in a group, the most frequent are psychological non-compatibility between members of the group due to different level of knowledge and academic training; peculiarities of characteristic features; absence of mutual productive activity of the group members, which leads to emotional deprivation and violation of interpersonal relations in group; low social-communicative development of students [4];

- training in higher school is decisive period of achievement of personhood, since important events and decisions during the training period, which are encountered by every student, effect greatly on his/her life and professional career [5]. In this regard the existing necessity of personal identity in future vocational environment can be accompanied with a set of negative experiences;
- students are assured in immensity of their physical and psychic resources, thus, they do not care for their health. The system of higher education does not have purposeful health training. Young people do not have established motivation to healthy vital activities and necessary reserve of knowledge and practical skills and habits, which could enable to know it better. Low level of health culture transforms a young person into victim of unconsidered occupation and the time available for recreation, removal of consequences of fatigue and preparation to a next stage of activity is utilized with low efficiency and quite often with negative result [6].

In our work the term "psychological health" will be considered as a combination of personal characteristics, which serve as background of emotional and stress resistance, social adaptation. In this regard, the procedures of diagnostics of neurotization level and neuropsychic tolerance are used as tools of our study.

One of the factors, influencing on psychic health of students, are peculiarities of teachers' behavior and communication with students. More than ever, recent studies in the educational and psychological field have been trying to investigate the impact of the teacher's style on the attitude that pupils develop towards the learning process [7]. Teacher's interpersonal actions, in which s/he creates and maintains a positive classroom atmosphere, is vitally important to the quality of teaching [8].

Pedagogical communication is a specific form of communication with its peculiar features and, at the same time, obeying general psychological interrelations, specific to communication as a form of interaction between humans, including communicative, interactive and perceptive components.

Studies in the field of pedagogical psychology demonstrate that significant portion of pedagogical problems is stipulated not only by drawbacks of scientific and methodological training of teachers but rather by deformation of sphere of professional pedagogical communication. As depicted by the studies, it is exactly the teacher who should establish and adjust strategies of communication with students in order to create favorable atmosphere aiming at increase in efficiency of educational process [9].

The notion of pedagogical communication style is related with the concept of individual style of activity, which originated in the works by K. Levin, who outlined three essentially different methods of people management (style of management): authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire [10].

The studies of Soviet authors confirmed major provisions of management continuum by K. Levin. Authoritarian style leads to aloof position of the teacher with regard to a group of students or individual student. Emotional coldness, depriving a student of kinship and confidence, quickly disciplines the group, but results in psychological state of forlornness, vulnerability and anxiety of the students. This style promotes achievement of educational tasks but suppresses initiative and does not develop motivation of targeted management of behavior [11].

Democratic style assumes that the teacher relies on the group, promotes and brings up independence. Problems of the students are discussed by the teacher with the students, the teacher does not insist on his/her point of view but tries to convince of its correctness. Such style is the most fruitful, exactingness is combined with trust without predominance of any of them. Democratic style provides active position of the student and disciplined behavior is not a goal in itself but a tool, which provides intensive activity [12].

Laissez-faire style assumes predominance of trust over exactingness, but is in its essence an attempt of the teacher to keep aloof from the educational process. The teacher does not show initiative and as a consequence, due to decreased mobilization all actions are low efficient, though, without psychic traumatism, contrary to the authoritarian style.

Nowadays there are several approaches to description and classification of pedagogical communication styles. Pragmatist conception of pedagogical behavior styles was proposed by A.K. Markova and A. Ya. Nikonova. They used the following backgrounds for differentiation of styles of teacher activity: substantive characteristics of style (prevailing orientation of teacher to process or results of his/her activity, expansion of orientation and reference-estimating stages of the activity); dynamic characteristics of style (flexibility, stability, togglability etc.); efficiency (level of knowledge and skills of the students, as well as their interest in the subject) [13].

V.A. Kan-Kalik highlighted five pedagogical styles: communication based on high professional prescriptions of the teacher; communication based on friendly disposition; communication--distance; communication--frightening; communication--flirtation [14].

Empiric study, devoted to analysis of interrelation between pedagogical communication style and manifestation of communicative aggression, was carried out in Kazakh Abai National Pedagogical University in autumn, 2012.

The following methods were used as diagnostic tools:

- For diagnostics of teacher communication style: diagnostic procedure for pedagogical communication styles by N. P. fetiskin, V. V. Kozlov, G. M. Manuilov,
- For diagnostics of psychological health of students: experimental psychological procedure "Level of Neurotization" (this procedure is the scale of neurotization from the questionnaire researching the level of neurotization and psychopathization, developed in Leningrad Bekhterev Institute in 1974) and procedure of estimation of neuropsychic tolerance (known as Prognoz method) (developed in Kirov LVMA).

The diagnostic procedure for pedagogical communication styles is based on classification of models of teachers' behavior in communication with students within classes by L. D. Stolyarenko and S. I. Samygin. Conventionally these models can be denoted as follows: dictator model (Mont Blanc); non-contact model (Great Wall of China); model of differentiated attention (Locator); hypo-reflective model (Grouse); hyper-reflective model (Hamlet); model of inflexible response (Robot); authoritarian model (My own self); model of active interaction (Union) [15].

Since in our researching activity we relied exactly on this classification, let us consider it in more details:

- Dictator model (Mont Blanc) – the teacher is aloof from the students, personal influence is minimum, pedagogical functions are reduced to informative message, which results in the absence of psychological contact, shiftlessness and passivity of the students.
- Non-contact model (Great Wall of China) – between the teacher and the students there exists weak response due to randomly or unintentionally created communication barrier, the studies are of informative and not of dialogue pattern, which leads to weak interaction with the students and for their part, indifferent attitude to the teacher.
- Model of differentiated attention (Locator) – based on selective relations with the students, the teacher is oriented not at all group but only at its portion, either at good or, vice versa, at weak students, which leads to violation of integrity of interaction in the system teacher--group, which is substituted with fragmented situational contacts.
- Hypo-reflective model (Grouse) – the teacher is in his/her shell: the speech is presented mainly with monologues, within joint activity he/she is absorbed with his/her concepts and is emotionally deaf to others, which leads to the absence of communication between the students and the teacher, since the latter is surrounded with the field of psychological vacuum.
- Hyper-reflective model (Hamlet) – it is opposite to the previous model in terms of psychological characteristic: the teacher is anxious not only with substantial part of interaction, but rather with how he/she is appreciate by the others, he/she always in doubts about efficiency of his/her arguments, reacts vehemently to responses from the students, taking them personally, which leads to strained social--psychological sensitivity of the teacher and non-adequate reactions to the responses and actions of the group.
- Model of inflexible response (Robot) – interaction between the teacher and the students are arranged according to rigid program, where targets of the studies and teaching procedures are strictly maintained, perfect logics of narration and argumentation of facts takes place, but the teacher does not feel and understand alternating communicative situation, which leads to low efficiency of pedagogical interaction.

- Authoritarian model (My own self) – educational process is completely focused at the teacher, there is no creative interaction between the teacher and the students, any self-action of the students is suppressed, their cognitive and social activity is reduced to minimum, which leads to shiftlessness, loss of creative character of education, distortion of motivational sphere of cognitive activity.
- Model of active interaction (Union) – the teacher is in contiguous dialogue with the students, supports their cheerful mood, encourages their ideas, easily reacts to variations in psychological climate of the group and reacts to them with high flexibility. This model is the most efficient.

The acquired results were processed using mathematical statistics.

As quantitative indices we used the scales of pedagogical communication styles, which expressed the intensity of the aforementioned styles: Mont Blanc; Great Wall of China; Locator; Grouse; Hamlet; Robot; My own self; and Union; as well as numeric estimations of level of neurotization and neuropsychic tolerance.

The empirical study diagnosed the pedagogical communication styles of the teachers of the faculty of philology and faculty of physics and mathematics of the University, as well as psychological health of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> year students of the same faculties as the teachers.

The diagnostic results of the pedagogical communication styles demonstrated that there exist reliable differences in the following pedagogical communication styles of the teachers of the faculties of philology and of physics and mathematics: Dictator model (Mont Blanc) ( $p < 0.01$ ), Non-contact model (Great Wall of China) ( $p < 0.05$ ), Hyper-reflective model (Hamlet) ( $p < 0.05$ ), Authoritarian model (My own self) ( $p < 0.01$ ) and Model of active interaction (Union) ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Herewith, in terms of absolute average value the intensity of such pedagogical communication styles as Dictator, Non-contact and Authoritarian is predominant for the teachers of the faculty of physics and mathematics; and of such styles as Hyper-reflective and Active interaction for the teachers of the faculty of philology.

Estimation of neuropsychic tolerance of the students--philologists demonstrated that the majority of them has satisfactory level of neuropsychic tolerance (more than 60 %).

In addition, the students--philologists demonstrated also decreased and low level of neurotization (for more than 70 % of tested persons), which is characterized with emotional tolerance and positive background of major feelings (calmness, optimism). Optimism and creativity, plainness in implementation of desires form sense of self-respect, social courage, independence, easiness in communication and related with these properties stress resistance.

Estimation of neuropsychic tolerance of the students of the faculty of physics and mathematics demonstrated contrastingly unsatisfactory level of neuropsychic tolerance. More than 70 % of students are characterized with possibility of future nervous--psychic collapses and more than half of the students have unsatisfactory level of neuropsychic tolerance, which in its turn is the index of manifestation of disadaptation in stress situation.

In addition, the students of the faculty of physics and mathematics showed increased and high level of neurotization (more than 60 % of tested persons), which is characterized with emotional excitement, producing various negative feelings (anxiety, tension, discomfort, soreness), easy frustrating by various external and internal circumstances, disposition to hypochondriac fixation on unpleasant somatic feelings, as well as with concentrating on suffering from own personal drawbacks. The latter in its turn forms the feeling of inferiority, complications in communications, social shyness and dependence and finally deadaptation in social aspect.

Statistic processing of data confirmed reliability of differences between the students of the faculties of philology and of physics and mathematics in terms of level of neuropsychic tolerance ( $p < 0.01$ ) and level of neurotization ( $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the experimental results revealed that predominance of such pedagogical communication styles as Dictator, Non-contact and Authoritarian leads to decrease in the level neuropsychic tolerance and increase in the level of neurotization. And vice versa, predominance of such pedagogical communication styles as Hyper-reflective and Active interaction leads to increase of the level of neuropsychic tolerance and decrease increase in the level of neurotization.

## **CONCLUSION**

Therefore, we demonstrated that it is possible to forecast neuropsychic tolerance and level of neurotization of students on the basis of diagnostics of pedagogical communication styles of teachers of higher school.

Psychological monitoring of pedagogical and educational processes, based on diagnostic procedures, would make it possible with certain likelihood ratio to forecast possible violations of psychological health of the students prior to the time when they become destructive.

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