

SCTCMG 2019

International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

TECHNOLOGY FOR FORMATION OF THE ABILITY OF NON-VIOLENT INTERACTION AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract

The topicality of the problem of forming the ability for non-violent interaction among students is conditioned by the significance of non-violence as a professionally important characteristic of future teachers and psychologists. The purpose of the study was to develop and test a technology for the development of said skill. We have tested a hypothesis that the positive effect can be achieved if the technology is focused on: self-knowledge and self-acceptance of personality; the formation of non-violent attitude towards other people; training in non-violent behavior and conflict resolution. A total of 172 students of both genders took part at different stages of the study. The average age was 19.5 years. The students were trained in the directions of “Psychological and pedagogical education”, “Psychology” and the specialty “Psychology of service activities” of the Moscow University for the Humanities and Cherepovets State University. The forming experiment involved two experimental (N = 16 and N = 14) and two reference (N = 18 and N = 13) groups of students. A technology was developed that included two blocks: theoretical and practical. The theoretical part was aimed at forming students' perception of non-violence as a panhuman value. The practical part was carried out in the form of a sociopsychological training of non-violence. In the experimental groups, positive shifts in the indices of non-violence and negative shifts in the indices of coercion, manipulation, and non-intervention were observed. A conclusion was made about the applicability of this technology to professional training of students, teachers and psychologists.

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Keywords: Nonviolence, interaction, position, self-knowledge, self-acceptance, attitude.



1. Introduction

The urgency of the problem of forming the skill of non-violent interaction among students—future teachers and psychologists — is conditioned by the practical demands and the requirements for the personality of an expert in this area. For example, it is difficult to imagine a teacher who builds relations with children, parents, and administration on the basis of coercion, pressure or threats. Such a teacher is nonprofessional. For a psychologist, such situation is absolutely unacceptable. He should work with people on the basis of full acceptance, non-judgmental attitude and congruence (Rogers, 1994). Unfortunately, the students that enroll universities in corresponding training profiles are not always non-violence oriented. A study conducted on a pool of medical students and students who will become teachers and psychologists showed that the position of non-violence dominates only in a relatively small number of students: from 8% to 32% in different universities (Koryagina, Maralov, & Sitarov, 2018). These results served as an additional incentive for the development of a special technology for forming the ability for non-violent interaction among students to become future teachers and psychologists.

2. Problem Statement

The practice of universities shows that sole acquaintance of students with the ideas of humanistic pedagogy and psychology in special courses is not enough for their professional training. It is necessary to carry out special work aimed at personal changes, internal acceptance of non-violence principles and the ability to implement them in daily life. In modern psychological and pedagogical science there is a sufficient number of programs aimed at educating school students in the spirit of peace and non-violence, and insufficient number of similar programs for students who wants to become future teachers and psychologists. This is especially true for Russian psychological and pedagogical science and practice. The demand for such programs is quite appreciable. They can serve as an essential help in shaping the personality of the future expert, who accepts and implements humanistic values in his work.

3. Research Questions

Non-violent interaction usually means the interaction of a person with the world, other people and with himself without the use of unreasonable coercion. Modern research methodology in this area emerged at the intersection of two ideas. The first is the concept of non-violence of Gandhi (1960). The second one is the development of humanistic psychology and pedagogy (Rogers, 1994). Their integration served as a powerful incentive to develop relevant theories and tools for empirical and experimental research in the field of education on various aspects of non-violence.

By present, a number of research directions have emerged in the field of familiarizing the younger generation with the ideas of non-violence. Let us denote several of them.

Education in the spirit of peace and non-violence. This is one of the most developed areas in modern psychological and pedagogical science. A number of monographs devoted to this issue have been published (Mayton, 2009; Salomon & Cairns, 2010; Taukeni, 2019). Several interesting programs (Lipman, 1995; Meyer & Northrup, 1997; Danesh, 2008) have been developed, that focus on building responsibility, respect

for others, awareness of the fact that a peaceful future depends on the present, on real activities of schoolchildren.

Consciousness of a non-violent development environment. A person will only feel free and safe when the corresponding material and social environment is created. It has been established that optimal personal development requires the psychologically safe environment the main feature of which is non-violent interaction (Bayeva, 2002). A number of studies indicate that the creation of a tolerant educational space in educational institutions is the most important condition for the upbringing of children (Mokeyeya, Zakirova, & Masalimova, 2015).

Forming a non-violence position. The position of non-violence is the system of attitudes, incentives, behavioral reactions in the form of special attitude of a person to the environment and other people without the use of unreasonable coercion, focused on "reinforcement of the existence" of another subject of interaction. In this direction, the focus is on the psychological means for forming the position of non-violence. In particular, Wang (2019) has developed a program which goal is to develop students' non-violent attitude towards themselves, a tolerant attitude towards differences, and skills of non-violent interaction. Zandkarimi, Kamelifar, and Heshmati-Molae (2018) has tested a non-violence training program for Iranian girls. The results showed that such training reduces stress and anxiety, however, has no effect on depression in girls who are socially and economically vulnerable. Acker (2013) has summarized the experience in coping with violence in men prone to manifestations of aggression and violence in the family.

As for the students, there are also interesting results. Hongyu (2018) offers a program for forming a position of non-violence among students who will become teachers. The program has appreciably changed their attitude towards non-violence. There has been a transition from a narrower to a broader understanding of it. The evaluation of the role of non-violence in a person's life has changed from passive to active. Conditions for internal acceptance of non-violence were created. There is also evidence of the difficulties faced by researchers during implementation of programs for the formation of a non-violent position for students. In particular, Zhuravleva (2017) notes that students inherently resist the acceptance of the principles of non-violence and do not strive for personal changes and overcoming of the existing stereotypes.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed at the development of a technology for forming the ability for non-violent interaction among students to become future teachers and psychologists. We have tested a hypothesis that the positive effect can be achieved if the technology is focused on: 1) self-knowledge and self-acceptance of a person; 2) the formation of a non-violent attitude towards other people, the central component of which is sensitivity to a person; 3) actualization of own experience of interaction with other people, training of non-violent behavior and conflict resolution skills.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study was represented by an integrative approach, which lies on the integration of the understanding of non-violence in philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. A total of 172 students of both genders took part at different stages of the experiment with the average age of 19.5 years and studying in the directions of “Psychological and pedagogical education”, “Psychology” and the specialty “Psychology of service activities” of the Moscow University for the Humanities and Cherepovets State University. The forming experiment involved two experimental (N = 16 and N = 14) and two reference groups of students (N = 18 and N = 13). Groups were not specifically selected. The small size of the groups is explained by the fact that the main part of the classes was conducted in the form of a sociopsychological training. An original questionnaire was used as a diagnostic tool to identify students' inclination to coercion, manipulation, non-violence or non-intervention (Maralov & Sitarov, 2018). The questionnaire was used at the beginning and at the end of the forming experiment. In addition, the students' subjective evaluations of the work effectiveness were also used. The experiment was conducted during the second term of 2018. To process the results obtained, Student's t-test was used.

6. Findings

Technology description. The developed Program of forming the ability for non-violent interaction among students consisted of two large blocks: theoretical and practical. The theoretical block suggested that students familiarize themselves with the ideas of non-violence as a common human value, psychology and pedagogy of non-violence. The practical block was aimed at the awareness of students of their interaction with people from the standpoint of non-violence, the actualization of their own experience, the development of non-violent communication skills. It was implemented at Moscow University for the Humanities and at Cherepovets State University as part of the course “Psychology and Pedagogy of Non-Violence” with students who will become teachers and psychologists. Let us look into the characteristics of these blocks.

The theoretical block consists of five modules: 1. Philosophy of non-violence; 2. Psychology of non-violence; 3. Pedagogy of non-violence; 4. Non-violent interaction of teachers with students; 5. Implementation of the ideas of non-violence in the practice of educational organizations. Within this block, students were introduced to the religious, philosophical-ethical, psychological and pedagogical aspects of non-violence. Special attention was paid to the problem of non-violent interaction of teachers and students, and the practical use of non-violence principles in life.

The practical block was realized as a workshop held in the form of a sociopsychological training of non-violence. It was focused on students' awareness of their behavior, on accepting non-violence and its usage in life. Each class took at least 4 hours. The structure of each lesson included: ritual, warm-up, main part, reflection and ritual.

The development of the ability to recognize coercion and non-violence. The first introductory class was aimed at developing the ability to recognize and analyze the positions that people take in the process of interaction: coercion, manipulation, non-violence, non-intervention (indifference). The students were given proverbs, sayings, texts of literary works that were analyzed and discussed. Then testing was

conducted that determined the tendency to coercion, manipulation, non-violence or non-interference. The results were then discussed. After that, the students were offered a number of life situations that could be resolved through coercion or non-violence. Each student proposed their own solutions. The class was ending with reflection and goal setting for future meetings.

Development of the ability to realize the strengths and weaknesses of a personality, creating conditions for accepting oneself and increasing the level of self-confidence (non-violent attitude towards oneself). In psychology, it was proved that self-acceptance is the most important condition for the acceptance of other people. The purpose of this course was to teach students to understand themselves, to understand the role and purpose of each of their personality traits. Students were asked to complete a series of tasks. 1. To find in themselves five strengths and five weaknesses of the personality, to emphasize the strongest and weakest qualities. 2. Draw four concentric circles on a sheet of paper, place all these ten qualities on them where “the hand wishes”. Most often, qualities that are not accepted by a person are located at the bottom of the sheet. 3. It was proposed to draw houses on a sheet where these qualities of personality (subpersonality) will “live”. The house for “I” was obligatory to draw. Next, students were asked to mark with an arrow the quality of the person, which they would definitely invite to “I”, and with a dashed arrow a quality that they would not invite to themselves. 4. Method “Working with creative garbage”. Students were asked to designate each quality of a person with any object (picture, calendar, flash drive, clip, etc.), after which the list was removed, and it was necessary to make any composition from the “creative garbage”. After completing the assignment, the students were asked to sketch this composition on a piece of paper, designating objects with circles or other geometric figures, and write in them those qualities of the personality that they symbolize. The result was a certain holistic projective “portrait” of the personality, where individual qualities were arranged in a certain way. 5. Psychodrama technique. Students were invited to play the game “At the reception of a King (Queen)”. The work was carried out in a group. The point is that one of the participants plays the role of his “I” (the king), who sits on the “throne” in the hall, and the rest are his servitors (subpersonalities) and are located to the right and to the left of the king, closer and further from him. Then, the participants playing the role of subpersonalities of the protagonist begin to engage in a dialogue (dispute) for places that are closer to the “throne”. The “King” listens attentively to the arguments presented but does not enter into the dialogue himself; however, he has the right to make a decision after hearing the arguments: leave everything as it is or make a swap. The head of the training gradually brings the protagonist to the idea of a circle where “I” (the king) will take the central place.

The gist of these tasks is to create prerequisites for understanding the role and value of each personality quality for an individual. “If this personality quality is there, it means that a person needs it for something.” The point is to realize what for. All tasks are accompanied by active discussion.

Formation of non-violent attitude towards people. It includes a course of tasks aimed at understanding the level of one’s irritability towards people, social patterns of interaction, level of own egocentrism and sensitivity to a person.

Irritability towards people. Irritability to people is an indicator that the interaction is somehow wrong. Students were asked to rate their irritability to various categories of people. The results were

discussed and the students were asked to give examples. The essence of the discussion was to understand the causes of irritability and to work out various scenarios of its expression in behavior.

Social stereotypes of interaction. They act as cognitive attitudes determining the behavior of people. To assess the level of stereotype, the questionnaire was used. The group has discussed those stereotypes that most students expressed their commitment to. For instance: "A teacher in a higher educational institution is the main figure, and the effectiveness of academic work depends on him" or "A good student is the student who studies well and causes no trouble to the teacher". This was also discussed. The validity of the stereotypes has been questioned and alternative points of view were formulated.

Egocentrism. The students were asked to imagine a "perfect" friend whom they would heartily and easily communicate and interact with. They were to single out and write in a column five most important qualities that the ideal friend should possess. Then they were asked to assess these qualities in the best friend and in a person for whom the subject does not feel sympathy. The more pronounced the difference in assessments was, the more the person was inclined to fit another one to the desired image. The idea is that the incompatibility of another person with the stereotypical expectations of the interaction subject creates internal prerequisites for bringing his behavior in line with his expectations, which increases the likelihood of coercion. The results were then discussed.

Sensitivity to a person. It is the most important indicator of non-violent attitude towards people. It manifests as the level of interest to a person, empathy, understanding and ability to come to the rescue. Several tasks were developed for the students. Let us discuss two of them. The students were asked to write an essay "My life path". Essays were read and discussed in the group, which contributed to a significant increase in interest in each other, empathic understanding, and stimulated the actualization of incentives for help. In order to develop the ability to understand another person, the task "Game in portraits" was used. This game was proposed by the Russian writer Turgenev (2003). Its gist is that the players are offered portraits of people drawn by Turgenev (2003). It is necessary to characterize the person in the image. Turgenev (2003) painted these portraits, accompanying them with succinct characteristics. The students were offering their versions of the characteristics, and then they were compared with the characteristics given by Turgenev.

Learning nonviolent interaction skills. This course was devoted to the practical development of the skills of non-violent communication and interaction. It consisted of an arsenal of techniques available in modern psychology, including exercises to create a positive image and develop the skills of confident behavior. A particular attention was paid to tasks aimed at developing the ability to "take a punch": to provide non-violent resistance and behave positively in conflict situations. The main techniques were the simulation of life situations and implementation of game approaches. Each assignment was followed by a discussion.

At the end of the course, a class lesson was held where corresponding summary was made and the students provided feedback. They were providing their conclusions they had drawn for themselves, what tactics they would choose in working on themselves and in changing their attitude towards people.

The results of technology testing. Let us turn to the results of the forming experiment. On the basis of a questionnaire that diagnosed students' tendency to coercion, manipulation, nonviolence and non-intervention, which was conducted at the initial and final stages of the study in the experimental and

reference groups, positive and negative changes were found in the indices of coercion, manipulation, nonviolence and non-intervention. At the initial stage of the experiment, the indicated indices in the experimental and reference groups differed slightly from each other. Coercion index: E (experimental groups) = 6.45, R (reference groups) = 6.42 ($t = 0.42$, insignificant). Manipulation index: E = 6.48, R = 6.38 ($t = 0.21$, insignificant). Non-violence index: E = 5.42, R = 4.87 ($t = 1.49$, insignificant). Non-interference index: E = 5.10, R = 5.56 ($t = 0.99$, insignificant). After the formation experiment in the experimental groups, the values of the interaction indices had changed. The coercion index decreased from 6.45 to 3.96 ($t = 5.08$, for $p \leq 0.01$). The manipulation index decreased from 6.48 to 3.94 ($t = 5.18$, for $p \leq 0.01$). The non-violence index decreased from 5.42 to 7.58 ($t = 5.27$, for $p \leq 0.01$). The non-interference index decreased from 5.10 to 3.87 ($t = 3.08$, for $p \leq 0.01$). There were no significant changes in the reference groups. The coercion index: before the experiment - 6.25, after the experiment - 5.56 ($t = 1.53$, insignificant). The manipulation index: before the experiment - 6.38, after the experiment - 6.06 ($t = 0.82$, insignificant). The non-violence index: before the experiment - 4.87, after the experiment - 5.36 ($t = 1.92$, insignificant). The non-interference index: before the experiment - 6.56, after the experiment - 5.38 ($t = 1.71$, insignificant). Thus, we can conclude that the experimental work has yielded positive results, as evidenced by the increase in the index of non-violence and the decrease in the indices of coercion, manipulation and non-intervention.

The effectiveness of the technology was evaluated on the basis of subjective assessments by students of the work that was done with them. As an example, we will give only one characteristic statement by student Alexei G. (20 years old): "From these classes, I realized that I do not have bad qualities, I need them all for something. I want to learn how to transform my weak qualities into strong ones. I began to look at the members of my group differently, they became closer to me, dearer. I began to communicate with many people more confidentially. People annoy me less. I also realized that in relations with people I unconsciously try to explain their behavior from the perspective of my expectations, thereby subjecting them to evaluation. Now it is easier for me to treat them non-judgementally, and I can calmly defend my point of view without fearing that it will not be accepted by others".

7. Conclusion

Thus, in this article, we presented the technology for forming students' ability to non-violent interaction consisting of two blocks: theoretical and practical. The theoretical block is focused on the assimilation of non-violence as a panhuman value. The practical block is focused directly on the internal acceptance of the ideas of non-violence and their implementation in practice. It was realized in the form of sociopsychological training of non-violence, which included tasks for self-knowledge, self-acceptance, increasing the level of self-confidence, formation of non-violent attitudes towards other people, actualization of own experience and training non-violent interaction skills. The first implementation of this technology allowed drawing conclusions on its effectiveness and applicability in universities of a corresponding profile. We see the further perspective of the study in the refinement and improvement of technology, its broader testing and practical implementation.

Acknowledgments

The study was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research in the framework of research project No. 18-013-00151.

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