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Psychological Barriers in the Teacher's Activity in the Implementation of the FSES

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Abstract

The relevance of the issue under study is determined by the need to improve the quality of the educational process and the lack of research into the problem of psychological difficulties in the professional activity of the modern teacher. The purpose of the article is to analyze the peculiarities of psychological barriers teachers struggle with while implementing the Federal state educational standards (further - FSES). The research method was the method of questionnaire conducted among 220 teachers (divided into five groups according to the seniority – from 2 to 30 years' work experience). The article reveals the teachers' psychological barriers which are typical to modern education, the relationship between the types of difficulties and the strategies for coping with them. The materials presented in the article allow us to assess the current situation in the development of Russian education from the teachers' point of view and identify psychological difficulties which must be taken into account when training and retraining professional staff.

Keywords: psychological barrier, innovation barrier, coping strategies, barrier resistance.

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Introduction

1.1. Relevance of the problem

The innovative nature of the modern school education development which significantly increases the speed and pace of implementing pedagogical innovations into the teaching and educational process and creates more situations in which teachers might face professional difficulties.

In modern Russian education, due to the changes in the educational standards, teachers often experience psychological barriers that impede their effective professional activities. The implementation of the new FSES in school teachers often consider as insuperable innovation which negatively affect the quality of teaching. Fear and unwillingness to work according to the new standards cause teachers' negative mental states.

In the theory and practice of studying psychological barriers there is a contradiction which is determined by the fact that, on the one hand, the personality of a teacher and his or her professional abilities are rather widely studied. On the other hand, the influence of the teacher's personal characteristics on the emergence or prevention of psychological barriers in the FSES-based teaching has not been revealed yet.

1.2. Literature review

In Russian psychology the problem of psychological barriers was developed in the studies of Vygotsky (2000), Rubinstein (1989), Leontyev (2009), Parygin (1999), Domyreva (2015), Kalinina (2010) and others.

Of particular interest are the views of Shakurov (2001), who determines a number of functions of barriers: stabilization, correction, energization, dosage, mobilization, development, inhibition and suppression. Shakurov's (2001) position is important as it reveals the mobilizing and developing functions of the barrier in satisfying the needs of the individual who activates his/her internal resources to overcome the resistance of the environment. Thus, barriers contribute to the actualization and dynamization of human resources and regulation of his/her activity (Shakurov, 2001).

The theoretical foundations of the concept of psychological barriers are presented in the works of Podymov (1998). Among them, there is the concept of a psychological barrier as an internal obstacle reflected in the human consciousness which is expressed in the violation of the semantic correspondence between consciousness and objective conditions and methods of activity. The understanding of the characteristics of psychological barriers includes the system-forming internal mental activity due to which the violations arising in the activity are eliminated by restructuring the semantic structures of the individual in order to make up for a deficiency in internal resources necessary to cope with the obstacles.

The question of innovation in the pedagogical process becomes relevant in connection due to the new requirements and standards in education. Innovation is something new and it is a creation of a new product. Slastenin & Podymova (1997) defines innovation as an activity aimed at finding and implementing innovations in order to expand the range and improve the product quality, to improve the production technology and organisation. Thus, the purpose of innovation is to improve the quality of work. The main features of innovation are as follows: the creation and use of an intellectual product, i.e. during the educational process the teacher creates something new for himself or herself or for the class; the integration of the curricular and extracurricular activities; the increase of children's interest in learning (Pisanu & Menapace, 2014).

The problem of innovative barriers and their components was developed in the works of Prigozhin (2003). The anti-innovation barrier as an intrapersonal psychological barrier is caused by the teacher's

individual characteristics and the socio-psychological features of the community in which he or she develops professionally. This barrier can be seen in the statements that can be interpreted as psychological protection, reflecting social stereotypes about innovations, in general, and, basically, build according to the type: “yes, but ...”, as Prigozhin (2003) says and are applicable to most situations associated with pedagogical innovations. Teaching should be considered as an object of possible psychological difficulties. The current situation of the education development requires that teachers have “barrier resistance”, i.e. willingness to implement innovative activity and constructively cope with the psychological barriers that arise.

1.3. Modern tendencies

The tense situations accompanying the implementation of the new educational standards act as insuperable psychological barriers that threaten the quality of the professional activity and the mental health of the teacher (Simonova, 2012).

In difficult situations the teacher must have a reliable “barrier resistance” which implies the ability to achieve the mental state of a person who adequately perceives difficulties, controls his or her feelings and, most importantly, his/her behavior by finding a constructive way to cope with the barrier.

Depending on the degree of tension the obstructed state is experienced in varying degrees and overcome in different ways. The theoretical and practical research of the strategies to cope with psychological barriers traditionally singles out two ways to cope with this state: constructive and non-constructive ones. The constructive way is impossible without the activity of the person and the presence of responsibility for solving the problem. Whereas in the opposite case, the teacher takes a passive position, trying to avoid or postpone the solution to the problems or putting the blame on external circumstances or on other people, often students. At the same time, there is a psychological stress, emotional excitement which, in its turn, prevents a rational way of thinking and the control over the situation is lost.

In difficult “barrier” situations the teacher must have reliable “barrier resistance” which is interpreted as the teacher’s ability to cope with the situation of the psychological barrier in a constructive way. With the introduction of the new educational standards, it is becoming necessary to be able to navigate under the changed conditions and find an optimal solution in an unusual situation and at the same time maintaining composure that is to be “barrier-resistant”.

It becomes clear that nowadays it is important for the teacher to be able to realize, experience and constructively overcome psychological barriers that he/she faces during innovation because innovations involve self-realization and self-actualization, the maximum development of one’s individuality but not adaptation to changing conditions. Willingness to innovate in modern conditions is considered by many scholars to be the most important quality of a teacher’s professionalism without which it is impossible to achieve a high level of pedagogical skills (Nazmetdinova, 2004).

Methods

The purpose of the study – to analyze the features of psychological barriers that teachers might face while implementing the FSES.

The following *methods* were used in the study: theoretical (deduction, induction, analysis, synthesis, specification; generalization, systematization); diagnostic (questioning; interviewing; testing); experimental; methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis of empirical data, methods of mathematical

statistics; the techniques of diagnostics of the dominant coping strategies of the person (Amirkhan, n.d.), the questionnaire of the severity of psychological barriers in teaching activity (Podymov, 1998), the questionnaire "Strategies of self-assertion of the person" (Kharlamenkova & Nikitina, 2000).

Experimental base of the research

Kursk State University was the experimental base of the research. In total, the study covered 220 teachers of different ages divided into five groups according to the seniority (from 2 to 30 years' work experience).

Stages of research

The study of the problem was carried out in three stages: at the first stage the analysis of the existing methodological and theoretical approaches in the psychological and pedagogical science was conducted, the problem, purpose and research methods were identified, the plan of the experimental study was drawn up, the parameters of the research sample were determined; the second stage was experimental, during this period the empirical research was carried out and the results were processed; at the third stage the analysis and systematization of the obtained experimental results were conducted, the theoretical and experimental data were refined, the conclusions and recommendations were formulated and the results of all the experimental work were summed up.

Results

The analysis of the research results leads to the conclusion that the majority of the teachers are actively developing their professional skills; they possess a well-fixed system of self-development; a third of the respondents showed the dependence of the development orientation on the conditions; the indicator "stopped development" was not recorded for the entire sample. Despite the fact that the age of the respondents in the experiment was between 24-63, the indicator "unimplemented self-development" was typical of the teachers aged 20-30 who are in the second seniority group (from 2 to 10 years' work experience) which may indicate their personal characteristics rather than the professional ones.

Analyzing the factors that stimulate and impede learning and development, the teachers identified stimulating factors more easily. Most of the respondents practically did not agree with the list of obstacles, with only 15% of the teachers identifying as obstacles their own inertia, health, limited time and resources, life circumstances and with 8% of the teachers referring to the insufficient feedback from the team and the principal (particularly, the lack of objective information about them).

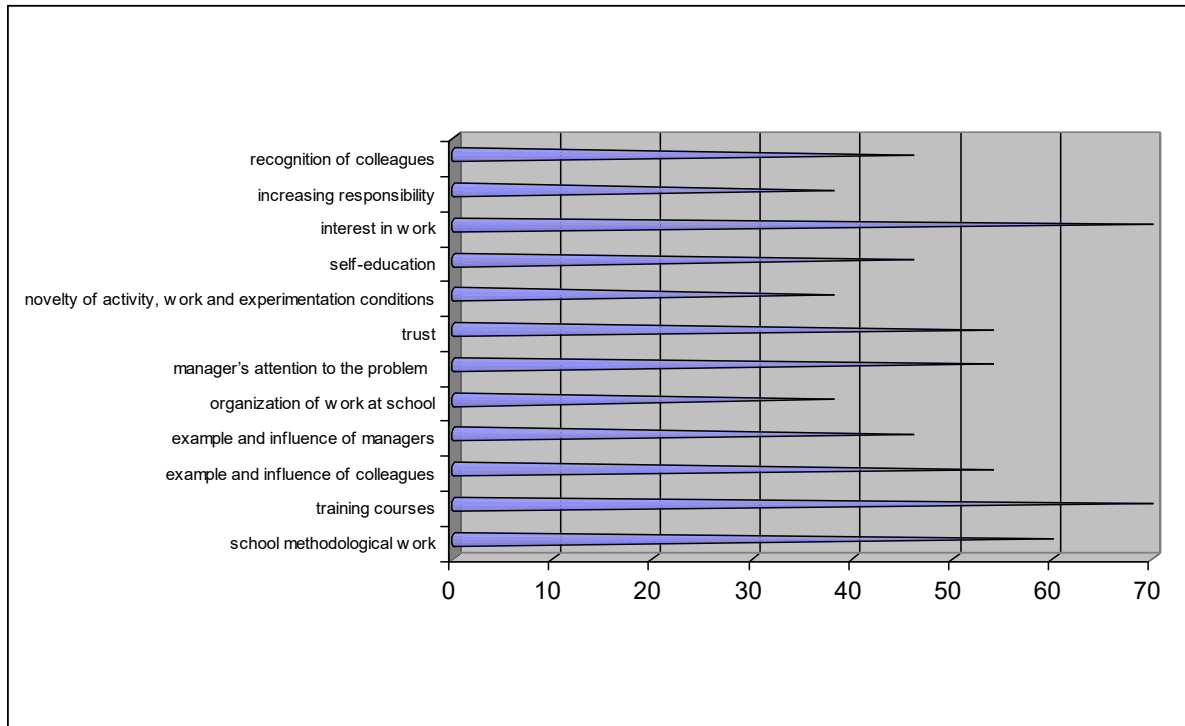


Fig. 1. The distribution of the stimulating factors for the teachers' development.

The most popular stimulating factor for the development (named by 70% of the respondents) is associated with motivation, for example, interest in work, training and professional development. 60% of the teachers identify methodological work organized in an educational establishment as such a factor, 54% of the respondents noted the option known in psychology as vicarious reinforcement – the colleagues' example, the principal's attention and trust. 46% of the participants of the research chose self-education, and only 38% of the respondents chose as a stimulating factor the novelty of activity and the working conditions related to experimentation.

Thus, the "novelty of activity" factor that is of interest to us in connection with the FSES implementation is among the last ones on the list. This means that the teachers do not consider it possible that it might contribute to their development and self-development. This is a characteristic of today's attitude to innovations, which, unfortunately, is becoming for teachers more of a factor impeding their effective work.

In this regard, the results of the research into dominant coping strategies of teachers' personalities which they use in their professional activity, were interesting. The analysis of the results showed no significant differences in the choice of strategies in different groups. The domination strategies prevailed (49 %) in all seniority groups, whereas self-repression strategy and the constructive self-assertion strategy were found only in a minority of the respondents (33.6% and 17.4% respectively).

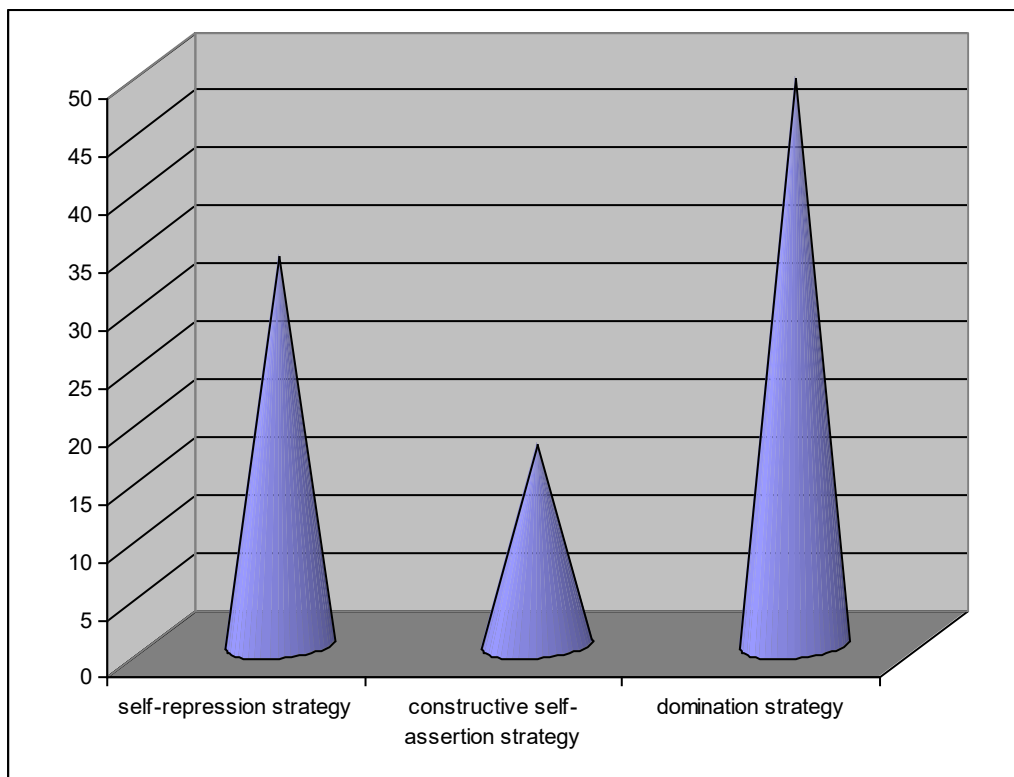


Fig. 2. The distribution of the dominant coping strategies of the teachers' personality.

We see that the majority of the teachers actively use the domination strategy which is often explained by the peculiarities of the teaching and by the desire for authoritarianism in teaching. Even now, some teachers prefer the traditional way of organizing training and education that is a conservative approach to the interaction of teachers and students. They approach the student as a "guided" party of the "teacher-student" system as an object of pedagogical influence and who is not responsible for his/her own development. Some scholars consider this behavior to be one of the types of teachers' professional destructions.

The respondents also recorded the psychological and pedagogical incompetence of parents as the predominant psychological barriers that act as an obstacle to the successful implementation of the new educational standards (52% of the respondents). The difficulties related to the new requirements for documentation, lesson notes, the transition to the technological map of the lesson, the need to introduce reflection into the structure of the analysis were also referred to as psychological barriers. 20% of the teachers included inclusive education as another difficulty while only 8% of the respondents considered stereotypes, fears and unwillingness to work in a new way to be such a barrier.

To confirm the hypothesis we conducted a comparative analysis of the strategies necessary to overcome difficulties and the level of teachers' dependence on barriers. According to the results of the study, the teachers using constructive coping strategies are characterized by a low level of barrier dependence while the teachers with a medium level resort to domination and self-repression strategies and those with a high level use a self-assertion strategy.

Conclusion

Summing up the results of the empirical research, we can state that there exists an interrelation between the psychological barriers that arise during the FSES implementation and the strategies of coping with the difficulties arising in the work of teachers. The psychological readiness to overcome emerging barriers is demonstrated by the teachers who use constructive strategies in the situations of tension in teaching unlike those teachers who use destructive protective mechanisms.

The conscious behavior at the time of an internal barrier in the activity performed, rationally directed at the positive resolution and transformation of a difficult situation is constructive coping behavior. The psychological and pedagogical significance of coping with barriers is the ability to adapt to the requirements of the situation more effectively and removing the stress of the situation.

In the current situation of the education development it is impossible to do professional tasks without forming “barrier resistance” and the ability to cope with psychological barriers in teaching constructively. The introduction of a special course aimed at teaching constructively to cope with psychological difficulties may become the solution in the professional training and retraining of teachers. The course is aimed at the achievement of the goal by solving the following tasks: providing general theoretical information on the problem of psychological difficulties in professional activity; developing the ability to diagnose various types of psychological difficulties; preparing teachers to cope with professional difficulties constructively. The course contents should be implemented in two directions: the study of the theories of psychological barriers, protection, psycho-emotional stress, destructions, emotional burnout, etc., their manifestations in the behavior and the professional activity and the identification of personal characteristics of teachers in order to form constructive patterns of coping with professional difficulties.

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