THINKING DIFFERENT AS A METHOD TO EDUCATE STUDENTS IN HUMANITIES

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Abstract

The area of stereotypical thinking is researched quite well but it lacks literature on what social science students think about it and whether they have the same stereotypes. We are going to show the results of the questionnaire which concerns biases. The purpose of the investigation is to display that we almost think the same way that is why we come to false conclusions and consequently make wrong decisions. The result of our research will be useful for professors and teachers who specialize in training critical thinking and forming organizational culture of future specialists.

Key words: *stereotypes, way of thinking, students in humanities, organizational culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary education system is orientated on the development of person's skills and abilities in particular spheres. Before that education was only about gaining knowledge but now there is a shift to accruement of the self-contained accomplishments. It means that we have to start working with the students' consciousness instead of educating them to get enough knowledge, do assignments and read a lot. The classical methods of the education are broadly used in Russia and all over the world. By those methods, I mean lectures, seminars, laboratory works etc. In this case, a method is a tool that connects the teacher and the students in order to impact knowledge. A challenge nowadays is lack of success of those methods. We are surrounded by information and it is impossible to be aware of everything and learn it. In addition to this, not all of this information is verified. In this case, there is a high demand for new methods of the interaction that will be able to increase the level of professionalism of the future specialist in any field of studies. Especially, if we are talking about students in humanities it has to be mentioned that those ones are having close contacts with clients in various spheres. Communication is one of the most important parts of their work and in this case they have to be well-trained and prepared for different situations that they would meet at their workplace or during individual consultations, group works etc.

For instance, social workers as students in humanities are those who are responsible for social security and valid information for people who are in need. In Russia, there are social security departments in each city but the quality of their services is poor. Based on my internship in the social department of Oktabriskiy region in Samara I have found out one the following disadvantages. First of all is the lack of communication skills with elderly people – the specialists do not socialize with them respectively, provide full information that they need, control that they have received everything they have the right to have. It is not a surprise for the elderly lady that she has to go to another room and be in a line for two or three hours. Another problem is time management regulations in the departments which depend on the management of the organization that have to be able to arrange proper functioning of this department. All those things give evidence that there is something wrong with it. There is a general assumption that a person who has a degree should be able to solve organizational and communicative problems. Obviously, there are different reasons involved in this kind of problems and not only in social work. To find out what is amiss at the workplaces we need to know how people think. The habits they deem from the way they function, communicate with each other at the workplace, solve the problems, and consult the clients.

Another difficulty with caseworkers is the fact that their own personal values influence the working process and can affect the client's well-being. It does not matter what field it is psychology, sociology, social work or management. Donald A. Hantula (2015) describes that work environment is the manager's responsibility and doing no harm is not the only thing; the responsibility goes far beyond the workplace into the family and community. That means it is necessary to improve all management

levels. We assume the way people think. R. Dobelly (2014) shows us his version of thinking clearly which is based on the non-stereotypical thinking. His simple conclusion is that we do not know exactly how something should be but we may chance upon how should not be. The more models we know how we should not do – we get more chances to behave in the right way. There is no guarantee to be aware of all stereotypical behaviors and you can be caught by stereotypical machine anyway. However, trying to identify some of them and avoid in the future is not the bad choice. At that place, we come to the necessity to find out whether the students in humanities are influenced by stereotypical thinking. And if so, as the consequence to form the ability to think in a non-stereotypical way in order to make better decisions, educate the specialist with the high level of professionalism and on this base provide better social services for people.

2. THINKING DIFFERENT

Beginning with the education of thinking different is altering the methodological basis of pedagogical activity. New margin of pedagogical activity is to figure the way to work with student's consciousness. The main features of this methodology are the following. The first place is for the students' understanding. The fact of knowledge does not worth anything without personal understanding and belief. Therefore, critical thinking is significantly important. The second point deals with the scientific worldview according to V. Stepin (2003, p. 641-671). The scientific world view which was based on the classical science highlighted inviolability of the fundamental laws, but non-classical and post-classical worldviews bring in cross-functional evolutionism which supposes the appearance of unexpected crucial moments in the state of the world. The willingness to understand the state of the world is the ability to perceive the situation, in which the sudden event has its importance. New definitions and explanations to the common situations may appear in the situation of surprise. And this is where the stereotypes force us to reflect in a habitual way to the unusual situations or events. To overcome this, we need to be prepared for those changes in the world view. The question is the process people's preparation in general, as well as students to those changes. In this case, we have to find the inner sources that can help us to accept current society and the other people's opinion. The third methodically important feature of contemporary education is that the students become the active engine of the educational process instead of teachers. Conscious experience is gaining on the way to your personal goals. Eventually, the goal is the understanding of the human being and the things that surround us. This is not about theoretical skills that are taught widely at the universities but about individual practical experience that assists students to enter the situation.

The realization of new principles is not an easy thing for any professor because the accomplishment with the consciousness is the responsibility of the subject (the student). The professor cannot make the students work with their way of thinking without their desire. Let's discuss the example. The professor gives to the student a paper assignment and sets the deadline. The purpose of the students' is to write a report about the topic given without plagiarism and hand it in until the deadline. And now, imagine, that the professors' assignment changes your attitude to the way you think about your neighbors because they are different and also have right to have their own opinion. At this point we have difficulties: how the professor is going to check if the students have changed their attitude or not, how to set a deadline, what to do with those who did not do it at all and still think that his neighbors are the worst ones in the world. Why do we have all those difficulties? The answer is that it is not enough just to identify the path you have to think and the students will follow it. This process is more complex and functions only if students themselves accept this 'sudden event' – the possibility that they are doing something wrong even if they got used to it and all their surrounding believes that it is right. At this point, we face stereotypical way of thinking as a powerful machine. R. Dobelli reports this phenomenon in his book 'The art of thinking clearly' which is called the social proof. R. Dobelli states: 'If fifty million people say something foolish, it is still foolish' (Rolf Dobelli, 2013, p. 10). In the questionnaire, I have also asked whether the student's have explained something in their life by using common sense. It could be everything, but the answer to the question: 'How do you know about this?' had to be 'Oh… Everyone knows that. Don't you know that everyone tells this'? In this case this magic 'everyone' has not his defined personality; it is not even a group of students or anybody else.

That's just ‘every single one' who has the same opinion and you have not just known about it. When we hear explanations like this we should stop at the point and think about whether we are going to join ‘magic everyone group' or fix on our personal opinion and verify it by using more plausible reasoning. However, most of the time logical thinking is not an easy thing to do for us, especially if we are talking with a close friend or relative, the person we trust.

It is proved by many types of research that for our brains simple and emotional decision are the better choice instead of rational conscious process. D. Kahman (2013) in his book ‘Thinking fast and slow’ has a full explanation why our mind prefers thinking fast (emotionally) rather than slow (logically) (D. Kahneman, 2013). The same happens with drawing conclusions and making choices. Thus, the question is how to keep free from stereotypical thinking.

Professors themselves are helpless to change something completely and they are in the paradoxical situation. The formation of capability to operate with consciousness; the capability to use intellective power; the understanding of the situation is all about person’s efforts. The knowledge of our conscious mind is an individual peculiarity. The goal of the tutor is to create the student’s consciousness and make him willing to change it. However, it is impossible because the meaning cannot be transferred from the tutor to his student. The capability of understanding, the capability to revelation, and the conscious insight should be the aims of the pedagogical process. So the question is how to contribute to student's mind in the chance of the impossibility of performance.

The Russian philosopher V. Konev states that (2015) the ability of consciousness cannot be transmitted but it can be given in everyday performance. This ability can be learned only when it is demonstrated with one's own eyes. The capability to use intellective power is the revelation between the tutor and the students. It happens only in face-to-face contact. That is the reason of spreading of cultural customs and traditions that reflect the existence of the set of mind. Even if we live in the modern society full of innovational technologies, personal communication plays a very important role. Russian researchers L. Kurilenko and V. Medvedev (2012) described the dialogue communication between the student and the tutor as the essential point. In this case, the most important professional goal of the education at the university level is to form the active personality which can be described by its own singularity. In other words, it influences the formation of the personality of the future specialist. It is known that a dialogue is the tool to organize communication, cooperative search of the idea in the particular educational situation. The implementation of the dialogue-orientated educational situations into the process of education encourages the creation of the specific educational environment in which its subjects are able to come closer in the field of scientific and personal worldview. At this touch point begins the process of transition of one person’s viewpoint to another. If this occurs it results in the mutual enriching of the subjects through the dialogue-based communication. In this understanding of educational process, the personality does not only acquire the intellectual context from the tutor's world view but also keeps their individuality. This individuality is something unique in relation to the partner. If the educational process is organized properly it results in the formation of the individuality which obtains unique culture. This individuality transforms the features of the tutor into the being of the students that means that the goal of integration of views has been achieved. The professional training of the future specialists is the collision of different spheres. Especially, if we talk about students in humanities who find themselves in the intersection of disciplines all the time. They should have the ability to perceive other people opinion as well as be prepared for self-criticism and the risk of the responsibility for the future decision making. Exclusively, in this case, the process of training of the future specialists is going to be aimed at the development of the personal and professional skills. In such a manner, the dialogue based on educational process is innovational method to train students in humanities rather than traditional educational method (monolog).

Moreover, new technologies excuse tutors from information transfer and give the opportunity to have an open dialog with a student. Exclusively in this situation, the understanding begins to work. The conscious understanding takes place at the moment of penetration into the situation at hand. This situation has its own mystery which is called individuality of the situation. The person's individuality can open the situation's individuality only when the students have their own inner mystery. From here

we see the goal of the pedagogical act: if the tutor wants to make student's consciousness clear, he should not explain something in details; he should give some sort of mystery and surprise the students. Hence, the difference of the partner's of the educational process is significant and should exist to the very end. Secondly, the tutor has to be aware that the student is not going to copy his model or behavior exactly because he has his unique features from which his individuality consists of. The dialogue-based educational process is not the blurring of distinction but the emphasizing the unity of diversity in opinions. Thirdly, the joint idea is the idea of the evolvement according to which the tutor and the student are equal subjects of the educational process.

Nevertheless, the education process can be spoilt by many reasons, but we are going to concentrate on the specific ones. Basically, we are speaking of transfer of stereotypical thinking and ideas based on common sense. Here we come closer to the stereotypes, how they work in our life and transmit from one generation to another. Stereotypical thinking is the main subject of psychology as well as the counterfactual thinking which was discussed by N. Hoeck, N. Ma, L. Ampe, K. Baetens, M. Vanderckhove and F. Overwalle in 2013, although it is relevant to pedagogical studies to a great extent. If the student is learning from what they observe it means that the tutors have to be aware of the behavioral model that they present. Those models are able to provoke either negative or positive consequences in student's behavior. To clarify what I mean let's take my personal example which is a good example of how the behavior of a person who should be a model of behavior can transmit the stereotypical thinking. I have written an article and the professor had to give a reference because otherwise it cannot be published. Professor and I set up time for the consultation and I came on time but the professor asks me to wait for at least thirty minutes because she was busy. Then the professor screwed the consultation up, explaining that she did not have time for my useless paper and for going into details. After that, she gave the paper with the question marks and hand-written notices which can probably understand only the professor herself. Then I left the classroom. Analyzing the problems which were shown in the example we would like to highlight several problems that we found out in the process of communication. For instance, the time management principles are not used correctly. At that time, I supposed that probably all elderly professors like she is wicked. We all know this powerful stereotype about elderly people who should retire but they still want to think that they are useful and do not want to give the turn to the young generation at the workplaces. They are too conservative and far from up to day life. On the one hand, the professor has succeeded a lot in her life. She is a chair holder of the pedagogical chair with working experience over forty-five years. Furthermore, she obtains a Ph.D. degree. On the other hand, on my mind were the thoughts like this: "Is this really the same person? Is she able to teach students anything useful with this methodology nowadays?" At this point, we should stop. Here comes stereotype all elderly women at the workplace are crazy and have to stay at home, spending their free time doing other activities. Obviously, these are the negative circumstances of the situation.

It is sure that I was caught in stereotypical thinking and emotional state in another word I was "thinking fast". Only by analyzing and working with your consciousness you can find other reasonable explanations and implications. From which you can learn how you should not behave in the future when you become a professor yourself. This is the positive circumstance. However, such situations are tricky because they are not always about negative and positive. Most of the time in such situation we concentrate only on the negative side and everything depends on a student whether he is able to acknowledge the situation from different sides or just define his stereotype according to the situation performed and hold on the way into the future.

What can be the consequence? There are different was for the future circumstances but for all that there are two most clear options. The first option considers that the student is going to "forget" about it and every time when the same situation occurs it is going just to confirm his stereotype. In addition, to this, he is going to tell about it to his friend or partner and the one in his term will find something similar in his life. Then they are going to agree on the "rock-solid truth" which is "yes it works for all women like her in the same way". And there is another option to calm down and cogitate upon the situation whether it is common or not, what could be the reason for such behavior or simply take it into consideration as the example of how you should not do when you become a professor yourself

one day because it is going to be the result of negative consequence and provoke our mind which is full of stereotypes.

Geller (2015) in his article 'Seven life lessons from humanistic behaviorism: how to bring the best out of yourself and others' overlooks that the positive reinforcement is an important point. He states that the positive consequences increase the possibility of the changes in the behavior. Even if the changes are not visible he argues that they are still helpful. According to this life lesson we have to be conscious that every situation gives us something useful. To understand this student's minds have to be trained in some way: the more stereotypical situations which can result into visible negative consequences or opinions discussed during the class the less is possibility that they are going to behave automatically in a negative way in real life. Even though they don't alter their thinking completely it is still useful for them.

3. SOCIAL SPHERE AND ITS MAIN FEATURES

The reformation process of the modern social sphere today unfolds within the backdrop of several global trends, such as the popularization of universal higher education, innovative development of digital technology, media sources, and information exchange. In connection with the integration process changes in the system of modern higher education occur and the understanding of the concept of social sphere. It should be taken into consideration and the mechanisms of globalization, which directly affect the social sphere. The social sphere being one of the most extensive areas of society has its specific features.

Let us consider these features in details. Firstly, for a long time the scientific community has not paid sufficient attention to the social sphere as an element of society and concentrated more on the production, technological development, and economic efficiency. However nowadays social sphere becomes the active object of research of the social studies. Secondly, social sphere has strengthened its position in internal politics because of the logical substation of the investment into the development and education of the generations for the purpose of training high-level specialists. In this situation, a large role is played by social sphere which task is a forehanded response to the changes in society. The aim of those changes is the preservation and the development of social sphere.

The establishment of social sphere of society was a response to its development and the process of complication of its structures. Social sphere is a sphere of constant communication between people and satisfaction of each other's needs. At the time of the tribal society communication occurred within small groups of people. However, with the evolution of human society, the system, and its hierarchy have become more complicated. Moreover, the number of its members has increased. The functions that were previously performed by individuals or a small circle of people have been changed in some way. First of all, the social institutions have been established, which nowadays allow the extension of the circle of their clients. The logics leads to the fact that the social sphere is a modern adapted form of tribal relations.

V. Mironov (2005) noted an important feature of social sphere. The author states that the social sphere is a sphere of production and the reproduction of society. Here human reproduces himself as a biological, social, and spiritual being. In this sense, social sphere is opposed to the rest of the public spheres. This feature emphasizes the fundamental nature of the social sphere in terms of the existence of society. The logics of reasoning leads to the fact that other spheres are working to maintain the social sphere which in its turn, provides other spheres with new staff members and sets the way of development and supply them with consumers. The point which is important for us is education which is included into the social sphere. University education is responsible for the formation of the future professional staff members who are going to find themselves at different workplaces in particular in the social sphere. To achieve the goal, the education fulfills the range of functions which are similar to the functions of the social sphere.

The maintenance of the existence of society and its development imposes a wide range of functions on social services. A variety of public relations, social processes, and human activities is a consequence

of the diversity of functions within the social sphere. Researchers systematize these functions by combining them into groups. Hence, G. Osadchaya (2003) states the main features that are in charge of the functioning of the whole society. Among them is the function of social reproduction of humans, different groups of the population and their full life-support; the function of social integration which contributes to the achievement of the actions of people in the community and is orientated to the most efficient implementation of the potential of each person; the function of the social production - it makes possible to meet all people's needs by providing the population with goods and services; the function of social dynamic - contributes to the improvement of the level and quality of life; the function of the social safety - provides social guarantees and rights of the disabled and is expressed by the indicators of the social protection of the population. Thus, the functions of the social sphere are reproduction, preparation and preservation of new members of the society, as well as preserving social security and the minimization of social tensions. The conditions of the social sphere should be adjusted so that, when imposing some restrictions on some members of the society, the social sphere has to be ready to meet individual and group needs under any circumstances and find ways for self-realization and self-development. It should be noted that the specialists of the social sphere are the main providers of these functions, especially of the function of the social safety.

Analyzing all the previously listed functions of social sphere, we came to the conclusion that these functions can be also applied to the sphere of higher education. For example, the social adaptation function of higher education helps to meet the new requirements at the workplace in the modern society; the function of the social production is responsible for the satisfaction of the desire to have a profession; the function of the social dynamic provides the social guarantees and increases the social status of the person. The correlation of the functions of the social sphere and the sphere of higher education assists to consider a person on the one hand as a conscious subject of life and on the other hand as an object of control. That means that the students are the active subjects from the one side and also they are influenced by the tutors' educational methods and behavior on the other side.

Doubtless the tutors are supposed to be the example of behavior because it may be copied by future specialists. Especially if we are talking about those who train and educate the students in humanities because those in their term are going to be teachers, psychologists, social workers and so on. All these professions are involved in social sphere, one of the largest spheres in social society. The main feature of social sphere specialists is communicating directly with people in different ways. Their way of thinking and model of behaving rely on people's well-being, psychological state, social security, the quality of education etc. Is not it enough for the understanding why the pedagogical methodology and their behavioral models are considerable? Geller (2015) in his second life lesson describes the role of the observational learning. The author recommends readers to learn something they want to do from those who are able to do this well already. The simple idea of the observational learning was stated previously by A. Bandura in 1969.

4. CURRENT TASKS AND SPECIFIC PREDICTION

To explore the rate of stereotypical thinking among the students in humanities the participants had to fill up the questionnaire. The questioner has thirteen questions which were compiled with the help of the book 'The art of thinking clearly' by Rolf Dobelly. We have chosen various life situations that can provoke the stereotypical thinking and asked the participants to choose among several options. For instance, we asked the students to imagine the crash of the plane. Also, we said that they were going to fly the same airline and on the same model of an airplane in a few days. We offered three possible answers: to cancel the flight, to change the airline or just ignore the announcement.

Along with we make several predictions. First, we hypothesize that stereotypical thinking will prevail among the participants. Secondly, we expect that the level of the stereotypical thinking will be lower among the seniors rather than among freshman.

4.1. Objectives

The present research had two objectives. First, to investigate whether students have the stereotypical thinking in terms of thirteen decision-making situations; and, second, to determine what extent (if any) changes in stereotypical thinking differs across university year.

4.2. Participants

Participants from the present research were drawn from Samara State Aerospace University in Russia. The students were enrolled in a 4-year social work program. And some of them were enrolled in the master's program in social work as it is shown in table 1. All in all, 76 students were taken part in the research. All participants were native Russian speakers. We have chosen social work because they belong to the students in humanities and social work also demands person-centered therapy (Rogers, 1942); different styles of communication with clients and the high possibility of decision-making behavior as part of their job.

4.3. Procedure

The participants were asked to answer all the questions quickly without long hesitations. They were told that the results are needed for future research. The topic of research was not indicated. The participants were altered that the result is going to be presented at the conference.

5. RESULTS

The results of the research showed that there were not significant changes in thinking over years of education. That means that our second hypothesis was not correct. While the first one which was the dominance of the stereotype thinking in decision making was confirmed as it is shown in table 1.

Table 1. The results of the questioner on the stereotypical thinking

The university year	The number of students	Non-stereotypical thinking	Medium inclination to the stereotypical thinking	Stereotypical thinking
First (Bachelor degree)	18	0	7% (1 student)	93% (17 students)
Second (Bachelor degree)	13	0	30% (4 students)	70% (9 students)
Third (Bachelor degree)	20	0	15 % (3 students)	75% (17 students)
Fourth (Bachelor degree)	16	0	7% (1 student)	93% (15 students)
First (Master's degree)	9	0	0	100 % (9 students)

5.1. Contributions and limitations

The primary objective of the present research was to explore the stereotypical thinking of the students in humanities. To achieve this aim we imagined several situations which we asked the students to make decisions. Most of them were chosen the common way and performed "stereotypical thinking". The present research makes contributions to the field of higher education as well as to the process of

training of the future social workers. Also, it can be implemented to the changes in the educational program which goal is to form the organizational culture of the students in humanities.

However, the present research has several limitations. First, it only explores the students in social work. They all study at the same university. We may guess that psychology or law students will show other results. Secondly, the students are taught by the same teaching staff. If there are a variety of teachers probably there will be the variety of the student's opinions. Thirdly, for more accurate results it would be useful to double the number of examples. In these terms, we would have to take other department or add the social work students from another university. These limitations suggest the findings of the present research should be considered tentative, rather definitive.

6. CONCLUSION

Since then there are good reasons to believe that these results are meaningful, some particular implications can be proposed for the high education of the students in humanities. First of all, the importance to form the high level of the organizational culture should be mentioned. Moreover, university administrators and teachers could use this research and the questionnaire itself to show the students the alternative way of thinking, to provoke critical thinking in students at university level.

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