

Hrechanovska Olena. Assertiveness and its role in forming the conflictological culture of students of higher technical educational institutions. *Modern Science – Modern veda*. Praha. Ceska republika, Nemoros. 2018. - № 4. C. 79-85. (*Index Copernicus, Google Scholar*)

ASSERTIVENESS AND ITS ROLE IN FORMING THE CONFLICTOLOGICAL CULTURE OF THE STUDENTS OF HIGHER TECHNICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract. *The questions about formation of assertiveness in students of higher technical educational institutions, as an important component of the conflict management culture, are raised in the article. The author has analyzed the essence of concepts of "engineer conflict management culture" and "assertiveness". The methodological approach to development of assertiveness trainings is described, and the examples of techniques used by the author in her work at training sessions are given.*

Key words: *assertiveness, conflict management culture, training, conflict, culture, aggression, tolerance, identification.*

Introduction. The issue of training technical specialists has come to the fore when technical progress has gained momentum and the need for appropriate education of future specialists has become apparent. Modern world technical trends are characterized by rapid changes and transformations, steady growth of professional skills, cultural flexibility, and higher competitiveness, which are also factors of possible conflicts in various spheres of human life. In addition, the requirements to specialists are increasing as the labor market put forward demands to higher education graduates pertaining not only to professional competence, but to cultural, tolerant behavior, the ability of non-conflict, assertive communication, and harmonious development of a personality, which focuses not only on the cultural heritage of his/her country, but is also quite aware of cultural specifics of other peoples.

Definition of problem and objective. At the beginning of the last century, S. Hessen convincingly argued that the culture was an essential prerequisite of education in the true sense. In his view, education was nothing but an individual's culture. Moreover, if the culture is an assembly of inexhaustible objectives-tasks of the very existence of a people, then education is an inexhaustible task of mastering the cultural way of life in the context of an individual [1].

A technical specialist, a graduate of a higher technical school, should be, first of all, a highly cultural individual, because attracting young people to cultural

achievements facilitates development of professional properties required for their further work, inasmuch as an engineer lacking common human and cultural values may pose a threat to the society. Therefore, we consider formation of a conflict management culture an important factor of the study at a technical higher education institution.

Latest achievements and publications. The issues and problems of conflict and culture have been of interest to scholars for many centuries. To date, there are many definitions of the concepts of "conflict" and "culture". Theoretical and practical experience of analysis of conflicts and ways of their settlement are represented in the works of many scholars: S. Freud, C. G. Jung, R. Dahrendorf, M. Deutsch, L. Coser, K. Lewin, J. Moreno, D. Carnegie, H. Cornelius, W. Ury, R. Fisher, D. Scott, A. Maslow, C. Rogers, A. Antsupov, E. Ershov, P. Blonsky, D. Vygotsky, M. Piren, L. Petrovska, A. Shepilova, H. Lozhkina, N. Poviakel, et. Al.

Cultural issues (as a broad concept) were touched upon in the works of such scientists as R. Benedict, L. Berezhnova, J. Gerder, S. Hessen, A. Hurevich, I. Zymnia, A. Kroeber, C. Kluckhohn, I. Ohienko, S. Pufendorf, P. Sorokin, E. Tailor, A. Touraine, S. Charnovskyi, and many others.

To date, the concept of conflict management culture has not been widely explored. O. Shcherbakova, N. Samsonova, N. Pidbutska, A. Antsupova, W. Mastenbroek, L. Petrovska, I. Shypilova, et. al. devoted their works to the problems of conflict management culture and conflict management competency in various fields of social life.

In our opinion, a *conflict management culture* is an ability to predict and find a compromise solution for settlement of conflict in different life situations and the ability to adapt in a conflict-generating environment. We consider the conflict management culture of a future engineer as part of the professionally important properties of occupational competence gained in the course of studying at a higher educational institution.

Presentation of the basic material. In the process of formation of the conflict management culture, students of higher technical education institutions combine cultural, psychological, social, humanistic, and cognitive components, being uncovered and mastered by students while studying both humanitarian and technical disciplines with the help of innovative teaching methods. We believe that mastering these components should carry on simultaneously, which is actually the basic principle of configuring the culture of conflict management.

We consider mastering the assertiveness skills an important component of the conflict management culture. The researches of this phenomenon were E. Salter, E. Bern, M. James, A. Maslow, G. Allport, C. Rogers, A. Fedorov, L. Nikolaiev, V. Capponi, T. Novak, T. Fasolko, S. Stout and others. For the most part, scientists define assertiveness as a constructive way of interpersonal interaction in a creative perception of the environment. The term "assertiveness" comes from the English language, and it means perseverance in proving own point of view, defending and asserting own rights. In psychology, the assertiveness is often associated with confident behavior. By definition of E. Salter [2], the assertiveness is viewed as an

ability of an individual to constructively insist on his/her rights, showing a positive respect to other people, while being fully responsible for own behavior.

The assertiveness is also interpreted as a trait of a mature individual, which characterizes the ability of a human being to change his/her behavior in common activities, the process of communication and positive cognition, expressed in a sense of inner strength, the ability of personal self-expression, emotional stability, responsibility for implementation of decisions taken, a positive attitude towards him/herself and others. The assertiveness contributes to achievement of the goals set without causing any harm to others, and occupies a middle position between passivity and aggressiveness - two unproductive behavior strategies [3].

The concept of assertiveness came into the domestic psychological terminology in the early 90's of the XX century in the aftermath of the book by Czech psychologists V. Capponi and T. Novak "How to do things in own way." In the book, the authors highlighted the principles of assertiveness based on the belief that no one could successfully manipulate others if they themselves would not allow it [4].

For the most part, the assertiveness is a subject of the psychological science and, alas, very little attention is paid to it in pedagogy and in the educational sphere of higher education institutions. In our opinion, in order to consider the assertiveness as part of the higher educational process, attention should be paid not only to formation of the assertive skills in students, but also to the aptitude to assertiveness in teachers, since, in some cases, the teachers are initiators of interpersonal conflicts in the course of learning process. Failure to constructively address the problems that may arise leads to aggression and conflict situations on both sides.

The interpersonal interaction is characterized by four types of behavior, namely: an aggressive type of behavior when an individual demonstrates him/herself by invading other's personal territory, violating other's rights; a passive type of behavior when the actions of an individual lead to restriction of his/her own interests and rights; and the mixed type combining passive-aggressive reactions and an assertive type of behavior that demonstrates the ability to express feelings, thoughts and beliefs openly, honestly, without violating the rights of other individuals [5].

Students should comprehend that professionalism consists in not only theoretical knowledge of professional skills, but also in the ability to find a compromise in challenging situations, to be confident in their own views and actions, to understand the role of their behavior in the occupational activities. Therefore, higher technical education institutions should attempt to form assertiveness or assertive skills in masters by means of innovative teaching methods. There may be a question, whether it is too late to form the assertiveness in the magistracy? Of course, while studying at initial and undergraduate courses, it is also necessary to pay attention to formation of students' assertiveness, but we believe that at the phases of socialization and adaptation of students to new environment when professional identification and identification of personal priorities are carried on, the formation and comprehension of the assertiveness passes the general stages, which contribute mostly to a social area, while master students should develop the assertiveness, directed in the first instance on the occupational orientation, and knowledge obtained at primary courses will help them in formation of assertiveness as an occupational trait.

For example, to explore the ability of master students of the Department of Construction and Heat Power Engineering of the Vinnytsia National Technical University, we have used a number of the below techniques.

Since we regard aggression as one of the factors of conflict behavior and destructive problem solving, master students were asked to undergo diagnostics of indicators and forms of aggression using the Buss-Durkey Inventory (adapted by A.K. Osnytskyi)[6]. This technique, which involves the Buss-Durkey personalized questionnaire, was developed by A. Buss and A. Durkey in 1957 and designed to characterize aggressive and adverse reactions. According to the authors, one may recognize aggression as a property of an individual, characterized by the presence of destructive trends, mainly in the domain of subjective - subjective relations. Probably, the destructive component of human activity is an indispensable element of creative activity, since the needs of individual development inevitably call for the ability of individuals to remove and destroy obstacles, to overcome everything that opposes this process. Aggressiveness is characterized by qualitative and quantitative aspects. Like any trait, it may exist with a different degree of expression - from almost complete absence to its ultimate grade. Every individual may be characterized by a certain degree of aggressiveness. Lack of it leads to passivity, control, conformance, etc. The authors proposed the following eight important indicators and forms of aggression: physical aggression - the use of physical force against other person(s); verbal aggression - expression of negative feelings (quarrels, yelling, threats, etc.); indirect threat – covert use of gossip, jokes and explosions of anger (yelling, Katzenjammer) directed against others; negativism - an oppositional form of behavior, usually directed against the authority of the leadership, which can range from passive resistance to active actions against regulations, rules, and laws; annoyance – an inclination to ill temper, readiness to falling in ill humor, acidity, and rudeness at the slightest excitement; suspiciousness - a tendency toward distrust and cautious attitude towards people, which stem from the conviction that others may cause harm; resentment - a manifestation of envy and hatred of others caused by feelings of anger for real or imaginary suffering; autoaggression or feelings of guilt - actions and attitudes towards oneself and others, preconditioned by possible conviction of a respondent that he/she is a bad person doing wrong things. Also, the authors proposed in their techniques to define the indexes of aggressiveness and hostility. The index of aggressiveness is represented by averaged indicators of physical, verbal aggression, mediated threat and negativism. The index of hostility involves averaged results of suspicion, annoyance and resentment.

This methodology cannot be an exhaustive source for analysis, therefore, after conducting this survey, it is necessary to hold a conversation or a secret interview with students to find out the factors that may influence the manifestation of aggression or hostility, if the teacher is not sure of sincerity of the respondents. For example, students are focused mostly on such factors as uncertainty, employment problems, economic problems, and hardships in their private lives. These facts should also be taken into account in the further work.

We consider the conversation as an important step towards understanding and further collaboration with students and as one of the important steps in developing the

training session. We regard holding the secret interview as a transitional phase between testing and conversation.

In our work we also used the Express Questionnaire Methodology "Tolerance Index" (H.U. Soldatova, O.A. Kravtsova, O.I. Khukhlaiev, L.A. Shaiherova) [7]. We also consider tolerance as one of the manifestations of assertiveness and professional competence, therefore, we consider it important to conduct this testing for the further development of the training session. It is designed to assess the general level of tolerance. The text of the questionnaire consists of statements that reflect both the general attitude to the environment and other people, and social settings regarding different spheres of interaction, in which tolerance or human intolerance manifest themselves. The method is inclusive of statements that show the attitude to some social groups (minorities, mentally ill people, beggars), communicative settings (respect to opponents, willingness to constructively resolve conflicts and productive cooperation). Particular attention is paid to ethnic tolerance/intolerance (attitude towards people of other races and ethnic groups, to their own ethnic group(s)). The sub-scales of the questionnaire are aimed at diagnostics of such aspects of tolerance as ethnic tolerance, social tolerance, tolerance as a personality trait.

To determine the level of assertiveness in master students and for a more thorough approach to developing a training session, we hold an "Assertiveness Level Test-Questionnaire" modified by V. Capponi and T. Novak [8]. In the test, the authors propose three scales with three levels against the number of points scored. These scales are distributed as follows: Scale A - independence and autonomy; Scale B - confidence, determination, self-reliance; and scale C – a social need.

We conduct this testing in order to view an initial level of students' assertiveness prior to beginning of the training sessions; we also conduct a post-training test to analyze the effectiveness of our work.

To form up and develop the assertiveness of masters we consider effective and necessary to use training sessions or classes with training elements. Being geared to the results of the methodology/tests, we develop a training session, at which we try to get rid of shortcomings revealed by the tests. We view the training session not only as a psychological or educational setting, but as a simulator of life situations, so we give great importance to selection of practical elements we use during our work. The assertiveness training sessions should be tailored to meet the needs of students who might not always be able to understand their needs. Therefore, before development of the training session, we practice to apply a number of techniques to understand what problems need to be highlighted during development of the training agenda. We consider trainings as educational work with students that is not possible to carry out under a same scheme in different groups, therefore, we develop the above for each group individually, being guided by the results of previous tests. For example, if most students have problems with ethnic or social tolerance, we use training elements to improve and increase the tolerance level. Of course, there are quite a variety of techniques that can be used to guide the assertiveness trainings.

Conclusion. The problem of the present days is a replacement of values that cannot be overestimated. In pursuit of occupational performance, we often forget that

professionalism is, first of all, an interpersonal understanding. We consider the conflict management culture as one of the components of professional competence with the assertiveness as an important component thereof, which is rarely paid attention while studying at a higher education institution. The educational process at a higher school, which, in most cases, has moved to the Internet, sometimes loses the most important educational goal - the formation of a full-fledged, cultural, moral, and humanistic individual who comprehends the importance of proper communication with other people. Therefore, we believe that formation of conflict management culture, assertiveness training sessions, and an individual approach to their development and implementation in the educational process is an important step of a future professional for obtaining so much desired occupational properties.

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