

Gender aspect in psychological support of Russian teachers of foreign schools

Alina Aleksandrovna Pozdnyakova^{1*}, *Elena Mikhailovna Markova*¹, *Darya Aleksandrovna Dmitrieva*¹, *Elena Aleksandrovna Baychuk*¹, and *Larisa Yurievna Morozova*²

¹The Kosygin State University of Russian, Institute of International Education, Moscow, Russia

²Moscow Pedagogical State University (MPGU), Institute of International Education, Moscow, Russia

Abstract. “Staff feminization” of the Russian schools is a general tendency of the modern education, however, the problems that female teachers face when performing their professional activity in a foreign cultural environment are rather specific and therefore they require the most careful consideration and further correction through the system of psychological support. The study of the mechanism of psychological support, as well as the methods of its implementation, is the objective of the present article. The tasks of the research are the following: 1) determination of the stress factors, accompanying the activity of the female teachers of the Russian school abroad; 2) selection of the contemporary psychological techniques required for neutralization of the stress factors; 3) formation of a cluster of measures required for psychological support of teacher of Russian as a foreign language; 4) modelling of the educational content directed to the formation of the psychological competencies of the Russian teacher of a foreign school. The system of psychological support has two levels and includes the following measures: 1) prevention of the impact of negative factors and 2) liquidation of the competency-based lacunes in the field of psychological knowledge. Taking into consideration the specific character of a foreign cultural environment allows determining the individual trajectories of the professional development of a teacher. The system of psychological support is not closed; it should be updated and improved constantly taking into account and under the influence of the demands of the time to become a part of the mechanism of the general training of a teacher of the Russian school abroad.

Keywords: educational process, psychological support, additional professional training, Russian school

1 Introduction

The organization of work of Russian schools abroad raises a wide range of issues, including those related to the psychological support of female teachers. The gender aspect in this sense is relevant as 98% of teachers of the Russian language and Literature and 95.4% of

* Corresponding author: apozdnyakova@live.ru

teachers of national languages and literature in the Russian Federation are women [1], and it is they who for the most part form the staff for foreign schools.

The problems that female teachers face in foreign cultural environment are quite often gender-specific. Therefore it seems correct to talk about the importance and systematic approach of the psychological support of the teachers working abroad.

The objective of this article is to study the mechanism of psychological support of the female teachers of foreign schools as well as the methods of its implementation. The tasks of the research are the following: 1) determination of the stress factors, accompanying the activity of the female teachers of the Russian school abroad; 2) selection of the contemporary psychological techniques required for neutralization of stress factors; 3) formation of a cluster of measures required for psychological support of the teachers of Russian as a Second (Foreign) Language (RSL); 4) modelling of the educational content directed to the formation of psychological competencies of the Russian teacher of the foreign school.

2 Methods

The following methods are applied for implementation of the objective and solution of the tasks set in the work:

1) theoretical analysis of the literature of psychological and pedagogical, sociological, culturological focus related to the specified problems (the most useful for research there were the “basic” works of Rosen [2], Dolton and Makepeace [3], Court [4], Anker [5, 6], experimental works of the foreign authors dedicated to the study of the various aspects of the educational milieu [7-9], works of Baskakova and Soboleva [10-12], Sillaste [13, 14], Efimova [15]);

2) analysis of the current programs of professional development of teachers of RFL;

3) studying the practice of organizing courses of psychological support for teachers;

4) bulk collection of materials for analysis (questionnaire survey, testing, interviewing Russian teachers of the foreign schools);

5) analysis of summarized statistic data related to the study of the teaching staff regarding teaching and learning [1, 16-18].

3 Results

The analysis of the results of interviewing of the female teachers who performed their professional activity in the Russian schools abroad in the different periods of time allowed distinguishing the four groups of factors being to a certain extent stress-based and causing the problems of psychological character.

The first group is factors related to the selection of candidates and the specific character of the educational institution that the teacher joins.

The concept “Russian school” combines the various types of educational institutions: with different ethnic composition, different structure, various demands of students [19]. These demands are not differentiated and often are not taken into account while forming the educational programs as they cannot be included in the qualification requirements specified for the selection of candidates for work in a certain organization. A teacher who got the job offer for work in the “Russian school” does not often have any idea what he should do and what student body he should work with and therefore quite soon he is in the situation of psychological discomfort. Often a woman cannot cope with it by herself. 27% of teachers

pointed out the non-conformity of expectations and more than 40% pointed out the incomplete conformity of expectations. Moreover, most teachers (82%) state that without the preliminary awareness of the specific character of the “Russian school” where they have to work, it is difficult to make an own strategy of the professional development and it is a negative psychological factor that does not allow getting complete satisfaction from the teaching process.

The second group is the factors related to the objectives of the taught student body. Evidently, the people (children and adults) rarely start learning the Russian language “for no reason” and even if it is so with time the objective is always formed. These can be: 1) practical goals (a wish to know the Russian language to be able to read (books, newspapers, Russian fairy tales, etc.); striving to get to Russia for study; a wish to work in a Russian speaking team, etc.), 2) cultural goals (interest to the Russian history, culture; a wish to travel around Russia; love for the Russian music, art, etc.), 3) specific goals (a wish to “maintain the language of ancestors”; a wish to learn an “exotic” language, etc.). However, the achievement of the goal can be realized only in case of the positive motivation available, formation and maintenance of which is possible only when two factors interact in the educational process: the authority of a teacher and the popularity of the language under studies. In case when the Russian language is not popular in the country it is rather difficult to maintain the motivation of a student and if the teacher does not have authority it is impossible.

In the opinion of the majority of respondents, the loss of authority (even partial) is the main reason of failure (or termination) of the pedagogical activity. According to the scale of significance, the loss of authority is above such factors as the lack of interest in the profession (35%; the lack of sufficient working experience abroad (17%); a negative attitude to the certain student group (5%); the “professional burnout” (2%).

The third group is the factors associated with the “competitive advantages” of the local specialists in the Russian philology that are manifested not in all countries but are currently important for the countries where the Russian language is popular (China, Turkey). For instance, in China the competition among its own Russian teachers is quite high and therefore those invited from Russia are offered to conduct only auxiliary courses (“Speaking and writing practice”, “Efficient communication”, etc.). In Turkey, the positions in the “Russian schools” are claimed by the immigrants from the Turkic-speaking countries of the former USSR (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). For obvious reasons, it is rather difficult to compete with them. From time to time more than 20% of respondents felt discomfort related to the direction or subjects of the courses of study.

The fourth group is the factors stipulated by the cultural differences of the parties (a teacher and the students). The analysis of the interview materials shows that one should speak not only about the cultural (cultural and religious) peculiarities of the country of study but about the perception of the profession of a teacher in the certain culture. It can be equally difficult for a female teacher from the psychological point of view to work in a Muslim country where “the profession of a teacher is considered to be male as it is estimated as the too complicated profession for a woman” [20] and in a non-Muslim country in a “masculine oriented group” [21]. In the first case, the difficulties are associated with the traditional preferences of the population when choosing the methods and form of knowledge acquiring, and in the second case, they are associated with the character of the lessons conducted. In the opinion of many social teachers and psychologists, the underestimation of the peculiarities of the gender composition of the students leads to their incomplete acquisition of knowledge as due to the “gender asymmetry” men and women are oriented to the different forms and methods of acquisition (“achievement” of knowledge

[21]. Due to their gender nature the female teachers are far from the “objectivity” and less adaptive to the productive activity, subjected to a higher extent to control and cannot adapt to the changes taking place. As a result, there are possible “hidden conflicts” of the teacher with a group that leads to nervous breaks.

According to the majority of respondents, the ideas of “impossibility for a woman to work in a Muslim country” are too exaggerated: an insignificant amount of teachers (less than 1 %) faced the demonstrations of tactlessness, lack of respect for a teacher as a woman. But teachers faced much more problems due to some other reasons: 1) as a result of the incorrect selection of the teaching material – printed texts, illustrations, audio and video fragments (it was mentioned by 22% of respondents); 2) due to the wrong choice of forms and methods of material presentation (18%); 3) as a result of the wrong selection of the style of communication in teaching (7%). Many problems of this category could be avoided if gender peculiarities of the group were taken into account. Thus it would be more correct to emphasize not the “position of a woman in the Muslim society” but the gender type of the group where the female teacher works.

4 Discussion

Starting the work on the article we were influenced by the well-known stereotypes about the predominance of ethnocultural and religious components in the structure of the gender problems. However, the results of the interview showed that these factors are not the leading ones: a woman “suffers” much more from the non-readiness to the interaction with a foreign cultural environment (of any type) and immature of professional skills. The psychological support of the female teachers of the Russian schools abroad should be carried out to prevent the development of the negative tendencies in human psychology to overcome the difficulties of the personal growth, to eliminate the conflict situations in relationships with students and colleagues. It is reasonable to provide this support in two directions.

The first direction is preventive work with the specified group that helps to form the “image of the country” where the teacher will have to live and the psychological readiness of the teacher to stay in this country.

According to experts in the field of communication, the main means of formation of the “image of the country” are mass media therefore the acquaintance with the materials of mass media of different countries presenting reliable and objective information to the public is quite productive. During such acquaintance, the special attention should be paid to the cultural, civilizational, mental and other significant characteristics of the host country. It is more correct to perform such work within the framework of the general course of the pre-departure training of the teacher that includes the consultations as well as diagnostic measures (questionnaire, situational tests for the solution of practical tasks, etc.)

The second direction is the work to eliminate the competence-based lacunes in the field of psychological knowledge. A teacher can be offered the programs of supplementary psychological and pedagogical training. (“Psychological framework of educational activity in the foreign language”, “Professionally significant personal qualities of the language teacher”, “Psychological analysis of a lesson of Russian as a Foreign language”, etc.) formed on the base of the results of the diagnostic testing and implemented remotely.

5 Conclusion

Revealing of the group of stress factors accompanying the activity of the female teacher of the Russian school abroad and determination of the deficit of professional competences in the field of psychological knowledge allow to describe the structure of psychological support of the teacher including the preventive psychological measures and psychological correction and to form the content of additional professional training programs for a teacher.

References

1. N.V. Bondarenko, D.R. Borodina, L.M. Gokhberg et al., *Indikatory obrazovaniya: 2020: statisticheskii sbornik* [Educational indicators: 2020: Statistical collection. (RDU HSE, Moscow, 2020)
2. Sh. Rosen, *The Theory of equalizing differences*, in O. Ashenfelter, R. Layard (eds), *Handbook of Labor Economics*. (Elsevier Science, 1986)
3. P. Dolton, G. Makepeace, *Europ Econ Rev*, **37**, 1393–1411 (1993)
4. G. Court, S. Morris, B. Reilly, M. Williams, *Teachers. Recruitment and the Labour Market*. (Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton, 1995)
5. R. Anker, *Int Labour Rev*, **136(3)**, 315-339 (1997)
6. R. Anker, H. Melkas, A. Korten, *Gender-based Occupational Segregation in the 1990s*. (ILO, Geneva, 2003)
7. E. Blom, et al., *Front Psych*, **8**, 552 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00552>
8. M. Lehtonen, et al., *Psych Bul*, **144(4)**, 394–425 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000142>
9. M. Antoniou, *Ann Rev Ling*, **5(1)**, 395-415 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011718-011820>
10. M.E. Baskakova, I.V. Soboleva, *Quest Edu*, **4**, 83-103 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2017-4-83-103>
11. M.E. Baskakova, I.V. Soboleva, *Population*, **21(3)**, 122-135 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.26653/1561-7785-2018-21-3-09>
12. M.E. Baskakova, I.V. Soboleva, T.V. Chubarova, *Bul Inst Econ RAS*, **2**, 85-100 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.24411/2073-6487-2018-00034>
13. G.G. Sillaste, *Gender sociology and the Russian reality*. (Alfa-N, RDC INFRA-M, Moscow, 2016)
14. G.G. Sillaste, *Human South Rus*, **6(5)**, 48-62 (2017)
15. G.Z. Efimova, *Sci Stud*, **7(5)**, 1-12 (2015)
16. TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners. (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>
17. TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals. (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1787/19cf08df-en>
18. *Positive, High-achieving Students? What Schools and Teachers Can Do*. (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1787/3b9551db-en>
19. E.M. Markova, et al., *Obrazovanie i gorod: Obrazovanie i kachestvo zhizni v gorode* [Education and City: Education and Quality of Living in the City], in *The Third*

Annual International Symposium. Moscow, 2021, 3013. (2021).

<https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20219803013>

20. I.I. Sokolova, *Universum: Bul Herzen Univ*, **2**, 3-15 (2010)

21. V.P. Simonov, *Bul Moscow Reg State Univ*, **1**, 1-13 (2014)