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Professionally-Oriented Communication Styles of Social Pedagogues: A Review

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Abstract

Communication is important in all human endeavours. This article evaluates the concept of “style” - in a professional setting. This paper comprehensively examines, the “individual style of communication”, the “style of pedagogical communication” and the “social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication style”. It also examines the essence of an individual style of professionally-oriented communication among social pedagogues. The main focus of this paper concentrates scientists’ views regarding the characteristics of each communication style. Finally, the major professionally-oriented communication styles within the spectrum of social pedagogues were similarly analyzed. An effective individual style of productive communication is the best style of professionally-oriented communication among social pedagogues.

Keywords: Communication Style, Individual Style, Productive, Professionally-Oriented Communication, Social Pedagogues.

Introduction

The competence development among social pedagogues is reasonably relevant nowadays. Special attention is paid these days to their professionally-oriented communication skills. These skills include; dialoguing skills, listening skills, speaking skills, and questioning skills. It is vital that social pedagogues master these basic skills during their professional and academic training.

The question of establishing a particular “style” of professionally-oriented communication among social pedagogues is significant. This is because of the fact that all professional activities depend on it, especially the regulation of interactions between specialists and their clients to offer solution to identified problems. As a result, much efforts have been channelled into training specialists’ communication skills.

A lot of scientific works are dedicated to training of specialists’ style of communication. It is necessary to highlight scientists’ researches, which are devoted to issues regarding the formation of specialists’ communication styles (Chukavina, 2005; Omelchenko, 2009; Savenkova, 2014; Sysiuk, 2004; Uvarova, 2005). The scientific works of Kan-Kalyk and Volkova are however dedicated to the problem of professional communication formation (Kan-Kalyk, 1979; Kan-Kalyk, 1987; Volkova,

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2006). In spite of a large number of scientific publications, insufficient attention is given to the nature and role of “style” in the scope of social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication. The purpose of this article is to reveal the professionally-oriented style of social pedagogues’ communication.

The essence of the concept – “Style”

The concept “style”, as T. Chukavina notes, is often used in modern psychology. She points that it was introduced in the late 20-ies of XX century by A. Adler, who proposed the concept of “an individual’s lifestyle”. Hence, the concept - style is simply seen as “*a characteristic of a certain individual strategy of vitality, that is directed by targets system, whose achievements provide an opportunity to compensate the inferiority complex, to protect against reality, to adapt to the environment*” (Chukavina, 2005, p. 65).

T. Chukavina in her research allude to G. Allport’s opinion that the concept “style” includes the uniqueness of a form of operation system, in which the person can behave through his / her individual properties [“*behavioral style*”]. The scholar also notes in her study that researchers as K. Lewin, R. Lippit, and R. White marked the beginning of an in-depth study of the “style” category. According to Chukavina (2005), such previous analysis depicted the concept of “style” as ways and means individuals employ to accomplish leadership roles in group settings. She writes that “*the common element for all these studies is to understand the individual style as personality characteristics*” (Chukavina, 2005, p. 65).

Omelchenko (2009) considers that “*the conceptual status of the individual communication style was first developed by V. Merlin*” (Merlin, 1982; Merlin, 1986). She notes a number of features singled out by V. Merlin (1982; 1986). This include a ‘vague space’, which is the basis of the individual style formation [*this is the fulfilment of any kind of activity involving the freedom of choice*]. As a person demonstrates this through his / her sense of individuality, he / she use intermediate goals and their means to achieve them. The style as a concept by Merlin is also based on a person’s freedom of expression. This opens the door for personal and public admiration of specialists’ activities. The concept of the individual style can be formed on the basis of a positive attitude towards work and the desire to improve it. It can be formed rather as a systemic function during the later stages of human development. For the most part, an individual style of communication fulfils a compensative function [helps a person to build on his / her own strengths in the process of professional activity fulfilment] (Merlin, 1986, p. 93).

Omelchenko (2009) confirms that this phenomenon by Merlin (1986) considered the concept as “*a unity of components (operations style, actions and reactions style and goal-setting style)*”. The scientist also notes in her study that, Merlin (1982; 1986) interpreted the individual style of communication as a discrete kind of activity style. She remarks that Merlin (1982; 1986) transferred all the above mentioned characteristics of the activity style to the communication style. Merlin (1982; 1986) considered the individual style of communication as a person’s systemic core factor; which is reflected in all levels – from physiological to socio-psychological properties (Omelchenko, 2009, p. 224).

Definition of the essence of the concept - “The style of pedagogical communication”

The style of pedagogical communication can be determined as an identified system of methods and techniques; which the teacher can use in the process of interaction with pupils / students. The style of pedagogical communication is represented in “*the uniqueness of teacher’s personal qualities and communicative abilities, his / her creative manner, type of relationship with the students, and particular characteristics of pupils’ group*” (Volkova, 2006, p. 44).

Consequently, we identify social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication style as a characteristic of personality. This consists of: (a) operations style; (b) actions and reactions style; (c) goal-setting style; and (d) statement tasks communication style at the time of direct interaction with the client.

Additionally, it is important to note that specialists’ professional and personal qualities are based on the individual style of social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication. Kan-Kalyk (1987) pointed out that “*mastering the basics of professional pedagogical communication should take place at the individual creative level*”. The scientist also claims that

“the most important task of a new teacher is the search for individual communication style, a search that must be carried out systematically” (p. 105). Kan-Kalyk (1987) noted that for a person to develop his / her individual communication style, the following steps are to be adhered to:

1. Define and review personal peculiarities;
2. Define the disadvantages and errors resulting from the individual communication. [*Constant work should be done to overcome shyness, constraint, and the negative elements of the communication style*];
3. Master the elements of communication based on personal peculiarities;
4. Master methods of communication in accordance with the prevailing style of communication;
5. Constantly engage in educational / pedagogical activities [e.g. *communicate with children*].

As a consequence, these steps consolidate the individual communication style of professionals (Kan-Kalyk, 1987, p. 105).

The formation of social pedagogues' professionally-oriented style of communication is both labour-intensive and time-consuming. This process automatically brings on board the study of the individual's characteristics, which is complicated by the direct process of communicating with the client and further mastering of technological tools for professionally-oriented communication.

An example of correct style of professional communication can be learnt from the ways professional social workers encounter and settle social work problems. These include;

1. The psycho-pedagogical and social impressions realized as part of the work of professional social work;
2. The social workers communicate by achieving mutual understanding of clients to offer the maximum solution to their problems;
3. The interaction between social workers and their clients occurs in the atmosphere of cooperation.

Thus, these allow them to build constructive relationships with their clients and also achieve the purpose of their communication (Kaniuk, 2009, p. 27). As social workers aim at solving clients' problems, it can be concluded that certain characteristics of professional communication [*such as authoritarian, liberal and democratic*] were employed. These styles of communication, as noted, can occur in the professional activity of social workers. It can be also stressed that the above mentioned styles of professionally-oriented communication are peculiar for social pedagogues' activities (Kaniuk, 2009).

The Essence of the characteristics of communication styles

There are three basic characteristics of communication styles. The first example is the authoritarian style. According to Kaniuk (2009), *“the authoritarian style of communication is based on the prohibition, the strict regulation of relations and clients' behavior, the suppression of the individual clients' initiative, the ignoring of his / her individually-psychological properties”* (p. 28). Volkova (2006) however pointed that *“an authoritarian teacher personally determines activity direction, he/she is the intolerant of pupils' objections, that is suppressed their initiative and control them”*. She highlighted that the main forms of teacher's interaction providing such style of communication are order, correction, instruction and rebuke (p. 45).

The second example is the liberal style. Kaniuk (2009) indicated that the liberal style is the opposite of the authoritarian; therefore, the process of communication is spontaneous. In effect, a social worker loses control and initiative power in communication is fully transferred to the client. Volkova (2006) turned attention to the fact that teacher's usage of the liberal communication style is manifested in non-intervention level. Such communication examined externally, may seem democratic, but the process of communication can be out of control through passivity, lack of interest and responsibility, and unclear programs (p. 45).

The third example is the democratic type. It is important to note that this is the most productive style of communication. A social worker for example, can organize productive interaction and cooperation with a client following this communication style. The specialist does not lose control over the communication process, but also allows the client to be initiative during care. This is helpful to the client as it promotes their voice and needs (Kaniuk, 2009). Volkova

(2006) also described the democratic style of communication to be based on mutual respect, trust, orientation to self-organization, collective and person's autonomy. This style of communication is founded on the desire to delate the activity purpose, to rather involve pupils / students in joint activities. The democratic style of communication is provided by the usage of such basic interaction methods for developing learners' confidence and resourcefulness through teachers' encouragement, advice, information and coordination (Volkova, 2006).

The social pedagogue's usage of any style of professionally-oriented communication is dependent on the client's personality, the situation of interaction, the client's problems and the goals of communication between them. Kaniuk (2009) argued that there were two main types of speech styles [*formal* and *informal*] in the communication process. She emphasized that the functional styles of verbal behavior differ from each other in the choice of vocabulary and expressive means. Accordingly, the social worker should be able to move easily from one communication style to another, taking into account the context of each specific situation. As a rule, the formation of the social worker's individual style of communication requires a lot of efforts over extended periods. The individual speech style is therefore manifested in manner of self-expression [e.g. *vocabulary, intonation, facial expressions, pantomimic*]. It is also important to note that professional ethics requires a certain speech discipline, strict adherence to literary norms which do not allow using the dialects' jargons in both formal and informal communication (Kaniuk, 2009). Notwithstanding these dynamics, Omelchenko (2009) pointed out that some researchers identified it as a productive style of communication within the scope of individual style of pedagogical communication (Kan-Kalyk, 1979; Kan-Kalyk, 1987).

This style offers tangible psychological contact [e.g. *negotiation of psychological barriers affecting pupils' cooperation*] and it enhances pedagogical interaction. Interpersonal relationships among pupils and teacher when combined with both business and personal levels of communication form an integral social and psychological structure of pedagogical process (Kan-Kalyk, 1979). Social workers engaging in this professionally-oriented style of communication with their clients - for example, manifest a joint responsibility for the outcome of their communication process. In addition, there is an opportunity for rapid contact establishment with the clients using dialogic interaction.

For productive professionally-oriented communication, the future specialist must master skills such as: the skills of verbal and non-verbal communication, the ability of self-presentation, the ability to initiate communication, listening skills, the ability to speak, the ability to persuade, the ability to give feedback, the ability to establish a positive emotional connection, and the ability to take into account the individual characteristics of the client. Considering the individual style of pedagogical communication, it is argued that psychological indicators of successful pedagogical communication are their sources of spontaneity and facility. These provide professionals with skills needed to stimulate their self-regulation (Savenkova, 2014). Savenkova, (2014) also pointed out that the productive style is the most effective individual style of pedagogical communication. The productive style of pedagogical communication in effect "*is a system of operations that make available, the subject-to-subject level of communication and its achieved mutual understanding, pedagogical contact and its management, the achievement of educationally-effective result in teacher activity*" (Savenkova, 2014, p. 26).

Sysiuk (2004), studying the style of teachers' pedagogical communication in higher education institutions noted that, the style of communication is formed not only in accordance with the individual typological characteristics of teachers, but also according to the demands of the situational interacts. Thus, according to the degree of teachers' readiness for different situations of communication, the scholar identifies three communication styles: (a) "*ritual [posed by inter-group situations] - to maintain the relations with society, (b) manipulative [generated by business situations] - to partner as a means of achieving external goals, and (c) humanistic [generated by interpersonal situations] is aimed at satisfying the requirements of understanding, compassion, empathy*" (p. 14). The style of pedagogical communication is "*not only as a time stable, transsituational methods, techniques and expressive forms of teacher communication, but also as his / her personal wealth, which is the result of professional self-determination and self-actualization*". Therefore, there is the need for "*the possibility of some components of pedagogical communication style formation, not only in the process of teacher's professional activity, but also*

during professional training of students of pedagogical higher education institutions” (Uvarova, 2005, p. 8).

Conclusion

In consequence, professionally important personal qualities and characteristics of the specialist as a person are the basics of the individual style of social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication. Social pedagogues’ style of professionally-oriented communication can be defined as some personal characteristics that include; the operations of the style, the style of actions or reactions, goal-setting style and problems of communication during direct interaction with the client. One of the main social pedagogue’s tasks is the search for the individual style of communication; it must be carried out systematically, depending on the situations and problems of the client. If the social pedagogue chooses the right style of professionally-oriented communication, it will contribute to the successful solution of many professional problems.

The social pedagogues’ activities include the main styles of professionally oriented communication as; authoritarian, liberal and democratic styles. For efficient professional activities, social pedagogues’ must master the individual style of the professionally oriented communication in this regards. Productive communication style, which is the kind of personal style of social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication, is characterized by active communication positions of specialist and client. This enables the achievement of both close and long range goals of communication. The productive style of social pedagogues’ professionally-oriented communication is an effective individual style of productive communication. To this end, Omelchenko (2009) concluded that the determinants of individual style of pedagogical communication are: “*personal mediation – the desire to communicate, that is corresponded to person’s values [K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaja]; personal qualities [O. Bodalov]; the relation to person as inherent value [P. Rubinshtein, B. Bratus]; dialogue as equal partners’ free communication [S. Bratchenko]*” (p. 228).

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