

Creation of a comfortable psychological climate in university teaching staff

Creación de un clima psicológico confortable en el profesorado universitario

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Summary

The article is devoted to improving the psychological climate in university teaching staff. The article provides a theoretical analysis of the considered phenomenon, its connection with the phenomenon of communications, and its elaboration in the pedagogical and psychological research. The study highlights the importance of socio-psychological climate in the context of the effectiveness of the activities of teachers and teaching staff in general. The study is aimed at examination of the problem of improvement of psychological climate in university teaching staff. To achieve the goal of the research, the authors developed and carried out an experiment aimed at examination of the ways to improve the psychological climate in university teaching staff with the help of training activity. The authors selected the research methodology and its algorithm, including a complex psychological and pedagogical experiment and tracking the state and dynamics of socio-psychological climate in university teaching staff before and after the formative influence. The research was carried out during one semester at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The study involved 40 teachers; the sample was representative in terms of gender and other characteristics. The results of the study allow concluding that training is an effective method of improving the socio-psychological climate in university teaching staff under several significant conditions.

Key Words: psychological climate, teaching staff, methodological recommendations, pedagogical experiment.

Resumen

El artículo está dedicado a mejorar el clima psicológico en el profesorado universitario. El artículo ofrece un análisis teórico del fenómeno considerado, su conexión con el fenómeno de las comunicaciones y su elaboración en la investigación pedagógica y psicológica. El estudio destaca la importancia del clima socio-psicológico en el contexto de la efectividad de las actividades de los docentes y profesorado en general. El estudio tiene como objetivo examinar el problema de la mejora del clima psicológico en el profesorado universitario. Para lograr el objetivo de la investigación, los autores desarrollaron y llevaron a cabo un experimento destinado a examinar las formas de mejorar el clima psicológico en el profesorado universitario con la ayuda de la actividad formativa. Los autores seleccionaron la metodología de investigación y su algoritmo, incluyendo un experimento psicológico y pedagógico complejo y el seguimiento del estado y la dinámica del clima sociopsicológico en el profesorado universitario antes y después de la influencia formativa. La investigación se llevó a cabo durante un semestre en el Instituto de Lenguas Extranjeras de la Universidad de la Amistad de los Pueblos de Rusia. El estudio involucró a 40 profesores; la muestra fue representativa en términos de género y otras características. Los resultados del estudio permiten concluir que la formación es un método eficaz para mejorar el clima socio-psicológico en el profesorado universitario en varias condiciones significativas.

Palabras clave: clima psicológico, profesorado, recomendaciones metodológicas, experimento pedagógico.

Introducción

The social changes in Russia, which have occurred over the past 25 years, cause the need for a fundamental rethinking of the educational system to train specialists of a new type. To train specialists who can effectively act in the conditions of rapid development of modern society, it is necessary to change the educational process, in particular, the nature of the teachers-students interaction. This problem leads to two very significant phenomena: the psychological climate and the interaction in the teaching staff (Dolzhich, Dmitrichenkova, 2018; Blinova, Dugina, Zabolotskikh, 2018).

The above-mentioned phenomena are interconnected since they are interdependent. The interaction between teachers and with students and the socio-psychological climate also influence the interaction between the participants of the educational process (Kniga, 2011). This is because both phenomena are linked to the communication environment and both are its important elements and criteria of its current state.

Considering that the communication environment is a very important factor in the development of the educational process, the socio-psychological climate and interaction of the teaching staff with each other and with others are reduced to communication and its specifics. They are important for the state and development of the educational process and, therefore, for the quality of education (Shkerdina, 2018).

The psychological climate influences significantly the students' learning abilities and the development and formation of their personality, due to the essence of the psychological mechanisms of social adaptation. This implies the importance of this parameter for the educational environment and the effectiveness of the educational process (Bírová et al., 2018; Volkova, Panchenko, 2018).

Literature review

The psychological climate in pedagogy and psychology is understood as a quantitative representation of the nature and level of favourable relations in a certain group (Nezhkina, 2017).

The research by the following well-known Russian psychologists is devoted to the problems of psychological climate: A.A. Bodalev, A.G. Kovalev, Ya.L. Kolominskii, B.D. Parygin, K.K. Platonov and others. The main features of the team are considered in these studies (Gorev et al., 2018; Vasbieva et al., 2018; Sharonova, Trubnikova, Sokolova, 2018). V.V. Boiko, B.F. Lomov, R.S. Nemov, V.N. Panferov, A.V. Petrovskii, V.V. Shpalinskii and other scientists also focused on this problem. Such foreign psychologists as R. Cummins, O. Keller, D. King, R. Marriott, E. South, W. Schutz and others also studied the problem of socio-psychological climate (Krichevskii, Dubovskaya, 2012; Rodgers, 1978; Stevens, 2001; Sharonova et al., 2018). Despite numerous studies, the problem of psychological climate in the university requires further research.

Thus, there is a contradiction between the following:

- a high level of the elaboration of the problem of psychological climate in general, and an insufficient level of the elaboration of this issue concerning the university;
- the need to increase the level of a comfortable psychological climate and the complexity of this continuous process in a university environment.

The conducted theoretical analysis, in particular in the works by D. Rodgers, D. Stevens, L.Yu. Nezhkina, A.V. Makarov and others allow us to conclude that the socio-psychological climate is a part of the communication environment, which causes the need, first of all, for effective teacher's communications (Krichevskii, Dubovskaya, 2012; Makarov, 2007; Nezhkina, 2017; Shkerdina, 2018; Rodgers, 1978; Stevens, 2001). Specifying this idea, it is important to note that the effectiveness of communication depends on many factors. However, these are, first of all, the teacher's personality traits and the communication style, the role of which is influencing the psychological climate is dominant. This makes the cohesiveness of the team, as an indicator of the correspondence of the personal qualities of teachers and their communication models, one of the most significant indicators of psychological climate development (Makarov, 2007; Rodgers, 1978).

Another extremely significant element of the teacher's impact on the psychological climate in the team is the influence on the nature of relations between colleagues. This influence

is significant because interpersonal interaction is one of the most important components of psychological climate, and it largely determines the trends in its changes (Kniga, 2011; Nezhkina, 2017).

It is also worth mentioning that in the process of labour activity, communication between the members of the teaching staff is necessary to coordinate their activities; and the larger the team, the more contacts are needed to maintain the effectiveness of the activity. This fact makes the socio-psychological climate in university teaching staff one of the important conditions for the effectiveness of the professional activity.

Methods

The study was carried out at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The study involved 40 teachers; the sample was representative in terms of gender and other characteristics. The study is aimed at examination of the problem of improvement of psychological climate in university teaching staff. The following diagnostic techniques were used:

- Methodology for determining the index of group cohesiveness (developed by S.E. Seashore);
- Methodology for diagnosing the social and psychological climate in the group (developed by L.Yu. Shalyto and O.S. Mikhalyuk).

The research is carried out according to the algorithm typical for psychological and pedagogical research, presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

The experiment algorithm

Algorithm
1. Theoretical analysis of the problem
2. Ascertaining stage
3. Formative stage
4. Control stage

Results

Let us analyse the results of the study, considering the measures taken at the formative stage and the results of their implementation.

According to the results of the ascertaining stage, the majority of teachers consider the cohesiveness of the teaching staff to be average. At the same time, they consider the team to be friendly, but note, that not all team members are eager to communicate, some employees keep their distance and do not participate in joint activities. Therefore, the leader should pay attention to and help to develop a comfortable psychological climate in a team.

The formative stage of the experiment is aimed at creating the organizational and pedagogical conditions for managing the socio-psychological climate in the university.

The formative stage objectives:

1. To develop a long-term set of measures to manage the socio-psychological climate at the university.

2. To develop methodological recommendations for the management of the socio-psychological climate in the university.

Having analysed the socio-psychological climate at the university, we create a long-term set of measures to manage the socio-psychological climate at the university (Table 2).

Table 2.

A long-term set of measures to manage the socio-psychological climate in the university

Title	Aim
Diagnostics of the level of the socio-psychological climate in the university	To reveal the level of socio-psychological climate in the team
Consultation “Management of the socio-psychological climate in the university”	To reveal the features of the socio-psychological climate
Workshop “Socio-psychological climate in the team”	To improve the psychological competence of teachers
Training “Constellation of personalities”	To improve the cohesiveness of the teaching staff, to reduce communication barriers and psychological triggers
Training “I will always be there”	To make the teaching staff cohesive
Training “There is a solution”	To develop effective communication skills
Training “Side by side”	To reduce communication barriers and psychological triggers, to work with fears in communication
Training “Last meeting”	To reveal the teachers’ affections

We have developed the following methodological recommendations for the management of the socio-psychological climate in the university:

- to apply the principle of consent (to hold events aimed at identifying common interests, cooperating and solving problems that have appeared between team members);
- not to allow discrimination against people (to comply with the principles of tolerance; to distribute professional responsibilities equally between team members);

- to conduct joint events (to organize joint leisure activities and events, collective visits to theatres and concerts: to hold training, festivals, holidays; to encourage active informal communication of team members);

- to create conditions for work and rest (to equip classes with modern teaching devices; to provide teachers with leave at a convenient time for them);

- to improve the socio-psychological climate (to increase the self-esteem of teachers; to develop the ability to control emotions; to eliminate cases of psychological discomfort).

Thus, we carried out several activities at the formative stage following the presented long-term set of measures.

A control stage of the study was carried out to identify the effectiveness of the creation of the organizational and pedagogical conditions for managing the psychological climate.

The aim is to identify and compare the results of experimental work. The control stage objectives are:

- to re-examine teachers' psychological climate indicators;
- to identify the results of the creation of the organizational and pedagogical conditions for managing the socio-psychological climate in the university.

To determine the level of cohesiveness of the teaching staff, we used the methodology for determining the index of group cohesiveness developed by S.E. Seashore. Comparing the data obtained at the ascertaining stage with the data obtained at the control stage, it can be concluded that the creation of the organizational and pedagogical conditions for managing the psychological climate in the university helps to increase the level of the cohesiveness of the team.

For illustrative purposes, we present the data in the form of a diagram (Figure 1).

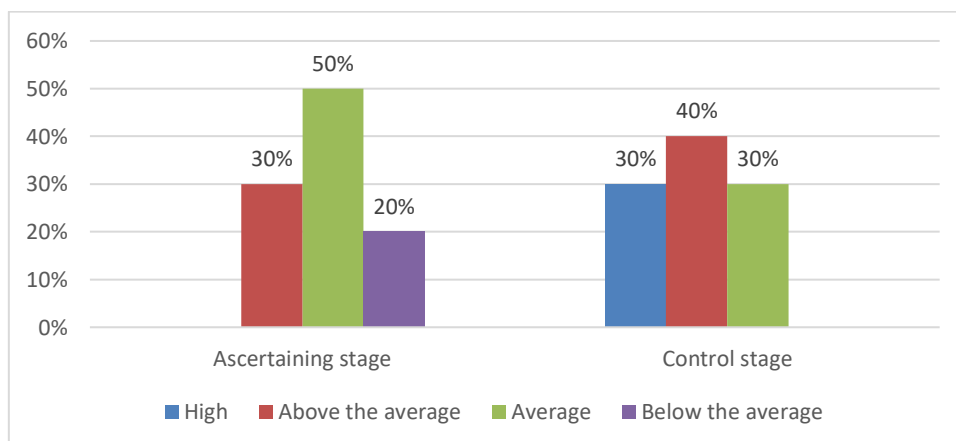


Figure 1. Comparison of the indexes of group cohesiveness at the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment

Discussion

The diagnostic results allow us to conclude that the teaching staff is quite cohesive. There are no negative triggers and fears during the interaction between teachers, and the atmosphere in the team is comfortable.

The re-examination of psychological climate in the teaching staff was carried out according to the methodology for diagnosing the social and psychological climate in the group developed by L.Yu. Shalyto and O.S. Mikhalyuk.

Comparing the data obtained at the ascertaining stage with the data obtained at the control stage, it can be concluded that the creation of the organizational and pedagogical conditions for managing the psychological climate in the university helps to increase the level of the comfortable psychological climate in the team.

For illustrative purposes, we present the data in the form of a diagram (Figure 2).

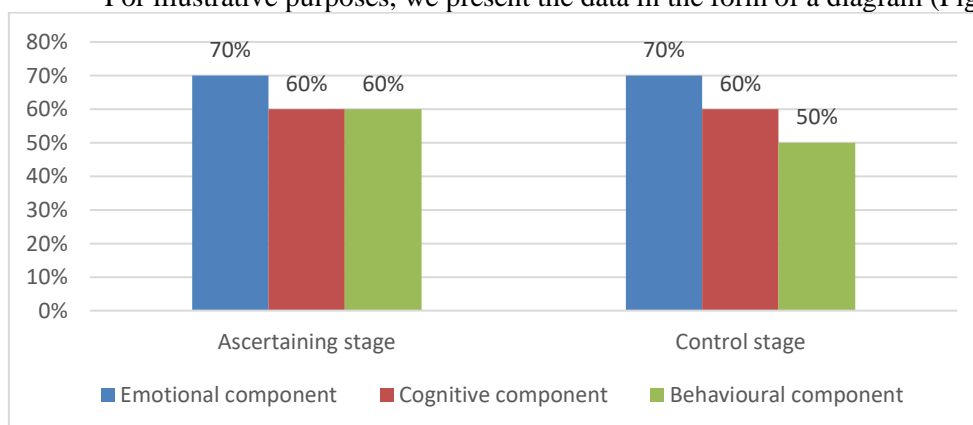


Figure 2. Comparison of the psychological climate in the groups at the ascertaining and control stages of the experiment

Analysis of the data allows us to conclude that due to the measures implemented at the control stage of the study, there are positive changes of each of the studied components of the psychological climate, especially the emotional one.

As a result of our work, we can state positive changes in the level of development of the psychological climate, which confirms the effectiveness of the implemented measures.

Conclusion

The problem of managing the psychological climate in a university is one of the most urgent in the system of higher education. It helps to increase the efficiency of management of an educational institution. This is because the communication between the members of the teaching staff in the process of labour activity is necessary to coordinate their activities; and the larger the team, the more contacts are needed to maintain the effectiveness of the activity.

The analysis of the scientific research allows us to conclude that both Russian and foreign researchers focus on the problem of managing the psychological climate in the university.

As a result of our work, we can state positive changes in the level of development of the psychological climate in a preschool educational organization, which confirms the effectiveness of the implemented measures for the creation of organizational and pedagogical conditions.

For further research, in our opinion, it is important to examine various structural components of psychological climate and the influence on them of certain aspects of managing activity and parameters of teachers' activity.

Conflict of interests: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution: The authors have participated in the research process, in the writing of the work and in the analysis of the documents.

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