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ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 159 (2014) 235 – 238

Procedia

Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCPCG 2014

## Teacher's Professional Health as a Factor of the Development of a Student's Harmonic Personality (on J. Updike's Novel "Terrorist")

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### Abstract

Defining factors of a student's personality development requires analyzing the notion of professional health of a teacher. Urgent social instability, social changes, environmental problems and changes in educational policy influence both teachers and students. Professionalism of teachers is necessary condition for young people's resistance to negative psychological impacts. The scope of our work is a generalized approach to uncover connections between teachers' professionalism and their contributions to the development of the student's harmonic personality. We analyze several criteria of teachers' level of professionalism including their moral intentions, drawing on previous work of Russian, U.S., German, Turkish, etc. scholars. We use correlative analysis, comparative, structural-typological methods, and structural-poetical method while engaging literary images of a teacher and a student from the novel "Terrorist" by well-known American writer J. Updike. The results demonstrate that the development of a student's harmonic personality is closely connected to the professional health of a teacher. We find that the professional health of a teacher is the base for the harmonious development of the cognitive, psychological and moral characteristics of a student's personality.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Academic World Education and Research Center.

*Keywords:* professional health; harmonic personality; teacher; student.

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## 1. Main text

A teacher as a professional needs the atmosphere of physical and psychical well-being. An individual is considered healthy while developing potential physical and creating forces which make him or her a mature, effective, active member of the society. The efficacy of teacher's activity depends not only on coordinating his of her actions and emotions but on the physical, psychical and social well-being. The teacher is the key figure of pedagogical process, the keeper of knowledge, the model of good manners, healthy life-style, appropriate attitude to the health. The professional health of a teacher is defined by stable results of his or her work that keeps a high level of professionalism both in education and good breeding.

Russian psychologist L. Mitina writes "the problem of professional health of a teacher is so important that it should be considered in the context of the general concept of national healthcare. The health of a teacher has a great influence on the health of the younger generation" (Mitina, 1998). Teacher is a high-risk profession because of the neurotic and psychosomatic disorders it causes. The reasons include long office-day, high mental stress and social responsibility. Teachers are chronically overworked and have high risks of disease. As a rule, they have no way to recover the energy spent, therefore, they are unable to adapt to the diversity of the students' needs and surrounding reality. Emotionally overloaded teacher would prefer the familiar range of circumstances and situations rather than innovations, where the results are unclear and poorly predictable. Thus, by professional health of a teacher we mean that physical and psychical state of the organism in which a teacher is able to maintain and strengthen the emotional, cognitive, motivational, reflexive regulatory mechanisms to ensure effectiveness of his or her professional activity.

The issues of professional health of a teacher, which became a crucial factor for destiny of a student, relationships between teacher and student and how they develop are brightly presented in the literary images in the novel "Terrorist" (2006) by well-known American writer J. Updike.

There are several conceptions based on different understanding and definition of health. The most characteristic is a systematic approach expressed in the works of V. Bekhterev (1902), M. Basov (1926), A. Lazurskiy (1997), etc. According to them, V. Myasishev define three levels of health: biological, psychological, and social, and determine personality as a biopsychosocial unity (Myasishev, 2003). Developing his idea A. Leontiev (1977) writes: "We can easily distinguish the different levels of human studies: the biological level when we see a human as a natural being; psychological level, where he or she appeared as the subject of animated activity, and finally the social level, where a person manifests his- or herself while implements social-historical process". Healthy modern teacher is someone who effectively copes with stress and can prevent and resolve conflicts, makes responsible decisions, who do not just adapt to external conditions, but can rebuild them, improving public health by that. That is why the concept of "health" is inevitably associated with pedagogy.

O. Anisimova marks that by the end of the school year many teachers in Russia feel "physical and psychological discomfort, fatigue, emptiness, irritability, a sense of unrealized potential, socio-professional loneliness that means professional changes a person's health. All this leads to the need for psychological support of a teacher's professional health. As a result, we can talk about the active, mobile, stirring teacher" (Anisimova, 2002).

Modern world is full of threats and challenges that require special spiritual and physical strength of a teacher to protect the students. When he or she is not able to overcome these difficulties there appears such a state as "burnout". "Burnout" was investigated in the 1970s as a crisis of overextended and disillusioned social service workers" (Vandenberghe, Huberman, 1999). Teachers, being pressed to do more work with fewer resources, have to spend their time and energy recklessly, receiving fewer rewards and less recognition of their efforts. The burnout syndrome of teachers has negative effect on their students. "The quality of the relationship between teachers and students is indeed one of the most rewarding features of the teaching profession; it is potentially also the most vulnerable one, especially when viewed against the backdrop of an ever more rapidly changing world that compels both teachers and students to learn how to adapt" (Vandenberghe, Huberman, 1999).

The objective of this paper is to provide new perspectives and a deeper understanding of the nature of the professional health of a teacher, its conditions and consequences, most notably in the teaching profession. This issue becomes general in the novel "Terrorist" (2006) by J. Updike, which discovers the theme of terrorist formation and how the teacher coping with his tiredness and cultural prejudice helps his Muslim student Ahmad not to commit a terroristic act.

In their subjects and issues this novel stands out among other works by the author. Updike tells about how eighteen years old Ahmad, Egyptian and American born and raised in the American town of New Prospect, becomes

Muslim and a terrorist. The world of the average American city in the beginning of the XXI century is presented through the eyes of a young Muslim, naive and devout.

The process of self-determination is a central motif of the novel “Terrorist”. United States is a country which inevitably becomes not only a place to find a new place to live, but also a place of incitement of ethnic, religious, etc. conflicts. The novel by John Updike certainly deserves to become an object of literary analysis to consider the theme of professional health of a teacher and its contribution in self-determination of a young man.

The novel “Terrorist” tells the story of America after the tragedy of 9/11. Protagonist – Ahmad Mulloy (Ashmawi) – the son of Irish-American woman and Egyptian artist who came to study in the United States. Ahmad was born in marriage, but when he was three years old, his father left the family. The very desire to have a father led Ahmad to the mosque, to the Sheikh Rashid. From eleven to eighteen years he taught the boy Arabic, read the Koran with him and raised nearly flawless warrior of Allah. Ahmad does not drink, does not smoke, does well in school, performs all the required Muslim rituals and relies entirely on the will of God in regard to the future.

The novel begins with a young man, “Devils, Ahmad thinks. These devils seek to take away my God” (Updike, 2007). All of America seems to Ahmad infidel, the abode of sin and debauchery to be cleaned. Everything that surrounds Ahmad in his hometown of New Prospect is the devil in his opinion: the girls who “sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair. Their bare bellies, adorned with shining navel studs and low-down purple tattoos” (Updike, 2007), the teachers “weak Christians and nonobservant Jews, make a show of teaching virtue and righteous self-restraint, but their shifty eyes and hollow voices betray their lack of belief”. Abandoned by his own father, Ahmad finds father Sheikh Rashid, who introduced him to the Islamist faith. This fact separates him from his peers: and the young men and women, from teachers, whom he despises, even from his mother, to whom he refers condescendingly.

Faith, a gradual and orderly learning classical Arabic language thinking about the greatness of God – that’s what Ahmad seeking core traits of his personality in the beginning of the story. Disharmonious relations with other people only aggravate his desire to go into your inner world. Jack Levy, “old and tired” Jew, a teacher responsible for career guidance plays a great role in later life of a young man. He likes Ahmad with his seriousness, academic success, undoubted intellectual abilities and confident behavior.

In this novel Updike is trying to understand how a terrorist psychology forms. It is interesting that Ahmad was raised in America, far from Islamic culture, and he has never been abroad. Writer thus holds the idea that the tolerant America grows children in her womb that will devour it.

According to S. Foster “Because most teachers will come into contact with children who are culturally and racially different from them, teachers will need to learn new ways of thinking about cultural differences and will need to be trained to work with students from various racial and cultural backgrounds” (Foster, 2012). Thus, the relationships between Jew Jack Levy and Arab-American Ahmad are very interesting to examine. A non-practising Jew of broadly liberal tendencies, Levy is, in every obvious sense, the antithesis of Ahmad. Yet there are significant correspondences between the views of the world-weary Jew and those of his idealistic Muslim student: Levy’s vision of social disintegration under a barrage of “merciless advertisements geared to a preposterous popular culture of eternal music and beer and impossibly thin and fit young females” is characteristic of a certain strand of western intellectualism, but it also chimes with Ahmad’s damning analysis of America’s spurious religion of freedom – “freedom above all, though freedom to do what and to what purpose is left up in the air” (Updike, 2007). “Bring ‘em on,” says Levy, discussing with his wife the possibility of terrorist attack, “this whole neighborhood could do with a good bomb.” (Updike, 2007).

Turkish researchers Kadı, Selçuk, Yıldırım state that “student-teacher relationship is an important element in themes like students’ participation during the organization of education objectives, students’ comprehension to school practices, students’ dependent and independent behaviours and their attitude towards the in- and out-school authorities” (Kadı, Selçuk, Yıldırım, 2014). Relationships between Ahmad and old teacher Jack Levy in the “Terrorist” are the basis for the consideration of themes and issues of the novel. Initially Ahmad arrogantly refuses his help, considering Levy as a loser and a liar who wants to take away from him. At the same time, Ahmad does not hate the Jews: “Before Israel Muslims and Jews were brothers, and they both were on the rim of the Christian world, looked comical in their funny clothes, served as entertainment for Christians” (Updike, 2007). In the final scene we see how the teacher Jack Levy going through suffering, feeling ache in his heart and head, overcomes these physical difficulties in order to prevent a tragic incident – terroristic act, he convinces his student Ahmad not to commit such an action.

We can make a conclusion that the issues of professional health of a teacher becomes very important, especially in the conditions of modern multinational, diverse high school. It is also closely connected with the life-long learning, as it mentioned in the works of Russian scholars Voronchenko and S. Chugunova: “At the beginning of the twenty-first century Europe entered a new epoch, “the Age of Knowledge”, the conception of the lifelong learning was introduced into the educational policy of the European Union” (Voronchenko, Chugunova, 2013). The teachers have to face more problems while working, to take into account cultural differences of students, to learn how not only to teach students but be ready to cope with difficulties caused by cultural differences and changing worldview of students, to prevent conflicts in any case. The appropriate teacher’s attitude towards the student which is mostly determined by his or her professional health is a crucial factor for destiny of a student, and it is brightly presented in the literary images in the novel “Terrorist” (2006) by J. Updike.

## 2. Conclusion

The results demonstrate that the development of a student’s harmonic personality is closely connected to the professional health of a teacher. We find that the professional health of a teacher is the base for the harmonious development of the cognitive, psychological and moral characteristics of a student’s personality.

The issues of professional health of a teacher, which became a crucial factor for destiny of a student, relationship between teacher and student and how they develop are brightly presented in the literary images in the novel “Terrorist” (2006) by well-known American writer J. Updike.

Thus, professional health of a teacher is integrity of bodily, emotional, spiritual components of a teacher’s personality, which involves the development of balanced intellectual, moral, physical, emotional spheres of the personality of the teacher. That’s why modern efficient, successful teacher is someone who manages to cope with difficulties caused by cultural differences among his or her students and to prevent his or her personal “burnout”.

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