

THE CONSERVATION OF SOCIAL HEALTH OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN SCHOOLS

Veronike EFIMENKO

Abstract: *The problem of the formation and conservation of social health of pupils in secondary schools by means of Children's service of reconciliation is shown in this article. The Reconciliation Services in secondary schools include cooperation among administration, coordination, implementation of programmes and methodological work. This paper introduces the possibilities of such programmes, which allow to organize the constructive dialogue among the conflicting parties, facilitate social adaptation and eventually improve school climate. The experience of the work of Children's service of reconciliation about the settlement of school conflicts is also presented in the article.*

Keywords: *social health, secondary school, Children's service of reconciliation, school conflicts*

The tendency of pupils' health decline both in Russia and Kamchatsky region determined the necessity of implementation of health conservation technologies into the educational process of school as an important means of health conservation.

According to modern approaches to health that are fixed in the WHO's definition, health is treated as the state of full physical, mental and social welfare, but not only as the absence of diseases or physical defects.

The new conception of health reinforces the social component of health and implies sharing responsibility for health protection by the society, an individual and specialists in the medical, social and psychological, pedagogical spheres.

In accordance with the new conception, social health is viewed as social behaviour of an individual in the community, their social well-being, social comfort, social security, life activity level.

Social health is determined by the behaviour of an individual, their way of life and way of thinking. A socially healthy person has personality qualities allowing him or her to adjust to the conditions of modern life, to arrange self-education and self-accomplishment, to find the means of overcoming and solving various kinds of problems, to implement their life plans.

Social health is formed in optimal and appropriate social environment conditions

that impede the appearance of socially determined diseases, social deadadaptation and determine the state of social immune system and harmonic development of the personality in the social structure of the society.

As is seen from the work experience of some Russian schools, “Children’s service of reconciliation” (hereafter referred to as Reconciliation Service) can appear to become one of facilities for maintaining pupils’ social health.

We have already stated above that social health of a person is directly connected with successful adaptation of the child in the community, with the ability to find appropriate solutions for various kinds of problems, with social welfare of the child etc. It is worthy of note that school conflicts often interfere with successful adaptation of the child and the child’s social welfare. School appears to be not only educational process but the interaction of different people united within the scope of one space and participating in various kinds of activities. In the course of such interaction a number of conflict situations may occur.

A conflict is characterized by the confrontation of two positions and facilitates neither pupils’ nor teachers’ social health formation. Meanwhile, the school is very reluctant to give publicity to these situations, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, it is not always able to find effective ways of settling the conflict.

The following mechanisms of dealing with conflict and criminal situations in school are employed most frequently:

- an administrative decision is taken immediately in class, in the director’s office or at the pedagogic council. The main task of the administration is to find the guilty one and to punish them. Very often the injured party is accused of the provocation of the offender, after that a kind of “formal reconciliation” takes place when the pupils are compelled to shake hands and make peace;
- adolescent “bumps” (conflict appointments accompanied with fights) that take place outside school and about which teachers even do not know anything. The aim of such “bumps” is the demonstration of power and establishing the status within an adolescent group;
- the offender is sent to a psychologist, specialist in social pedagogics for reformation;
- the situation is dealt with by the parents of the offender and the injured party. The parents make telephone calls or arrange a meeting but strong negative emotions and preconceived opinions of the parties involved impede conflict settling;
- the conflict situation is transferred to a group of senior students in the framework of student government, but the method of their work practically duplicates the handling of the situation at the pedagogic council, since they do not know any other methods of conflict settling (A.Konovalov).

All the above enumerated methods impose a certain position upon the child instead of rendering responsibility for the handling of the situation, in this case we treat responsibility not as an adolescent’s obedient acceptance of punishment but as his or her dynamic actions aimed at “reparation” for the damage made and taking measures in order to prevent the similar cases from occurring.

If we consider conflict resolution with regard to the interests of all the parties

involved – the injured party, the offender, the community, – we shall face the following situation:

- the injured party feels pain, suffers and longs for dealing with the situation in some way (revenge, termination of contacts). For the injured party it is important to express himself or herself, to compensate the damage, to avoid recurring of the situation;
- the offender tries to justify himself or herself, sometimes regrets about the matter, but more often blames the injured party and expresses aggression. He or she wants to escape punishment, revelation, it is important to deal with the situation confidentially;
- the community expects the offender's regret, admittance of committing an offence, wants him or her to avoid such behaviour in the future.
- The parties will really be able to satisfy their needs if the participants of the conflict have a straight conversation in which both the injured party and the offender can speak about their emotions and complaints to each other as well as make a decision about the urgent settling the situation and the measures preventing it in the future.

But one should ask the following question: can the parties themselves hold such a conversation, being overcome with emotions and distrust? What can one do in order such an appointment does not turn into fight? This situation demands for a conciliator who could help in settling the long-term conflict and control the abidance by rules during the appointment. It is the function that the school Reconciliation Service could perform.

Reconciliation Service appears to be a voluntary union of volunteer children, the 7-11-formers the aim of which is the following:

- involvement of the schoolchildren into reconciliation activities;
- support of children's rights for initiative, active position in life;
- creation of conditions for developing the skills of holding constructive dialogue between pupils, pupils and teachers in partner interaction;
- preventive measures against delinquency and social rehabilitation of the underage youths taking part in the conflict and criminal situations.

Reconciliation Service functions in the interaction with the participants of the educational process:

- school administration supports the activity of Reconciliation Service, fosters the creation of a well-arranged mechanism of applying to the Service for handling conflict situations, enlarging the legal space of the school (drawing up reconciliation agreements on the settled conflict situation);
- interacting with the Service pedagogic collective supports children's initiative in reconciliation activity, facilitates the formation of partnership communication skills and constructive dialogue, demonstrates the example of tolerant relationships;
- organs of student government in the interaction with the Service develop the programme of reconstructive justice by means of the system of out-of-school activities with civil and legal orientation.

Such Reconciliation Services are created in secondary schools. The main activities of the Service are:

- arranging conversations, training, classes for volunteers among children in order to prepare them for the reconciliation activities;
- promotion of the idea of recreational justice;
- finding out conflicts, preparation and organization of reconciliation procedures;
- the organization of outreach activities among pupils, parents and teachers with the aim of forming tolerant beliefs in the school space
- accumulating the experience and its transfer.

Each member of the Service is vested rights and responsibilities. Members of the Service may include pupils of the 7th-11th form, who accept the idea of reconciliation and recreational justice. The members should be tested, should pass through preselection on the basis of their character features, which volunteers from Children's Reconciliation Service should have. Thus, for instance, the right and the duty of the Service member may be the following:

- to make suggestions on the issues connected with the Service's activity;
- to get information about the planned events;
- to participate in the implementation of the programmes and events conducted by the Service;
- to participate intensively in the Service's activity, to make one's own contribution into the work;
- not to spread information that could discredit the Service and its members;
- observe the rules of confidentiality;
- observe the rules of holding preliminary meetings and reconciliation procedures.

The work experience of Reconciliation Services in secondary schools (Moscow, Volgograd, Velikiy Novgorod, Petrozavodsk) shows that the Service's work is to be oriented to several directions: administration, coordination, implementation of programmes and methodological work.

The Service prepares adolescents as leading reconciliation programmes, works at creating an adolescent community around the Service – a support group. These are children who do not themselves implement the programmes, but accept the ideas of reconstructive justice. That is why discovering a conflict at school they are able to orientate themselves correctly and direct the parties to the reconciliation service. As a result the service will not exist “in vacuum”, but will always be aware of the situation. The enlargement of the “support group” is provided by the collective of associates, who exert a positive influence on the emotional and cultural background in the school. It is really important whether two school poles – administration and pupils – will have a site on which they will be able to work together at changing the relationships and improving the quality of life in the school. The Reconciliation Service provides an opportunity to express one's opinion without any fear and to hear the opponent's opinion. The creation of a constant site of such kind is one of the Service's objectives.

For the resolution of a wide range of conflicts the programme of reconciling the injured party and the offender (or conflicting parties) is applied. The given program-

me in the organizational plane presents a voluntary meeting of the wrongdoer (offender) and the injured party (victim). The meeting takes place in the presence of an efficient leader of the programme (children leaders), who organizes the constructive dialogue of the parties. The presence of parents, psychologists, social pedagogics specialists is admitted.

At the reconciliation meeting three main questions are discussed:

- 1) “What consequences does the criminal or conflict situation produce for the parties involved and what do the parties feel with regard to this situation?” As a rule, the consequences are destructive for both parties. And at the meeting they begin (often for the first time) to view each other as people, not enemies. So, if the parties admit that unfair and traumatic event has occurred, it seems logical to pass on to the next question.
- 2) “How can the given situation be resolved?” There are a number of solutions varying from apologizing to damage compensation in terms of money, finding an opportunity to earn money for the damage compensation, remedying the caused harm by the offender themselves and so on. We think that fairness occurs only when the parties themselves have found the solution that suits them both.
- 3) “What should be done in order such situation would never occur again?” The deeper causes and motives of the wrongdoer’s behaviour and the necessity to work with them as well as the necessity of consulting a psychologist or social pedagogics specialist are considered. To this effect a rehabilitation programme is developed.

The results of the programme implementation are fixed in the reconciliation agreement, if necessary, and may be presented at the sitting of the pedagogic council, the commission on juvenile affairs (CJA) and at the court trial during the process of decision-making.

Another programme – “Circles of care” – is used when there is such a dramatic degradation of social network that it is necessary to search for some substitution for the social ties in the community surrounding an adolescent.

The programme is implemented in case the family of a child does not perform their functions in regard to the child’s upbringing or in case of family disruption (for example, caused by alcoholism or drug addiction of the parents) when it becomes necessary to create a community of people who can support the child. It is necessary to find such people and discuss with them who is ready to share responsibility for the child and what kind of assistance they can render. Among these people may be relatives, teachers, neighbours, instructors of children clubs and so on. The question of responsibility is also discussed with the child himself or herself. The results of the meeting form the basis for a rehabilitation programme which can be presented to the commission on juvenile affairs, militia and other organs for arranging the complex process of rehabilitation. Psychologists, social pedagogics specialists and other professionals take part in the meetings (“circles”).

The third programme includes school conferences that support the work on overcoming conflict relationships in the school collective.

This programme of reconstructive justice is designed for normalization of group

relationships. School conferences can be used for reducing the level of aggressiveness in a group or for raising the status of an adolescent outsider. The programme is implemented by means of conducting a discussion in class concerning the current conflict situation and finding the way of its resolution by the class. As a rule, pupils themselves, school administration, teachers, parents take part in the programme. The programme allows to mobilize the group for solving the problem (basing upon the “reliable nucleus of the class”). In order to “balance” the parties during the discussion, it is possible to arrange the support for the outsider on the part of a psychologist, the child’s friends or relatives. The meeting can take place in a narrow circle of people who are interested in the resolution of the situation. A teacher who is not accepted by the pupils can also perform the role of the outsider at such a meeting. In this case we observe the formation of a site for organized dialogue between teachers and pupils, on which both parties get appropriate feedback and solve problems concerning the further interaction.

Thus the work of Reconciliation Services in secondary schools creates an opportunity to react to pupils’ antisocial actions that have not yet caused wrongdoing and law breaking. The Service’s work with adolescent aggressiveness and bullying that in the future may transform into wrongdoing appears urgent as well. The work of the Reconciliation Service is also effective for the relaxation of tension and normalization of mutual understanding in the collective.

Summing up all mentioned above, we can draw a conclusion, that the introduction of Reconciliation Services into the secondary school structure will allow to solve numerous problems that emerge in the school environment, to prevent deviant and delinquent behaviour of adolescents, to maintain the favourable psychological climate in the school collective and, finally, facilitate successful adaptation of pupils, their social health preservation and maintenance.

Literature

MANSHINA, N.A. *The system of school work on the protection of a child’s rights and lawful interests*. Volgograd: Uchitel, 2008, 205 p.

KONOVALOV, A. *School reconciliation service*. Social pedagogics, 2009, No 1., p. 56-65.

<http://www.sprc.ru>

OCHRANA SOCIÁLNÍHO ZDRAVÍ STUDENTŮ STŘEDNÍCH ŠKOL¹. ZKUŠENOSTI RUSKÝCH ŠKOL

Abstrakt: Tento příspěvek se soustřeďuje na problematiku formování a ochrany sociálního zdraví žáků středních škol za účasti institutu „dětské smírčí služby“. Smírčí služby na středních školách se věnují spolupráci s administrativou, koordinaci, implementaci programů a metodologické práci. V příspěvku jsou představeny možnosti tako-

¹ Pozn. překl.: termín střední školy používaný v příspěvku odpovídá v českém systému školství přibližně druhému stupni základních škol a nižším ročníkům víceletých gymnázií.

vých programů, které umožňují organizovat konstruktivní dialog mezi stranami sporu, usnadňují sociální adaptaci a případně zlepšují i školní klima. Dále jsou zde uvedeny zkušenosti z práce smírčích služeb pro děti v oblasti řešení školních konfliktů.

Klíčová slova: sociální zdraví, střední škola, dětská smírčí služba, konflikty ve škole