

## Foundation of Psychological Support in the Emotional Experience of Professional Identity Crisis by Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

The background of the researched problem is determined by the psychological and pedagogical science's and practice's need to supplement the ideas about teachers' professional development and about the course of their getting through the emotional experience due to difficulties of this process; as a result, it is necessary to study psychological foundations of building of psychological support programs in the process of school teachers' getting through a professional crisis under conditions of permanent changes in the educational system. The main approach to studying this problem is the interview and phenomenological method that allows to identify and justify psychological basis of building of teacher support programs. The theoretical analysis allows to identify the nature of the support process, its goals and objectives, and to justify the methodological basis of the support program realization. The empiric results demonstrated that the process of teachers getting through the professional identity crisis goes hand in hand with the value-semantic transformation of a person and with "launching" of reflexive processes which, in turn, justifies resorting to them as to the psychological basis of building of teacher support programs. The research results expand the understanding of the nature of professional identity crisis phenomenon, the process of coming through it and supplement the data of the basis of building of teacher support programs.

**Keywords:** professional identity crisis, emotional experience, value-semantic sphere, reflection, psychological support

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the problem of crisis and crisis states remains actual both for the psychological science and for society as a whole. It is especially essential to regard the category of "crisis" in the context of pedagogical work. According to the Concept of Modernization of Russian Education, one of the main tasks of education policy is the development of education in accordance with relevant and perspective needs of a person, society and the state and providing its quality while preserving its fundamentality. One of the ways to meet this challenge is to provide psychological safety in the educational process, including through increasing of the level of teachers' psychological well-being [1]. The ability to continuous self-determination, building oneself as a professional, projecting new paths of professionalization and overcoming of the professional identity crisis have the particular significance in this case [2, 3].

The professional crisis of a teacher's personality is a long-term non-equilibrium condition of a subject of labor caused by desynchronization of the value-semantic sphere of his/her personality and actualizing the process of experiencing the crisis [4]. Occurrence of professional crisis is caused by desynchronization of relationships in the "personality-profession" system. This condition is characterized by appearance of self-doubts, disagreement with oneself, awareness of the necessity of personal re-assessment, ambiguity of life goals, lack of understanding of "how

to go on", loss of sense of innovation, falling behind the times, etc. We can say that the professional identity crisis is a situation of "inability" of realization of an inner professional idea in the actual situation of professional development [5]. The crisis forms the process of "going through" in the teacher's consciousness - the act of removal of disintegration of the value-semantic sphere of labor subject regulated by special psychological mechanisms, that is, value-semantic and reflexive mechanisms which are deployed towards changing the system of values and the semantic field of consciousness. Moreover, in the crisis, when the sense of melancholy and devastation increases, the process of soul searching gets actualized in teachers - the process of new senses of professional activity and realizing their professional potential [6].

The value-semantic system transforms during experiencing of the crisis, which is justified in works of Russian and foreign scientists: F.E. Vasilyuk, L.S. Vygotsky, D.A. Leontyev, B.S. Lievegoed, A.O. Prokhorov, N.R. Salikhova, A.S. Sharov, G. Shikhi and others [7-14].

For instance, L.S. Vygotsky [8] noted that comprehension of a situation by a man in course of a practical activity leads to a change of the semantic field and real actions. An emerging emotional experience (affective attitude to the reality), being a form of the unity of the emotional and the affective, is a structural unit of the dynamic semantic system [8]. In the opinion of F.E. Vasilyuk [7] and D.A. Leontyev [9], extremely strong disturbances with an abrupt change of one's social position can lead to a profound rebuilding of all personal meanings. F.E. Vasilyuk describes the mechanism of value emotional experience in his concept of emotional experience [7]. The author notes that there is a misbalance between the consciousness and the being independently on the concrete character of a crisis. The consciousness cannot accept the being in the form it exists in reality and therefore cannot endow it with the meaning and cannot direct it. A loss of the meaning happens which can be overcome by value-semantic rebuilding [7].

B. Lievegoed [10] and G. Shikhi [14] note that the mechanism of modification of the value-semantic personal sphere is launched during the crisis of personal development. The development of the value-semantic sphere often becomes the most important indicator of a person's transition to the next level (step, stage) of his/her development.

In his works, A.S. Sharov emphasizes that the value-semantic sphere as a whole and values, in particular, create the psychological regulative mechanism of a subject's life [13].

Transformation of a value system is based on the mechanism of barrier-operability of personal values which was justified by N.R. Salikhova during the research of value-semantic regulation of a subject's life [12]. When the value is unavailable (professional crisis is characterized by it), tension and feeling of life senselessness increase, as the value determines life goals, on the one hand, and has its own sense, on the other hand [12].

A. Olson, while analyzing existential crises, notes that they are connected with the processes of personal self-actualization. They appear in a situation when a person realizes that goals which were set before are impossible to be achieved, that is, in the situation of transformation of the personal value-semantic sphere [15].

A.O. Prokhorov characterizes crisis as a misbalanced situation which can be caused by a rupture of the habitual system of relations in usual life, such as inability to achieve goals, loss of an intimate person, etc. [11].

Looking at the reflexive mechanism of experiencing a professional crisis, we should note that the problem of reflection is one of the main and fundamental problems of psychological and pedagogical sciences. At the current stage of research, the category "reflection" is analyzed in the works of A.V. Karpov, A.V. Karpov & T.K. Klimontova, M.V. Klementyeva and others [16-18]. Majority of the researchers verify that reflection is a mechanism of behavior regulation and life regulation in general. Thus, in the works of A.V. Karpov and representatives of his scientific school, reflection is regarded as a mirror of one's own mentality, self-perception of psychic processes, features and states, as well as of their regulation [16, 17]. The author emphasizes that "the feeling of completeness and redundancy of representation of the inner world, with all variety of its manifestations, including processual, is achieved due to reflection, and this is the nature of the latter [16, 17]. A.V. Karpov notes that the reflection (as a process, as well as a state, as well as a feature) is especially essential in such cases when organization of behavior comes with a choice, uncertainty and necessity of overcoming it. "A reflexive break" and reflexive processes and mechanisms are nowhere as important as in these breaking points of behavior continuum" [16, 17].

In his works, D.A. Leontyev supposes that disagreements about the meaning of reflection and assessing its role in life regulation are caused by the fact that different forms of reflection are called by one word [9]. From the very beginning, the notion of reflection was quite ambivalent and so it is now. On the one hand, reflection is the main mechanism of self-cognition. On the other hand, the excess of reflection looks like a negative predictor of achievements in everyday consciousness and in the scientific psychological studies [19]. The psychological mechanism of reflection as the human ability to direct the consciousness at oneself has two fundamental points: voluntary manipulation of ideal intellectual content, based on coming through a distance between the consciousness and its intentional object, and direction of this process to oneself as to the object of reflection. It is the unity of these two aspects which creates the full reflective relation in a narrow sense where with D.A. Leontyev connects the new quality of self-regulation [20].

In the conceptual model of reflective regulation of psychological states worked out by A.O. Prokhorov & A.V. Chernov, the reflection is a central equivalent in the subject's regulation, as it functions as the self-determinative and self-regulative beginning of the subject's regulative actions [21, 22]. Reflective mechanisms are included because of the goal of regulation – the necessity of changing the psychological state as a non-adequate event, situation, aim of work and so on (the subject is able to realize the necessity of changing the state due to reflection). Reflection as a feedback mechanism in a human life is not just a result but also a process connected with inner rebuilding, namely, re-comprehension of one's own mentality foundation and peculiarities of psychological state [21, 22].

Thus, the empiric proof of the fact, that there exists transformation of the value-semantic sphere due to the reflection of professional development in course of teachers getting through their professional crisis, can become an empiric basis for working out programs of psychological support of teachers who experience a personal professional crisis.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Methods of the Research

The following methods were used in the research: theoretical (analysis, comparison); empirical (questioning, testing); mathematical statistics (descriptive statistics, comparative U-criteria of Mann-Whitney, Spearman correlation coefficient).

To collect the empiric material the following methods were used:

1. The biographic reflection method of M.V. Klementyeva [18]. The author understands the biographic reflection as a subject form of reflection, which is directly aimed at realizing and self-analysis of an individual subject's life. Firstly, the biographic reflection is manifested in mechanisms of cognition, identification and interpretation of processes, phenomenon and events of life; secondly, it provides the self-regulation of a life path; thirdly, it takes part in the processes of life purpose creating; fourthly, it integrates the life path of a person into the sociocultural reality.
2. The differential reflection test of D.A. Leontyev & Ye.N. Osin [19]. The authors use the concepts of introspection, systemic reflection and quasi-reflection. The important aspect of D.A. Leontyev's & Ye.N. Osin's approach is that the systemic reflection is the most adaptive, and exactly this form of reflection is connected with self-determination. The systemic reflection is based on the unique and quite rare human ability to look at oneself from the outside. The processes of purpose-building, self-determination and search of new vectors of development are "launched" in course of a professional crisis experienced by teachers. That is why the systematical reflection is an important predictor, and all processes of sense creating are impossible without it.
3. The life-purpose orientations test of D.A. Leontyeva (adapted version of Purpose-in-Life Test (PIL, J. Crumbaugh and L. Maholic). The method is aimed at the research of life consciousness. It allows identifying peculiarities of life-purpose orientations of a person (life goals, abundance of life and satisfaction with self-realization) which correlate with the goal (future), the process (presence) and the result (past). Besides, this method allows to characterize the locus of control "me" reflecting a person's imaging of himself as a strong personality with sufficient freedom of choice, and the locus of control "life" which reflects the belief in the self-ability to provide such control (the image of own ego), make decisions freely and turn them into reality.
4. The phenomenological method "is a special method of description and analysis of one's own feelings, which is based on the reflection and principles of evidence and absence of prerequisites; the method has been worked out in the framework of phenomenological tradition and its reworked version is applied today as a strategy for high-quality research" [23]. Words and statements which reflect the richness and deepness of human feelings are used in the phenomenological method. It is focused not on a subject's public actions and behavior but on description of his/her emotional experiences. Basing on the phenomenological method, the author developed a questionnaire "Emotional experience of a person's professional crisis" [5]. The questions addressed some aspects of teachers' experience of the professional identity crisis: "general life perception and feelings before occurrence of the professional identity crisis", "feelings coming with the professional crisis", "transformation of value-semantic sphere", "overcoming the professional identity crisis". The questioning was aimed at forming of a group of teachers who were passing through their professional identity crises at that moment. Relating to Group 1 or Group 2 was based on a teacher's self-assessment of the professional activity situation as crisis or non-critical; a common mood of self-report; the nature of assessment of the professional activity; the nature of assessment oneself as a professional.

## **The Experimental Base**

The experimental base is provided by educational organizations of Sverdlovsk Region of the Russian Federation.

## **Stages of the Research**

The research of the problem was carried out in three stages:

On the first stage of the research, we analyzed theoretical approaches of foreign and Russian scientists who developed value-semantic and reflective mechanisms of a professional identity crisis. The content of a semi-structured phenomenological interview and psychological tools for diagnostics were worked out.

On the second stage of the research, the empirical data was collected.

On the third stage of the research, we carried out the content analysis of teachers' self-reports and descriptive, comparative and correlative analysis of the empirical data.

## **RESULTS**

To describe the psychological mechanisms of teachers getting through a professional identity crisis and to justify the psychological basis of support of teachers, the empirical research which teachers of educational schools of Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Region took part in was carried out. The average age of participants is 36 years old; length of service is 15 years. All participants have a pedagogical education. 125 people took part in the research. The group of teachers with the crisis at the present moment consists of 38 people. The other teachers (87 people) were included in the comparative group.

To justify the assumption that the emotional experience of professional identity crisis comes with transformation of the value-semantic sphere and launching of reflective mechanisms and, respectively, with justification of necessity of psychological support, with taking into account these results, we singled out a group of teachers who were going through the professional identity crisis. For this purpose, self-reports of teachers were analyzed. The teachers were referred to the group of those who were going through a professional identity crisis due to: self-assessment of the professional activity as a crisis or non-critical situation; a common mood of self-report; the nature of the assessment of the professional activity; the nature of assessing oneself as a professional. In all, the group of teachers who were going through the professional identity crisis consisted of 50 people.

Description of peculiarities of teachers' semantic sphere and of reflective processes became the next direction of the empirical data analysis. Let's look at the description of the peculiarities of the semantic sphere of those teachers who were going through their professional identity crisis. The comparative analysis of the two groups of teachers (teachers who were going through their professional identity crisis, and teachers without this crisis) has presented that there are differences between peculiarities of the semantic sphere of teachers. Indeed, the teachers in crisis had a lower level of all indicators of life-purpose orientations. For example, the comparative analysis showed that on the level of  $p \leq 0,05$  there were differences between the following scales of the test of life-purpose orientations: "Purpose-in-Life" ( $X$  average = 34,34), "Effectiveness of life or satisfaction from self-realization" ( $X$  average = 34,34), "Control locus - "Me" (I am a master of my life)" ( $X$  average = 24,34), "Control locus - Life or manageability of it" ( $X$  average = 30,45). The level of parameters listed above were usually lower for teachers who were going through their professional identity crisis. Namely, in the situation of professional crisis it is usual for teachers to live for today without planning the future (the parameter "Purpose-in-Life"), as the future and professional perspectives are not clear. Besides, the teachers are not satisfied by their life (the parameter "Result of the life"). Probably, it is caused by the teachers' necessity of revising their own achievements, the reflection of experience and their own abilities that appears in the situation of the crisis. More than that, dissatisfaction with the past can be caused by the feeling that all professional knowledge and skills cannot provide the achievement of the objectives which are declared by the social-professional environment. The lower results of the scales "Control locus - Me" and "Control locus - life or manageability of it" demonstrate that teachers who are in the crisis usually feel the lack of self-confidence and are unable to control events of own life and the life in the whole, to make decisions freely and turn them into reality. Teachers who were going through the professional identity crisis were increasingly characterized by conviction of the fact that human life cannot be consciously controlled, and the freedom of choice is an illusion, and there is no sense to plan the future.

It is interesting that the common level of consciousness of life and its emotional abundance (the scale "Process of life") doesn't demonstrate any statistically significant differences between the groups of teachers. The life on the whole is perceived by the teachers as interesting and abundant and the emotional experience of professional identity crisis changes only some separate parameters of life-purpose orientations which are significant for pedagogical work.

It is also interesting that its reflexive and value aspects of the emotional experience as mechanisms of higher level which move on the foreground, unlike negative emotions which are a common background of the crisis. The latter are rarely fixed by teachers in their self-reports, which demonstrates high development of their emotional self-regulation [5].

The analysis of results of the phenomenological questionnaire has also confirmed the conclusion that for many teachers going through the professional identity crisis the reflection of the content of the professional activity is accompanied with the reflection of their inner and social world. So, let's have a look at the description of results of the reflective process research. Despite the fact that the significant peculiarities of reflective processes were not manifested during the professional identity crisis, we have identified the important correlation between parameters of reflection and parameters of the semantic sphere. Probably, it has demonstrated that the reflexive processes are actual due to the semantic mechanism. Let's describe the results obtained.

We noted above that, as has been identified, during the emotional experience of professional identity crisis teachers are not satisfied by the past, feel themselves unable to control their lives, are convinced that human life cannot be consciously controlled, and the freedom of choice is an illusion, and there is no sense to plan the future - parameters "Effectiveness of life or satisfaction from self-realization", "Control locus - Me or I am a master of my life", "Control locus - life or manageability of life". As these semantic parameters are correlated with such parameter of reflection as introspection (there is a negative feedback between introspection and such parameter as the "Effectiveness of life or satisfaction from self-realization",  $r = -0.38$ , when  $p \leq 0.5$ ; there is a negative feedback between introspection and such parameter as "Control locus - life or manageability of life",  $r = -0.37$ , when  $p \leq 0.5$ ), it can be supposed that, during the crisis, teachers especially feel the necessity to concentrate on their own feelings and their own state. D.A. Leontyev and Ye.N. Osin, the authors of the method, called the introspection a self-awareness and characterized it as a non-adaptive (unlike the systemic reflection) form of reflection [19]. In our opinion, such character of correlation between introspection and life-purpose orientations can be explained by the fact that the main goal which appeared during the professional identity crisis, due to the great social significance of teacher's work with the loss of professional perspective on the background, is to understand oneself and to find new resources.

But there is a high probability of non-constructive solution of the crisis, as the introspection which starts in the crisis does not influence the external, objective social and professional situation. More than that, during the crisis there is a probability of appearance of necessity to revise the achievements and to reflect the experience and one's own abilities. Besides, the dissatisfaction with the past can be caused by the feeling that in a present reality all professional knowledge and skills cannot provide the achievement of the objectives which are declared by the social-professional environment.

Reviewing the correlative analysis between parameters of biographic reflection (the method of M.V. Klementyeva) and parameters of life-purpose orientation has allowed making a conclusion about positive correlation between the cognitive part of reflection and the parameter of life-purpose orientations ( $r = 0.39$ , when  $p \leq 0.5$ ) and parameter of control locus "Me" ( $r = 0.39$ , when  $p \leq 0.5$ ). It allows supposing that the improvement of the consciousness of the future and searching and forming professional perspectives will be successful in the case of development of a teacher's ability to realize the life. This result has a great practical value, as it can become a foundation for building programs of psychological support and facilitation in the process of school teachers getting through the professional development.

One more interesting conclusion can be made during the analysis of the correlation between the content-analytic categories and parameters of biographic reflection. As the results demonstrated, there are the positive correlations between the personal part of reflection and melancholy-devastation category ( $r = 0.53$ , when  $p \leq 0.1$ ) and the negative correlation between the parameter of con-figurative reflection and content-analytical category of the emotional experience during the professional identity crisis ( $r = -0.39$ , when  $p \leq 0.5$ ). The personal part of reflection characterizes the process of endowing actions and events in the life with the sense, realizing one's own peculiarities which are coming out in course of various events. Accordingly, the process of searching oneself, new semantic directions, realizing one's own professional potential become actual when teachers are getting through their professional identity crisis when the melancholy and devastation increase because of the senselessness of profession and loss of the interest.

And the configurative reflection characterizes the process of forming the narrative - the context of a life path. In this light, peak emotional experiences which take place in a professional identity crisis would block the process of the life path building. It appears in front of a person in a disrupted and fragmentary view.

Thus, this conducted empirical research allows proving the hypothesis that in the situation of experiencing of a professional identity crisis by teachers when a level of their satisfaction with the past decreases, lack of self-confidence and conviction in non-manageability of their lives rises, the reflective processes become actual.

## DISCUSSIONS

In the context of working out the problem of psychological support, the most interesting thing is the result which demonstrates that the successful crisis solution, finding new goals and professional perspective building will be possible in the case of expanding the reflection boundaries and achieving a new stage of consciousness and analysis of life events in the whole and realizing one's own role in these events. Besides, the rebuilding of semantic goals and creating of new purposes of professional development should become an important part of the psychological support. That is why the psychological support and facilitation in the process of teachers getting through their professional crisis is aimed at actualization of the processes of sense-creating and reflection of activity subject being to find the constructive solution of the professional identity crisis.

The functions of the psychological and pedagogical support:

- informative support of the professional identity development and building the competence of the teachers' emotional experience of professional identity crisis;
- the help with the self-building of professional paths and professional future, the search for new purposes of the professional development and the reflection of the own professional ego;
- competent psychological support identity facilitation in the process of overcoming professional crises.

One of the main objects of the psychological support and facilitation in the process of getting teachers through the professional crisis is to make them to be able to find the resource for solving of the crisis situation by themselves.

The realization of psychological support of the emotional experience is based on the methodological principles and approaches, such as systemic, synergic, context, historical-evolutional, phenomenological approaches.

The systemic approach includes studying of an object as a whole, ordered and complex, consisting of various inter-connected elements. There is the emphasis on the identification of different links and relations which take place inside the object of research, as well as in its relation to the environment. The features of the object as a holistic system are determined not as much as by the sum of features of its separate elements but by the features of its structure and by special system-building integrative links of the object. Besides, a distinguishing feature of the system are its new, integrative, qualitative characteristics which are not included in its components. The structure of the system influences the quality of the system much more than its components (Aphanasyev V.G.). The research of the emotional experience as of the systemic phenomenological allows to present it as a complex composite and unified whole.

The synergic approach is used in psychology in course of studying opened (exchanging of the substance, energy and information), non-linear (variable and irreversible in development), self-developing (changing under the influence of inner disagreements, factors and conditions) and self-organized (ordered spontaneously, coming from chaos to the order) systems. From points of the synergic approach, there is no the sole correct universal variant of going through professional identity crises. Peculiarities of this emotional experience are determined by the personal peculiarities of a teacher, by those of the value system and of the social and professional situation.

The context approach allows to select the professional crisis from a variety of difficult situations which are faced by a person in course of his/her becoming, and to separate professional crises from age crises. Changes in a person are sometimes connected with specific situational factors, or the situational context of professional development.

Systemic historical and evolutional approach comes from the points of the necessity of studying the phenomenological of a human being in the process of evolution of the system, which created him, and of studying the target determination of the developing system, which is expected to clarify the question "what the aim of a phenomenon is?". This approach is very significant in the context of the psychological support analysis. The support is based on the idea of answering the question about the reason of professional crisis occurring in a human being's life.

Using the phenomenological approach allows regarding the emotional experience as a central psychological phenomenological of a professional identity crisis. The loss of sense inevitably leads to a professional crisis, as an important predictor of productive professional development is realizing of the sense and significance of human activity and self-determination in it. The interest of sense analysis, the search for it, ways of world perception and realizing it by the human being – all this is the central aspect of the phenomenological methodology. And the successful psychological support of professional identity development is possible if the psychologist has an idea about this inner nature of professional reality which a professional possesses. It is possible to accept this inner world, to admit that it is unique and obvious, and to build the helpful activity on this basis, in the case of using special methods of the qualitative phenomenological research (interview and analysis of documentation, self-reports, conversations).

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, in the article the results are presented which justify that the value-semantic and reflective mechanisms can become a psychological foundation of working out the content of psychological support and facilitation in the process of teachers getting through their professional crises. During the empirical research, the decreasing of some parameters of life-purpose orientations which characterize a teacher's professional identity crisis was discovered; they are the purpose of life, the effectiveness of life (satisfaction from self-realization), control locus - "Me", control locus - life. Teachers who are going through their professional identity crisis can be characterized by the decreased level of consciousness of the future, the absence of time perspectives. The situation of professional identity crisis is characterized by a strongly expressed dissatisfaction with the past, the feeling of the senselessness of the phases left behind and unsuccessfulness of self-realization. The feeling of being unable to influence one's own life and non-confidence in the principal ability of one's own choice of ways of life are also features of a professional identity crisis.

In course of the research it was discovered that for many teachers the experience of a professional crisis comes with a reflection of the content of their professional activity, and only thereafter a reflection of the inner world and social environment get actualized.

The obtained results become a foundation of building programs of psychological support and facilitation in the process of teachers getting through their professional crises, which is aimed at actualizing of the processes of sense creating and the reflection of the subject of activity being, in order to find ways of constructive solution of the professional identity crisis. We have chosen the systemic, synergic, context, systemic historical-evolutional and phenomenological methods as the methodological basis of the psychological support program.

The designated results complement the idea of professional identity crisis, enrich the idea of emotional experience nature and expand the knowledge about the psychological foundation of psychological support and facilitation in the process of teachers getting through the professional crisis.

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