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SOCIAL PROJECTS AND WELL-BEING

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Abstract

The author shows the link between the social projecting activity and world well-being. Social project is the activity aiming to improve the social reality. This activity usually lacks the resources: time, money, materials, etc. However, these are the circumstances of the real life, so we must improve our social situation within these conditions to support the social well-being. This is the best method to deal with real social situation. The author analyses the experience of Tomsk State University of Control Systems and Radioelectronics. From 2006 until nowadays this university has been developing the system of Group Project Training, teaching students how to deal with problematic social situations in project way. The main project theme of the Chair of History and Social Work is support of disabled students. The main themes for student social projects were improving social life of the university, supporting disabled students, adaptation of immigrants, socialization of former prisoners etc. The problems of disabled students were solved in the most effective way: thanks to it, The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation granted the team of teachers and students. Author shows, how the project point of view can change the way of thinking of the students in these projects, helping them to solve difficult social problems.

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1. Introduction

Well-being of an individual or a group means that this individual or group feels well, functions and do the best they can. But the modern society has many problems, which influence on the state of people. This makes the threat to the well-being. The social problems are very complex, we cannot solve them easily. Of course, the continuous state of well-being needs the new specialists in solving social problems to be produced and needs them to be effective. The educational technology of group project training will help us to solve this problem.

2. Problem Statement

The social well-being is impossible without permanent improvement of the social environment, permanent solving the social problems. But the social services nowadays cannot provide the decent solution for this challenge: they are overloaded by routine and their workers are not competent in this kind of issue.

3. Research Questions

How to produce the new generation of social workers, which can solve the difficult and complex social problems and improve the well-being of society?

4. Purpose of the Study

To analyze the experience of the group project training on the chair of history and social work of TUSUR in the context of producing the new generation of social workers.

5. Research Methods

We used system analyses and case study.

6. Findings

The technology of group project training in TUSUR began to develop actively since 2006. The essence of the technology is that in the second year students form project teams (from 3 to 5 people) who are engaged in designing for 4 semesters: they are looking for ways to solve a problem and create the final product, the use of which will solve this problem. Although initially the staff of the Department of History and Social Work experienced difficulties in organizing the project technology, in the end, it was adapted to the needs of a particular specialty. Having applied system analysis (Tarasenko, 2010), we formulated the definition of a social project as an activity to solve social problems, limited in time and resources and aimed at creating a complete product. In addition, we must understand that the first preference of our minds is the ability to foresee the results of our actions. Thinking is mostly foreseeing (Ksenchuk, 2011). In other words, a social project is the creation or improvement of a social system that

can solve any social problem. The groups go through an analytical stage (problem analysis), research stage (carrying out additional research, clarifying the vision of the problem, forming a solution model), testing (implementing the model and testing its viability), presentation (finalizing the model, finding sponsors, etc.)

Initially, in 2006, 4 project teams were formed, but in the spring of 2007 there remained 3 of them. The subjects of the projects were mainly aimed at the student audience (adaptation projects for disabled students and first-year students) (Zinovieva, 2007). In addition, there was one project, the purpose of which was to go beyond the university environment (evaluation of municipal projects and grants). Subsequently, the teachers of the department preferred to focus on students as an object of research. To some extent, it was a training ground for mastering the basics of GPT technology. Then interest in the student audience is reduced, but more projects are being sent outside the university. It indicates the attempts of teachers to move to a new level of development. At the same time, there was a steady interest among students of project groups to study mental health. This was due to an acquaintance with the foreign experience of social work (in particular, at the University of Tampere, Finland). Teachers of the department of the ISR developed common questions of this topic, 3 project groups of students also expressed a desire to study its individual aspects.

Mental health and optimal living conditions are important sources of everyday life in many areas: in families, in schools, on the street and at the workplace. In addition, it is necessary to create interest in mental health for every citizen, every politician, every employer, included in various public sectors. Many social organizations play an active role in the field of mental health. Mental health, social integration and productivity are manifested in the activities of various social groups and communities. In addition, the main reason for strengthening mental health is the very important value of mental health itself.

In fact, mental health remains undervalued in many areas of our society. Mental health is an indivisible part of overall health and optimal living conditions. Usually they talk about the mental health of individuals, but we can also talk about the mental health of families, groups, communities and society as a whole. Mental health, as a concept, reflects the balance between a person and the environment in a broad sense. In science, there is a structural model of mental health. In this model, the causes of mental health are grouped into four categories: individual factors and experience; social support and other social interactions; social structures and resources; cultural values (Lahtinen et al., 1999). Thus, we can talk about a systemic model of mental health. Moreover, physical and mental health are very closely related.

TUSUR's examples of scientific and practical activities in the sphere of strengthening the mental health of certain social groups located on the territory of Tomsk are social projects "Development of social technologies for strengthening the mental health of student youth" and "Socio-psychological algorithms for strengthening the mental health of families with disabled children". The first project was designed by a group of students from 2012 to 2014. The second project is also implemented.

Often such projects were built on the basis of the "only university" projects that preceded them. We also noted the emergence of "projects for projects", the goal of which was to improve the technology of GPT (study the possibilities of teamwork, explore the possibilities of fundraising etc.). The aim of these projects was to improve the working conditions of other groups of GPT and to develop a group design methodology. Separately, one can note projects on history and demography, which were a

reflection of the scientific interests of the leaders of the teams. At the moment, these projects have been completed, a number of their developments are used in the studies of GPT teams both at the department and outside it. Separately, we note the projects on the adaptation of students with disabilities, the number of which has been unchanged throughout the period. The reason for this lies in the fact that the department won a grant for the development of this topic, and the topic itself turned into one of the leading directions of research at the department. For the project itself, see below. By 2015-2016 academic year, the teachers obviously focused only on two areas: university projects and projects directed outside the university. Also we tried to understand how the marketing of non-profit organizations can work and how we can develop our own organization. This problem is very actual today, when the third sector in Russia develops slowly and we need new approaches and models in doing this (Kiseleva et al., 2016).

It is a pity, but just once our project teams tried to explore the theme of elderly people support. Of course, this topic can find the wide implementation in the project sphere, for example, we can teach the elderly people different new communicational resources ((Ivankina et al., 2017). But this group met the sharp, almost painful pride of the elderly and didn't proceed to make this project.

The total number of projects, as well as the number of their participants, indicates the end of the search phase in the development of GPT at the department and the stabilization of the number of projects within one academic year. The sharp increase in projects and participants of the GPT in the recent period is explained by the transitional character of this period (from 2011, the department adopted the bachelor's system, which affected the GPT statistics of 2012-2013 academic year).

The effect of social design technology on graduates of the department is reflected in the increase in their scientific activity, the best preparation for the protection of the graduation work. In addition, the design skills are also useful after graduating from the university. Experience shows that there are relatively more successful people working in the specialty among GPT graduates. In addition, there is one case of opening a graduate successfully working on the basis of self-repayment of a nonprofit organization, trained on this technology. But in the most effective way this technology influenced on the minds of the students. They begin to think critically, and it is very useful for future social worker, who meets different situations in his or her practice and need to interpret it in the context of different social work theories (Adams, Dominelly, Payne, 2009).

7. Conclusion

Thus, the technology of group project training contributes to the formation of specialists able to comprehensively assess the social problem, as well as to find the best, systemic options for its solution. Although their professional life in the future develops in different ways, but at the same time the knowledge gained helps them to solve individual social problems in their place, thereby ensuring a situation of continuous social well-being.

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