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CONFLICTS AND WAYS OF PREVENTION IN AN ACADEMIC GROUP OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

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Conflicts and Ways of Prevention in an Academic Group of First-Year Students

The article deals with the problem of conflicts in the academic group of first-year students, their role in group formation, establishing interpersonal relations between first-year students; reasons of conflicts origin; criteria of classifying conflicts; existing types of conflicts; ways and methods of their prevention; factors to study in order to heighten the efficiency of settling a conflict. The connection of conflicts with stages of academic group formation has been studied; the stages of academic group formation have been researched; their psychological and pedagogical characteristics have been given. The role of conflicts in first-year students' relations-building has been studied. The notions "conflict", "interpersonal conflict" have been defined; the conditions of their origin have been studied; the stages of their course have been defined and characterized; the notion of a post-conflict syndrome has been defined. In the article the constituents of a conflict have been viewed, its components have been comprehensively studied; various criteria of classifying conflicts have been studied. The sources of conflict origin have been researched; the factors that increase the probability of conflicts origin have been singled out; various methods of preventing conflicts in an academic group have been studied in the article.

Key words: conflict, interpersonal conflict, academic group, first-year students.

The progress of students in the educational process, and, consequently, in their professional life depends on the nature of interpersonal relations in their academic group. Today, attention of the psychological and pedagogical literature is paid to the study of a relationship culture, creating a psychological climate of a team, whilst a problem of the study and prevention of conflicts in peer groups has not been sufficiently tackled.

On entering the higher educational establishment, young people turn over a new leaf, beginning to learn to express themselves, set new goals, objectives and values during performance of their academic group. It is known that in its

development any group go through a phase of formation, conflict period, rule-making, business activity and disintegration. Periods of formation and rule-making in the first-year students groups require assistance to ensure they are explained mechanisms and ways to overcome conflict situations.

In the national psychology much attention is devoted to the study of social and psychological phenomena in the academic group, as well as rules of its operation. Well-known works of B. G. Ananiev and his collaborators at the Leningrad University (I. P. Volkov, N. V. Kuzmina, V. T. Lisovskyi, M. M. Obozova, V. I. Sekun etc.). In recent years, researches of the Ukrainian psychologists came to the front (L. M. Zhaldak, P. G. Luzan, L. G. Podoliak, V. A. Semychenko, V. I. Yurchenko etc.).

Formation and functioning of an academic group is impossible without such phenomena as occurrence, prevention and navigating of conflicts. The problem of conflicts in peer groups, including student groups, was tackled by such domestic scientists as Ye. Durmanenko, I. Zaitseva, L. Loseva, P. Luzan, etc. The problem was addressed by foreign scientists including J. Kaprar, D. Servon, L. Steinberg etc.

The objective of the article is to define a concept of conflict, to examine the existing classification of conflicts, to investigate causes of occurence and methods of settlement of conflicts in academic groups.

Students study in academic groups, that's why they play an important part in shaping the outlook and attitude of an individual. Students are more or less of the same age, occupation (training), level of education and life experience [7, p. 6], so when working with student groups a teacher may deal mainly with groups of peers.

The important role of an academic group acting as staff that shapes personalities often becomes an object of research of sociologists, psychologists and educators. People cannot exist without collective organizations-communities that persist for a long time. This tendency was caused by biological interdependence of people, the benefits of cooperation and division of labor in order to survive in comparison with efforts of individuals, as well as an exceptional ability of people to interact on the basis of symbolic communication [8]. Structure of personal

relationships and team structure interact constantly, they influence each other and converge stronger if joint activities of people organized in better way [9].

As it was mentioned above, in its development any group goes through the following stages:

• formation, the basic processes of which is development of attraction relationships, information exchange, focus on others and situation. This period is characterized by tentative interactions, courteous polite conversations, concern due to uncertainty, lack of information;

• conflict period, main processes are: dissatisfaction with others, competition among members of disagreement on actions, conflict. During this period speaker's ideas are criticized, poor attendance is registered, there is a certain degree of hostility among group members;

• rule-making: within this period a structure of the group is refined, solidarity and harmony occurs roles are defined and relationships are established. This period is characterized by agreement on the rules of consensus seeking, increasing of support;

• business activity. The main processes are: focus on achievement, high focus on tasks, emphasis on efficiency. Main characteristics of the process are decision making, tackling of problems, cooperation strengthening, drop in emotionality;

• disintegration that is followed by divestiture of obligations, dependency reduction, termination of tasks fulfillment. The period is characterized by regret, increased emotionality.

We support views of P. Luzan and I. Zaitseva, who point out that an academic group staff is not just a union of individuals that are having and exercising their influence of interactions, that have nature of cooperation, competition, conflict, tension [5]. A first-year who came to a new environment of peers has to establish contacts and build relationships with absolute strangers. To establish relationships with peers students need social skills such as an ability to reach mutual understanding and agree on mutually acceptable terms. These skills let students to engage in interaction with peers, providing an emotional support and access to social resources through basic interpersonal relationships, including friendship, cooperation.

Relationships with peers do not just provide support, but force to overcome difficulties. A student has to submit to group norms, otherwise he becomes a fugitive. He faces conflict situations that he must learn to solve [2]. N. Loseva notes that "conflicts during formation and development of groups do not occur if moral level of interpersonal relationships is fairly high" [4, p. 107]. Let's consider detailed concept of conflict in educational psychology.

Conflict is an interaction of people, in which at least one party is aware of the incompatibility of a way of thinking (beliefs, perceptions), feelings and will with another party so that in its activities it encounters another party's opposition and percepts it like infliction of the harm [6].

In the study context we are interested in interpersonal conflict – a situation of human interaction in which they either pursue incompatible objectives or adhere to conflicting values and norms trying to implement them in relationships with one another, or both in the acute competition strive to achieve one goal, which can be achieved by one of the conflicting parties [3].

Interpersonal conflict develops when the collision (in one or more of the areas: motivational, cognitive, organizational, activity) of incompatible tendencies of participants of interpersonal relationships transfers to an effective and emotional sphere. Bringing emotional relationship to interpersonal conflicts is a cause for a spread of conflict relations in all fields, which distorts the processes of perception and understanding of opponents, leading to a denial of their thoughts, values, destroys joint activity, negatively affects the elements of organizational interaction. There are two forms of conflict prevention:

• open – frank confrontation, clash, fight;

• closed or latent, when there is no outright opposition, though there is an invisible struggle going amongst the parties of the conflict. Often, after a conflict there is a post-conflict syndrome characterized by tension in relations of the parties in conflict. Post-conflict syndrome if stimulated may be a start to a new conflict.

The main components of conflict are: parties to the conflict, its root causes, mutual perceptions of conflicting persons in a situation that has arisen (actually or perceived); orientation and emotional expressiveness of conflicting actions.

Every conflict can be divided into its separate components (sides) – cognitive, emotional, volitional. Cognitive component lies within a contradictory perceptions of certain events, phenomena, facts, the participants in the current situation, distortion of impressions about individual characteristics of each other and occupied position, real cause for tension, possible solutions to the problem. Conflict may also be triggered off by focus not on holistic events background, though in certain fragments; focus on negative circumstances connected with contacts of conflicting parties in the past; the low critical thinking, inability to understand or acknowledge the other's point of view so different from one's own, tendencies and bias against assessments.

The emotional component of a conflict is determined as mutual antipathy or special partiality for each other, mutual irritability and anxiety, aggressiveness, unacceptability of emotional state of another person, emotional dullness or, vice versa, increased sensitivity, as well as inadvertence, contempt, scorn, that is expressly demonstrated in communication.

Volitional component of a conflict is expressed through mutual demonstration (verbal) of collided ideas, obstinacy, negativism, unwillingness to understand each other and deal with the situation occurred, imposition of their own point of view.

The above mentioned conflict components interplay with each other, manifesting itself differently.

Conflict may occur unexpectedly (randomly, situational) or may be triggered off (provoked), exacerbated in particular situations. There is another option for a conflict appearance, which is a gradual accumulation in relationships of different, yet minor differences, occurrence of hostility and its aggravation, "fueling" by relatives, loved ones – up to an absolute inability of normal coexistence.

Conflicts may be classified according to various criteria. Let us examine them in detail.

By *cause factors* conflicts are as follows:

• business conflicts – a conflict orientated to an object (i. e. it is based on objective factors); such conflicts tend to be resolved quickly and successfully;

• emotional conflicts – usually based on complex interpersonal relationships and other implicit subjective factors (focus on the subject). Such conflicts occur in the midst of an emotional outburst of late phase; they usually are destructive and hard to arrange [6].

By *quantitative characteristics of involvement of participants* conflicts are divided into intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup.

According to a complex structure of a person's activity model, it is appropriate to classify interpersonal conflicts in the pedagogical environment as follows: cognitive, motivational, activity, organizational.

Sources of cognitive conflicts, according to Ye. Durmanenko [1] is misunderstanding and lack of information that, consequently, leads to misinterpretation of phenomena, events and processes and wrong response. Competition, which results in confrontation followed by a clash of intentions and desires, is the basis of motivational conflicts. Activity interpersonal conflicts are caused by inconsistency and ineffective cooperation, dissatisfaction with joint work results. Incompatibility, discrepancy between individual opportunities and opportunities given to a group structure, trigger the so-called organizational conflicts.

In order to prevent conflicts in the pedagogical environment of universities a significant point would be a complex and systematic study alongside with analysis of factors increasing the likelihood of interpersonal conflicts. They are as follows:

• personal individual and psychological peculiarities of group members;

• peculiarities of cognitive sphere of group members;

• motives, goals, values of individuals and majority in a group as a whole;

• formal and informal structure of a group;

• style of leadership in a group;

• availability of microgroups and nature of relationship among them and their leaders, etc.

As for *prevention methods* of interpersonal conflicts, Ye. Durmanenko defines the following:

• Cognitive – clear and specific clarification of positions, relationships, concepts, provision of a feedback, collection of additional information;

• motivation – forecasting perspective, joint solution of constructive competition problem or cooperation;

• activity – improvement of efficiency of joint activities;

• organizational – increasing flexibility of a system and role dynamics [1].

Thus, it may be noted that examining the essence, factors causing them and methods of conflict settlement, first-year students form a positive micro-climate in an academic group, which, in its turn, affects both their progress in education and well-being of a student in the midst of an academic group. Students gain valuable experience of important decision-making for future life situations. Group processes define and reinforce mutual obligations and impose restrictions on behavior and purposes of an individual. Prospects for research may include studying the means and ways to prevent conflicts at the pedagogical and technical institutes of higher education, and creating psychological and pedagogical methods for teaching recognition and effective conflict resolution.

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Маріна О. В.

Конфлікти і шляхи їх попередження у колективі академічної групи студентів-першокурсників

У статті обґрунтовано зв'язок проблеми конфліктів із стадіями становлення студентської групи; надано їх психолого-педагогічні характеристики; визначено роль конфліктів у встановленні міжособистісних відносин студентів-першокурсників. У статті надано визначення понять "конфлікт", "міжособистісний конфлікт", розглянуто умови їх виникнення; визначено стадії перебігу конфлікту. У статті наведено складові конфлікту, досліджено його компоненти; розглянуто різні критерії класифікації конфліктів. У статті досліджено джерела виникнення конфліктів; розглянуто фактори, які підвищують ймовірність виникнення конфліктів У дослідженні також визначено методи попередження конфліктів в академічній групі.

Ключові слова: конфлікт, міжособистісний конфлікт, академічна група, студенти-першокурсники.

Марина Е. В.

Конфликты и пути их предупреждения в коллективе академической группы студентов-первокурсников

В статье обоснована связь проблемы конфликтов со стадиями становлення академической группы, приведены их психолого-педагогические

характеристики; определена роль конфликтов в налаживании межличностных отношений студентов-первокурсников. В статье приведены определения понятий "конфлікт", "межличностный конфлікт", рассмотрены условия их возникновения, определены стадии протекания конфликта. В статье приведены составляющие конфликта, исследованы его компоненты; рассмотрены разные критерии классификации конфликтов. В статье исследованы источники возникновения конфликтов, рассмотрены факторы, которые повышают вероятность возникновения конфликтов. В исследовании также рассмотрены методы предотвращения конфликтов в академической группе.

Ключевые слова: конфликт, межличностный конфликт, академическая группа, студенты-первокурсники.

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