Motivational Strategy of Organization of Psychology Classes for Senior School Students

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Abstract. Psychological class is considered a means of development of students' needs to cognize psychological phenomena, self-cognize and self-improvement. This goal can be achieved only when the learning process is not formal, but has intrinsic personal significance for students. The article substantiates new approaches to organization and conduct of psychology classes with senior school students. The aim of the research is to provide theoretical support and recognition for senior high school students' motivation strategies in psychology classes. The motivational strategy is premised on basic ideas of humanism and positive psychology. The article expounds principles and contents of the selected stages of the motivational strategy. It presents the results of introducing the motivational strategy into the practice of a school psychologist.

Introduction

The introduction of psychology lessons in the curriculum of Russian schools began more than 100 years ago. At the same time, the results of the introduction of psychological knowledge into practice were ambiguous. Therefore, the problem of organizing psychology lessons with high school students remains relevant [1,2].

We believe that psychology lessons can be a real factor in the development of the personality of high school students. At the same time, introduction of psychology class into school schedule as an obligatory subject for all students implies the development and substantiation of a motivational strategy of classes, since without students' internal motivation to study themselves and the world around them, psychology class will lose it developmental potential.

Under the "motivational strategy", we imply creation by a psychology teacher of such social conditions that would best promote students' perception of the tasks envisaged by the subject. In other words, a motivational strategy is a strategy of students' educational and cognitive activity management, basing on acute interests and needs of students, as well as providing the creation of their internal incentives for cognition and self-knowledge. Although the matter of students' educational and cognitive activity management in psychology classes is understood by practical educational psychologists, it is yet not enough discovered.

Methods and Organization of the Research

The experimental work was conducted during compulsory classes for 10th grade students under the auspices of the Specialized Educational and Research Center (Lyceum) of the Ural Federal University. During the first stage, a motivational strategy for psychology classes was developed. In total, 159 senior school students (9-11th years) took part in the research. During the classes, the researchers were monitoring the feedback, which allowed for correcting the work of the psychology teacher.

In developing the motivational strategy we relied on the works by S. Rubinshtein [3], A. K. Markova, T.A. Matis and A.B. Orlov [4], V. Lyaudis [5], as well as on didactic principles set forth in the works by teachers-innovators (S. Amonashvili, L. Zankov, T. Goncharova, E. Ilyin, V. Sukhomlinsky, P. Kapterev and V. Shatalov) [6], which best promote the development of a teacher's humanistic attitudes and determine their personal self-development and reaching the acme of their professional skill.

Those principles include: 1) principles of pedagogical activities: principle of teaching all and every single one, principle of joining education and personal development, principle of creative initiative; 2) principles of students' activity management: principle of free choice, principle of psychological support, feedback principle, cooperation principle, principle of joining individual and group work.

Besides, the motivational strategy is based on the ideas of positive psychology: in particular, M. Seligman's core idea is that every person can reach happiness and prosperity on their own by cultivating various internal skills, including self-confidence, resilience, positive attitudes or optimism [7,8].

Also we share the ideas of positive psychology, emphasizing that involvement of senior school students into deliberate or proactive lifestyle is possible only providing that you are not limited to simple information on some psychological phenomena, but involve the students into the active process of self-cognition, self-confidence increase, self-development and self-efficacy [9,10].

Results of the Research

The motivational strategy we have developed consists of 3 stages, each focusing on implementing significant incentives of students' cognitional activities in psychology classes.

The main goal of the 1st stage is assisting in the development of positive motivation for psychology classes. Practice showed that in the first stage, it is most reasonable to give psychology lessons in the form of traditional courses.

This stage is psychologically based on the ideas stated by L.M. Fridman [11], L. Rogaleva and V. Malkin [12]. The essence of those ideas is the following: involvement of students into the educational process is more effective if it is based on students' subjective experience and on actualization of their already existing positive attitudes, which are to be promoted and supported, but not destroyed.

Involvement of students into new forms of activity (training classes, psychological games etc.) from the very beginning is not considered rational, since those forms imply that they have to abandon the existing behavioral stereotypes and class activities, which many of them may not be ready yet.

Giving a psychology class at the first stage should follow the traditional pattern: delivering new material, recitation, writing tests, preparation of individual works and homework, as well as grading of students' performance.

In order to make grading an incentive for a student's activity (the positive stimulation) we used simple choice situations, meaning that a student could pick the tasks they saw as most challenging or significant.

The principle of free choice allows the psychology teacher to interact with students in class, create positive environment of the classes and foster students' interest in the educational activities.

The results of the work showed that the use of traditional structure of lessons in combination with home and practical tasks had contributed to creation of "working" atmosphere in classes, lifted students' distrust or negative attitudes towards the "experimental subject" and helped improve the "status" of the psychology class among other school subjects.

We considered that the students' interest in receiving new information, eagerness to understand the studied matters and readiness for doing practical and home works individually were indicators of development of students' positive motivation for psychology classes.

The goal of the 2nd stage is fostering the development of personally valued incentives for cognizing psychological and social and psychological phenomena.

At this stage we proceeded from the premise that the involvement of students into the analysis of psychological problems they had faced in their real life or would face in future during education or interpersonal interaction might be seen as the main condition for the development of personally valued incentives for cognizing psychological phenomena.

Given that, the most important activity of psychology teachers in the second stage is to involve students in analysis and self-analysis that would help them to:

1). See the existence of psychological problems and ponder them.

2). Comprehend their position and stance on the matter.

3). Understand that there are possible ways and tools for solution of psychological problems.

4). Increase their self-confidence.

Thus, we regard problem-based learning as the main form of work at the 2nd stage. This form of work in classes makes psychological knowledge no longer "objective" and becomes the means of cultivating students' independent thinking.

In order to move towards problem-based learning, a psychology teacher has to know the actual problems of students, understand the social and psychological features of the group, and be ready to welcome a discussion of the questions raised by students at any time.

Practice showed that the following methods of work with students are most effective at the 2nd stage:

1. Independent analysis of the process of self-cognition involved in students' self-characteristics and the data obtained through psychological tests

We considered this method very effective, but under certain conditions. Only when students are not simply allowed to accept or deny the tests results, but oriented on the analysis of the results and comparison of the obtained data with their personal perceptions, can psychological diagnosis become an important means of self-knowledge.

2. Discussion of psychological problems that are personally valued by senior school students

The following problems were most acute for all students during our practical activities:

1). Problem of students' integration into a new group.

2). Problem of students' adaptation to a huge academic load in the lyceum.

3). Problem of interpersonal interaction.

3. Involvement of students into doing tasks aimed at development of self-reflection and social thinking

Development of self-reflection and social thinking of senior school students is the main condition of correction their self-esteem and behavior, development of tolerance (ability to take the place of another person), readiness to listen and hear, accept another person's opinion and effectively interact with people around.

To that end we have adopted the following forms of activities: compositions and essays related to citation analysis of prominent psychologists and philosophers, discussions on acute social problems of young people, and protection of papers on various aspects of psychological science.

The goal of the 3rd stage is to cultivate students' motivation for self-improvement and increase of psychological culture.

This goal may be achieved only if students independently plan their individual self-development program and voluntarily participate in project works and various social and psychological training sessions depending on students' requests: for instance, stress resistance training, self-confidence training, communicative competence improvement training or teambuilding training.

Given that, the organization of both curricular and extracurricular activities for students was rational at this stage.

Within the frames of a compulsory psychology class, the work with students on planning a psychology lesson is considered feasible.

Students' readiness to individually evaluate psychological methods and tools for solving challenges and problems they face will allow them not to deny them "off the bat" or take them as a "remedy", but to use them consciously for self-development and self-improvement.

This approach makes a student a subject of self-development, not a user of ready-made answers and behavioral patterns.

Discussion

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the motivational strategy, we elaborated a questionnaire aimed at studying students' attitute towards psychology classes in general, and its certain parts. 159 persons participated in the questioning. The results of the questionnaire survey are as follows:

Is it necessary to include psychology classes into the academic program?

78% of the students replied "Yes, it is necessary"; 14.3% answered "Yes, but only as an option", and 7.7 % answered "I am not sure".

Is it necessary to include the analysis of acute psychological problems arising out of studying in the lyceum into the psychological classes?

61.7% of the students replied positively, while 23,3% were not sure, and 15% responded negatively.

Do psychology classes allow you to more objetively feel about yourself and your actions?

83% of the students answered "Yes".

Do psychology classes contribute to establishment of rapport between students and ability to effectively interact with each other?

More than 70% of the students answered positively.

The conducted survey of students allows us to conclude that psychological knowledge, received during the lessons of psychology, had a practical effect: it contributed to the development of reflection, to understanding of their relationships with others, to the willingness not to move away from problems, but strive to find ways to solve them. At the same time, it should be noted that for a certain part of high school students the psychology lesson did not become significant. It indicates the need for further improvement of the motivational strategy.

Summary

The obtained results show that the motivational strategy of psychology classes organization has contributed to the effective involvement of students into self-cognition and understanding of the world around, and fostered the development of their need to self-cognize and sefl-improve.

The practical significance lies in the fact that a motivational strategy, developed by our group, can be used by teachers to improve the efficiency of the organization of training sessions not only in psychology, but also in other subjects.

Further research implies the analysis of the impact of psychology class on development of senior school students' personal qualities.

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