

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****PECULIARITIES OF WORKING AS AN EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGIST DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

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Abstract

Coronavirus COVID-19 is a new phenomenon, daily mentioned in media but still understudied. This fast transition from an epidemic of COVID-19 to a pandemic declared by the World Health Organization gave rise to multiple unforeseen changes, primarily a challenging situation in the education system. Pandemic and quarantine necessitated a shift to a full online mode of education. This paper analysis a problem of job organization and content for an educational psychologist in the new condition of education development. The educational psychologist actively interacts with the society around a child, involves parents, teachers and other specialists into joint activity to provide the child with a psychological assistance; they not only have a more complete concept of the child's problems but provide involvement of all the possible resources into this activity. Scientific novelty of the study is in providing a review of the level of satisfaction with distance learning by subjects of the education relations (students, parents and teachers). The practical significance of the study is defined by recommendations to introduce corrections to a common set of activities of an educational psychologist due to the distance mode of operation. The research results are significant for further development of the practical educational psychology, as they reveal new aspects of activity related to distance learning. They may be seen as development of Russian educational resources.

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1. Introduction

In January of 2020, the World Health organization (WHO) declared an outbreak of a novel coronavirus infection of 2019 (COVID-19) a healthcare emergency of international significance. In March 2020, WHO stated that COVID-19 might be characterized as a pandemic. Since then, WHO and health care institutions all around the globe take measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

A threat of spreading the epidemic introduced many unforeseen changes to our life: disturbance to a regular style of life, lack of active interactions with other people, economic instability, general uncertainty, transition to remote work, possibility of a loss of income, hardships of life, isolation of families with children in confined space, etc. This crisis time facilitates appearance of acute psychological states.

Mass media are replete with advice on how to behave, what to keep busy with, what should be avoided during this troubled period: from publishing official information to advice on preserving motivation in remote working and even on long-distance personal relationships. Changes affected all areas of society with no exception. In particular, they significantly influenced education. Subjects of the educational process found themselves at the forefront: about 1.5 million schoolteachers and university instructors, as well as 16 million pupils and 7 million university students. It turned out that swiftly constructing a learning system and meeting the curriculum requirements in the distance learning format is hard, which was felt by all the participants, including parents of the pupils. Some polling results are given below.

A poll of 29,000 Russian teachers concerning distance learning during the pandemic has shown that 80 % of respondents encountered problems when transitioning to the distance learning. The most common problems were lack of computers and mobile devices among children, technical issues in schools and lack of experience in working with the Internet. A study by the Institute of Progressive Education, basing on express monitoring of the Internet and systematic summary of common complaints concerning online lessons on behalf of teachers, pupils and parents has shown that most often the users complained about technical unpreparedness of school-recommended Internet resources to distant operation with high load. More than 25 % of comments were dedicated to digital competences of teachers. At that, the authors of the comments noted that school employees often lack understanding of online teaching methodology and skills in remote transfer of knowledge, which turns distance learning into self-teaching. Almost 5.5 % of complaints concerted increased load on both pupils and teachers. The parents lament that homework is large, while the teachers are forced to intensively prepare for online lessons in addition to regular lessons, which were kept in some cases. Besides, 10 % of messages concerned complaints on lack of equipment necessary for distance learning.

A large-scale sociological study on issues in transition to distance learning in the Russian Federation as seen by the teachers was conducted by the Higher School of Economics and showed that during the transition to distance learning, the share of those who use online resources in conducting lessons increased from 64 % to 85 %. The most popular videoconferencing platforms were mainly employed in large urban settlements of 250,000 people and more. Rural schools and schools in small and medium cities and towns were found to be vulnerable. There, capabilities of both teachers and pupils are significantly lower. For example, only 8 % of teachers stated that all their pupils could use

videoconferencing. At that, the teachers usually select a platform convenient to them and to their pupils. Otherwise, one or more platforms may be stipulated by the school. Teachers regularly conducting remote lessons name the following among the most acute issues:

- Issues in connecting all the children to videoconferencing;
- Interruptions in operation of the videoconferencing service due to overload;
- Children lacking skills in independent logging on to the videoconferencing service.

About 84 % of teachers are of an opinion that their teaching loads increased with transition to distance learning. 59 % stated that load on children also increased. What caused it? Of course, primality the need to quickly master the new formats of teaching. New situation requires new ways of preparing to a lesson. Second, by no means all teachers know and use all the possibilities provided to them by the education platforms. According to teachers, pupils are undersupplied with hardware. Only 38 % of them can complete home tasks using educational online platforms.

When transitioning to distance learning, teachers note that they cannot understand how to teach online such subjects as Visual Arts, Music, PE, as well as communicate with psychologists and speech therapists. In some schools, these subjects were removed from the timetable for the duration of the distance learning. Teachers of these subjects are worried about their salary. Besides, there is no convenient platform for educating children with health limitations.

Experts of the Equal Opportunities to Children All-Russian Popular Front and National Educational Resources Fund polled 2401 parents of school pupils (grades 1-11) and 2,695 pupils aged from 13 to 18 on their evaluation of distance learning. Overwhelming majority of parents (70 %) are sure that distance learning cannot substitute school, while 60 % do not want to study with distant learning on a permanent basis.

All the online platforms used in the distant learning are currently operating with breakdowns. Interruptions in the operation of online platforms were reported by 88 % of children using them. Of those surveyed, 54 % watched ready video lessons on various services, 50 % completed tasks online.

Ill-preparedness of children to self-organization has become a major cause for increased load onto parents, which was registered by 48 % of those surveyed. While 62 % of respondents are of an opinion that their children experience reduced motivation to study, 9 % report increased motivation. At that, 55 % are completely or largely satisfied with the way their school resolves issues with studying during the quarantine. About 45 % of parents pointed to a lack of online communication with teachers, who remove themselves from the learning process. 21 % of children saw new possibilities in the new distance learning mode of studying, they felt it was interesting to try a different approach. While six out of ten children are sure that studying in a class is more interesting than in the remote mode, for 40 % of pupils distance learning turned out more comfortable. A third of surveyed are of an opinion that in the distance learning their studies are as productive as in a brick and mortar school; 27 % are sure that it is possible to get prepared to exams with the distance learning. Almost a quarter of pupils expressed their willing to continue studying in the remote mode, using textbooks or online. For 65 % of pupils, face-to-face studies appear more advantageous for memorization and understanding of new material.

More than a half (57 %) of adolescents started feeling a deficit of communication with peers; 45 % feel a deficit in communication with teachers. At that, during the quarantine, the share of teenagers who

feel lonely even when communicating in social networks reduced from 54 % to 49 %. About 77 % of pupils noted an increase in tasks for independent work, 49 % noted their increased fatigability.

Analysis of data from a survey of subjects of educational relationships – students, parents and teachers – on their satisfaction with organization of distance learning as implemented in Russian schools due to the pandemic has its advantages and drawbacks (Eremeeva, 2020). The format of long-distance work required changes not only in technology, but also in teaching and psychological approach as well (Braunack-Mayer et al., 2013). It also turned out that a threat to life and health typical of the coronavirus pandemic influenced social (Kawohl & Nordt, 2020) and psychological well-being of population (Arden & Chilcot 2020; Belykh-Silaev, 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Huang & Zhao, 2020; Moghanibashi-Mansourieh, 2020; Rajkumar, 2020; Tkhostov & Rasskazova, 2020). An additional need arose in psychological assistance (Savina et al., 2019).

A comparison of telephone calls to emergency psychological help provided by the Moscow Public Psychological Assistance Service before and during the pandemic (Gerasimova, 2020) shows that in 2020 in comparison with the same period in 2019 there is the following dynamics: the number of referrals related to agitation increased by a factor of 2.5. Referrals related to suicide appeared and the number of referrals due to self-destructive behavior increased by a factor of 2.5. The number of referrals due to domestic, physical and sexual violence increased almost by a factor of 1.5. It is assumed that these results may be generalized and one may say that they reflect actual psychological problems of population as a whole.

2. Problem Statement

Educational psychologist is a specialist immediately involved in the distance learning. Their activities and the place of a psychological service in a structure of an educational organization became the subject of works by both educators and psychologists: A.G. Asmolov, M.R. Bitianova, I.V. Dubrovina, Iu.M. Zabrodina, A.I. Krasilo, I.V. Konovalova, T.S. Leukhina, G.V. Mukanina, A.P. Novgorodtseva, R.S. Nemov, R.V. Ovcharova, V.E. Pakhalian, A.M. Prikhozhan, E.I. Rogov, Rubtsov (2003), N.V. Samoukina, I.G. Sizova, L.M. Fridman and others. However, while some bordering topics were touched upon along with the ideas of systemic approach to the activities of an educational psychologist, such as development of custom models of the psychological service (R.V. Ovcharova), a model of a specialized room of a child psychologist (O.N. Usanova), psychological-educational support of education (M.R. Bitianova), psychological support for students with health limitations (Koroleva, 2018), the professional activities of the educational psychologist in distance learning mode have not been previously considered.

3. Research Questions

The object of our study is the professional activity of educational psychologist.

The subject of the study is the content and peculiarities of educational psychologist professional activity due to changes in the mode of operation of education.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to describe the peculiarities in operation of the educational psychologist service with accounts for distance learning mode.

5. Research Methods

Employed research methods are analysis of Internet sites in the subject field, scientific literature, regulatory documents.

6. Findings

In conditions of epidemiologic situation, assistance from psychologists becomes highly sought after. The service of practical educational psychology exists within the structure of educational system for over 30 years. The current system of educational psychology service was formed in the USSR through the 1980s. In 1988, a resolution of the USSR State Committee on Education was issued to create a job position of educational psychologist in all the educational institutions of the country. This resolution became a regulatory foundation for operation of practicing school psychologist, defining their social status, rights and duties. From this moment, the service starts active development in almost all regions of the country. With the large-scale socio-economic reforms of 1990s, a number of serious new problems appeared that stimulated further development of the practical educational psychology service. In 2000s, the infrastructure of the psychological service was actively formed, the number of psychologists in educational institutions increases (in 2005 there are almost 50,000 of them), special educational institutions are created for children in need of psychological, educational, medical and social assistance (over 740 establishments as of 2006). Corresponding councils and commissions are created. Over 400 psychology departments have been created in Russian tertiary schools, which not only train personnel for the educational psychology service but are involved in scientific and methodological support of the service as well. A number of research institution of the Russian Academy of Education became actively involved in development of methodological support for the psychological service. Theoretic studies of the problem and generalization of the deliverables from school psychologists allowed formulating goals and objective of the educational psychology service, resolving a number of issues in its methodological support, define the content and modes of operation of an educational psychologist, their main functions, rights and duties, developing a system of psychological service in education. In 2017, the Russian Minister of Education and Science approved the Development concept for psychological service in the system of education of the Russian Federation for the period of up to 2025. Currently, the service covers the entire system of education, from kindergarten, to school, to initial vocational education, to tertiary schools; from orphan asylums to boarding schools, to elite private educational institutions.

Due to changes in the learning environment, educational psychologists found themselves in a new social situation which will help them developing professional competences and acquire new skills for work in a distance mode. They are required to, first, organize their workplace, second, select tools and master distance work technologies (both group and one-on-one), third, observance of ethical norms due to

application of distance work. The major lines of work of educational psychologist, as stated in the Federal State Education Standards (FGOS) are still various forms of *psychological follow-up* for the subjects of educational relationships, they are education, prevention, diagnostics, corrective and developing actions, consulting, expertise jointly with the administration, teachers, students and parents. However, a conventional set of professional activities of educational psychologist requires certain corrections due to the distance learning (Emelianova, 2020; Kralia, 2020).

- **Psychological education online.** Almost all educational psychologist have accounts on social networks, many of them are involved in operating their own web-sites, communities in VK.com, Ok.ru, etc., where they may provide psychological enlightenment on topical issues. Education online may be implemented with Skype, WhatsApp, Viber, etc., by production of interesting video content, live streams, webinars, video instructions, electronic libraries, collections of videos for psychological screening.
- **Psychological prevention in remote mode.** Prevention of maladjustment of students, development of topical recommendations to educational personnel and parents on support in education, upbringing and development with accounts for age-related and individual peculiarities, including psychological follow-up of distance learning. Developing coping behavior skills in all the subjects of educational environment; teaching the skills of self-regulation to different age and target groups through webinars and live streams. The situation when the students are outside the educational institution shall provide for the work of educational psychologist together with a school counselor online with the risk group families in order to prevent maladjustments, addictions and behavioral deviations of young persons (consumption of psychoactive substances, aggressive and self-destructive behavior, depressive states, getting under the influence of destructive communities (in the Internet), increased risk taking behavior, etc.). Matoshina and Kralia (2020), Rozanov (2020), Gunnell et al. (2020), has showed this in their works.
- **Online psychological diagnostics** is possible through special portal websites (e.g., attitude.ru), where it is possible to use various techniques, tests and surveys to conduct diagnostics and reveal the most important aspects of an activity, behavior and mental state of preschooler and school pupils, which shall be taken into account during the psychological follow-up of students in the distance mode. The online diagnostics with a possibility to collect data at a common resource (e.g., social-psychological testing); creation of online surveys and tests with various constructor sites (e.g., Google Forms); registration and storage of testing results for monitoring in a cloud service.
- **Psychological corrective development work** during the distance learning may be conducted in a one-on-one format (using Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, etc.) or in a group mode (through videoconferencing). It may cover students experiencing problems in adaptation, development, behavior, including work with the children with health limitations (Kislyakov et al., 2018), whose parents serve as tutors (helping the child to complete the tasks that the educational psychologist demonstrates). Psychological correction is also possible with the help of online

and mobile training apps and online games (e.g., for correction and development of cognitive processes).

- **Remote psychological consulting** suggests practical application by the educational psychologist the forms and methods of emergency and crisis psychological assistance (including in the long-distance format) with the aim of quickly mitigating possible negative effects (panic, fears, anxiety, aggression) (Fokina, 2014). There is also psychological consulting of parents and family members of the pupils (Soldatova & Rasskazova, 2019), including a direction aimed at development of coping skills for changing conditions of life.
- **Expertise and methodological activity in the distant mode.** It includes development of methodological guidelines for participants of the educational relations, generalization of experience from self-education, assistance to teachers in selecting educational technologies adequate to the distance learning with accounts for personal psychological peculiarities of the students; psychological support of teachers in project activities aimed at improvement of the distance learning process.

Depending on the situation, each type of activity may be moved to the forefront, depending on the problem and specifics of the educational institution.

In the current conditions, the job of educational psychologist likely includes keeping documentations in electronic format (class registers, databases, reports on fulfilling a state order).

Considering intra- and extra-SECTORAL interaction of the educational psychology service as a priority direction of development, it is necessary to name the following formats and technologies:

- videoconferencing for project and current interaction between the specialist of the psychological service at municipal and regional level;
- networked interaction on a unifying portal;
- a common library of regulatory documents regulating the activity of the psychological service;
- mobile and paperless interaction between the specialists of various departments;
- online resource map of specialist in the psychological service with a possibility to interact with them;
- a common information system for case reporting.

Psychologists of the first Russian psychology university – Moscow State Psychology and Pedagogy University (MSPPU) – prepared a number of recommendations. They are aimed at parents of preschoolers and primary school pupils for the period of pandemic and cover how a parent may help their child to cope with a possible stress during temporary stay-at-home order. There are also recommendations to parents, whose children are temporary studying in a distance learning mode; parents of adolescents temporary at home due to the coronavirus infection; adolescents experiencing anxiety due to the coronavirus; recommendations to students aimed at stress reduction, anxiety control, preservation of productivity in current matters.

In conditions of the new coronavirus infection spreading in the territory of the Russian Federation, the Department of State Policy in Children Right Protection of the Russian Ministry of Education distributed among the educational psychologists sets of recommendations for adolescents and

their parents prepared by the Protective Union of Mental Health on the basis of earlier recommendations of the WHO and MSPPU memo.

The topic of one of the issues of the Consultative Psychology and Psychotherapy was phrased as “Challenges to health and education during a pandemic: in search of psychological and organizational resources”. Editorial board of the magazine set a goal to not just state the problems arising due to pandemic-induced stress, but to emphasize resources for their solution as well. In this issue, they compiled not just separate observations and impression, but empirically justified data and reflection of specialist operating in the conditions of pandemic.

In late June of 2020, within the framework of an online conference in the Russia Today International Multimedia Press Center, a round table discussion was held on the topic of “Psychological challenges of the coronavirus pandemic: how to cope”. Among its participants were psychologists from Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov, The First Moscow State Medical University named after I.M. Sechenov (Sechenov University) and others.

7. Conclusion

Educational psychologist is an employee of an educational institution and provides professional solutions to strategic objectives of developing education in the Russian federation, aimed at preservation and strengthening students' health, reduction of risk of maladjustment and negative socialization. The educational psychologist actively interacts with the society around the child, involving parents, teachers and other specialists in joint activities aimed at providing the child with psychological assistance. They not only have a more complete understanding of the problems but provide involvement of all possible resources into this activity. Directions of their professional activity include psychological outreach education, psychological prevention, psychological diagnostics, psychological corrective development, psychological consulting, expertise and methodological work. In order to efficiently organize work in conditions of transitioning to distance learning, certain corrections shall be made by an educational psychologist of a general education institution.

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