

УДК 159.922.7

Structure and Dynamics of Mental Health as a Developable Resource

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Received 4.11.2011, received in revised form 11.11.2011, accepted 23.11.2012

The presented Article discusses the problems of school students' health, the specificity of points of view at health problems in the context of education framework. It describes the structure and dynamics of mental health, the concepts of developing children's health during their education and using the resources of the education system; it analyzes the traditional approaches to health preservation. Health is regarded as both the purpose and the result of education, as a developable and a manageable resource.

Keywords: mental health, health resources development, education, point of view at health problems.

Within the past years the problem of school students' health became an urgent discussed topic in the periodicals. They discuss the reasons of poor health, caused by the children themselves or by the unsatisfactory work of the education system as a factor, which can considerably influence the students' loss of health resources. Various publications point out similar groups of reasons originated from the education system. Among them there are: mismatch between the studying conditions, pedagogical techniques, and physiological, somatic, psychological resources of the child's organism; the lack of education in the sphere of skills and knowledge of health issues, weak concentration on healthy lifestyle etc. The results of psychological, medical, pedagogical researches on such parameters as: eyesight, posture, nerves system parameters, emotional disorders and so on are quite disappointing.

Therefore, it is essential to stop this process and take some measures that would preserve the children's health and provide some disease prevention. This necessity leads to launching special programs for preventing eyesight and postural disorders, bodily diseases, for monitoring the dynamics of various characteristic of children's organism that can be in this or that way defined as health indicators.

Analyzing the focus on the health issues in education, it is possible to arrive at the conclusion that health is mostly regarded as a series of such physical indicators as good eyesight, posture, innards functioning, absence of bodily diseases, and that is the direction in which the adults apply their efforts; secondly, health becomes visible only in the context of its loss; health manifests itself as the opposite of disease, not as an acquired resource; third, despite the popularity of

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such psychology trend as psychosomatics, mental health issues are not included into the health preservation sphere of the education system, except for some certain pedagogical practices.

In the context of such approach, health looks as a resource that is once granted to a person and that requires protection from invasions of surrounding factors; correspondingly, environment is regarded as a factor that invades health resources in order to destruct them. This way health is presented as a subject of trade within a system of relations that remind of economic relations, where one resource is always the payment for another, which is more important at the certain moment of time. This way, the idea of payment for education and development of children with their health is conventionally accepted by the education subjects and the society as a whole.

Having analyzed the economic aspect of the problem, it is possible to say that obviously it is health that determines the functioning of a human as an economic subject, gives them such key economic features as the ability to perform physical and intellectual labour, the ability to learn, develop, produce other economic subjects. The essence of health as of an economic resource manifests itself in the interconnection with such economic category as labour (Moskvitina, 2009). Labour is performed by an individual, by a healthy individual. Health is more than a basis for labour; it preserves and increases its productiveness. High health level provides high capacity and efficiency of labour. According to Karl Marx, health acts as one of the most essential and important conditions of active, creative and full life of an individual in the society. Health is the main resource, which determines the satisfaction of almost all the requirements of an individual.

Looking at numerous researches of health conditions of adult people carried out in various regions of Russia, it is possible to state that our

contemporaries do not take health as a priority and are often ready to sacrifice it for the sake of acquiring some material goods or social benefits. Due to the less value of health in comparison with achievements in other spheres of life, the parents' claims towards their children and especially their academic achievements are growing, though sometimes these claims do not correspond to the age and individual opportunities of a child. Many adults do not regard health as a developable resource and do not consider it to be the target and the value of development, though they often declare it to be an important component of life. At best they speak of developing healthy lifestyle skills that include correct nutrition, absence of bad habits, quenching and other practices aimed at physical health parameters as a priority. In this case, education measures do not foresee development of the health of the whole system; they are aimed at the health of some certain organs.

This situation is in many ways connected to the absence of satisfactory idea of what the term "health" actually means. In the present time there are numerous definitions of the term, and their analysis shows the absence of an integral approach along with a specific point of view at the problem that originates from an expertise area (such as, medical, psychological, philosophical approaches). The criteria of defining health are disputable, therefore, the ways of preserving health depending on the age and professional activity conditions are not outlined correctly; neither are the ways of developing health resources on certain stages of life and within the framework of reaching some meaningful social results.

As a rule, defining the terms of health and disease, we are trying to operate the definitions and criteria that have already been fixed in the culture, or we turn to the established academese patterns, and this way we cannot avoid some certain social and cultural determination. No

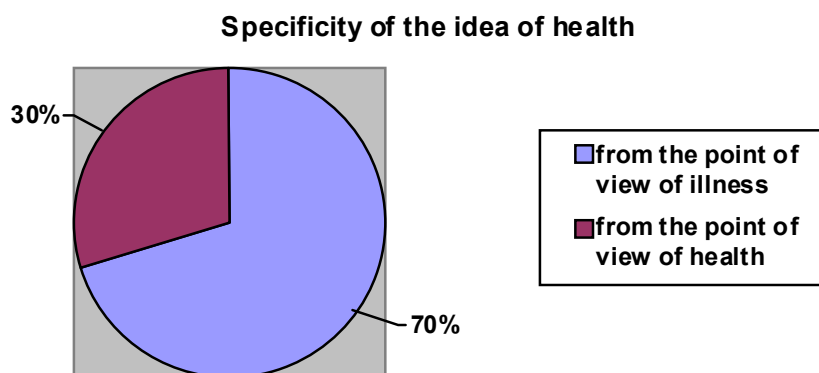


Fig. 1. Specificity of the adults' idea of health

matter how hard we try to reach impartiality in defining health, we still rely on some common regulations; for this reason the words “healthy” and “normal” are generally perceived as synonyms. For example, the explanatory dictionary presents the following definition: “Health is a normal state of a correctly functioning, undamaged organism” (Dictionary..., 1992). Such definition seems to be easily corresponding to common sense, as long as we possess the definitions of the terms “normal” and “correct”. However, defining these categories is not an easy matter, for they are connected to various notions established in different professional fields or cultural stereotypes.

The everyday stereotypes that presently prevail in Russia are generally described by proverbs and sayings used in the modern society, literally translated as “take care of your dress while it is new, and of your health while you are young”; “a sound mind in a sound body”; “the one who does not know illness, does not know health”; “one cannot appreciate health without illness”; “I am healthy as a bull, but I don’t know what to do” etc. (Dal, 2003). This information speaks of the idea of health as an alternative to illness, as a bodily characteristic and the major importance is granted to the bodily parameters, and health is not understood as a range of characteristics. Let us turn to the results of a survey on the idea of health

(the number of respondents is 300 people, the age varies from 27 to 60 years old, equal share of men and women, covering representatives of various professional groups) that vividly outlines the main points in the idea of health. The respondents were offered to complete the following phrases: “Health is...”, “When one is healthy, he is...”. The replies were classified according to the revealed ideas of health. In the end of the survey, two main ideas of health were found: from the point of view of illness, as an alternative to illness; and from the point of view of health components. The replies were divided into groups according to their frequency and their correspondence to different parameters of health.

This way, we see that in the majority of cases health is perceived as series of bodily characteristics; therefore, attitude to health is connected to maintaining some certain satisfactory state of the body.

Notion of health in its everyday understanding lacks the psychological aspect: a healthy person is imagined as a person without any defects, generally speaking, a person without any characteristics. Theoretically it is possible to find explanation of such understanding. For a long time the attention of researchers was concentrated on studying hazardous phenomena and abnormalities, deviations from healthy

1. **motor performance**
2. **absence of bad habits**
3. **healthy nutrition**
4. efficient rest
5. healthy sleep
6. spiritual harmony
7. emotional well-being
8. quenching and hygiene
9. health as illness prevention
10. ability to help others
11. positive thinking
12. self-actualization
13. sexual health
14. professional satisfaction

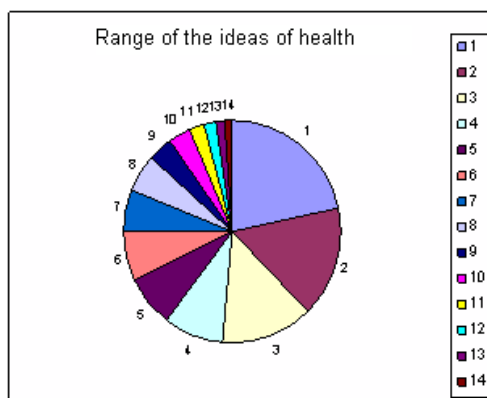


Fig. 2. Range of the adults' ideas of health

standards, as such standards are easier to identify by their difference from the “background”. It is proved by the existing and well-developed study of abnormality psychology. “Symptoms” are the behavioural features that go beyond the frameworks preferred or established by the society. Consequently, we have the rules and methods of social regulation, according to which people are divided into groups for placement into better conditions for observation, such as hospitals, prisons and other institutions. Moreover, there is an implicit conviction that only “normal” people have the right for personal inviolability and independent command of their life and fate. Though health cannot be limited to “being normal” which is understood as conformity to some historically established social regulations; besides, it makes no sense to define health as “the opposite” to illness, hoping that explanation of its main tendencies can simultaneously establish the limits of health in a more distinctive way.

To our mind, a healthy person is just as independent “diagnostic category” as any other kind of person. Moreover, the contraposition of health and illness is sometimes quite problematic. For example, P.G. Gannushkin wrote: “Since the times of Claude Bernard it has been established that there is no dramatic difference between

the phenomena of health and illness; there is an interconnection between the phenomena of both kinds. The same rules and powers are valid both for the norm and the pathology; the only difference is that in the conditions of pathology the harmony of interaction between the normal organism functions are broken” (Gannushkin, 1964). The same approach was observed by I.V. Davydovskiy: in his opinion, strict limitation and contraposition of the normal and the pathologic in physiology must be criticized. Any fact of pathology is to be regarded as a compensatory or assimilatory activity, as it is one of the kinds of adaptation activity of the organism (Davydovsky, 1969).

Recently, health has been regarded as a complicated and multi-dimensional phenomenon that combines components of various qualities. The World Health Organization offers the following definition of health: “Health is the state of total physical, mental and social well-being, not only absence of illness or disease”. The definition given by the Definition Dictionary of Psychology and Psychoanalysis” is similar: “Health is a comparatively stable state when a person is well adapted, maintains their interest to life and ability of self-actualization”. Health is presented not only as a biological characteristic of a human being; it contains social, psychological, and spiritual

components, which means that it pretends to a compound and an interdisciplinary approach in its understanding. The works by Petlenko V.I., Davidenko D.N. (Petlenko et al, 1998) outline the following components of health:

- Somatic: the current state of organs and organ systems of the human organism.
- Physical: the level of development and functional potentials of the organs and systems that provide the organism's assimilation to the influence of various factors.
- Mental: the state of the psychic sphere of a human being, the state of general emotional comfort that provides adequate regulation of behavior, normal development of the organism (according to the age and sex).
- Sexual: a complex of somatic, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of sexual being of an individual and their ability to love.
- Moral: a complex of the characteristics of motivational, consumer and informational bases of an individual's life activity, the system of values, directives and motives of an individual in the social environment.

At present the issue of studying a healthy personality is becoming especially urgent; it includes revealing the features that differentiate health from "being normal". Shoben claims that healthy people have strong feature of self-control, personal responsibility and moral ideals. From the point of view of Gerard, healthy people continuously widen their awareness of themselves, other people and the world around them, develop their competence in satisfying the basic necessities and in hazard response they work out realistic interpersonal relations that correspond to their social roles and personal demands. Descartes understood the health of soul as an ability to recognize the truth. Another well-known philosopher, Helvetius, considered

the distinctive feature of healthy mind to be the ability to compare the differences and similarities, conformities and non-conformities between things in the correct way (Strakhov, 1894).

Having analyzed the existing psychological development theories, it is possible to note out a certain point of view at mental health; concerning that almost in all the approaches health acts as a dynamic feature. The psychoanalysis theory does not describe the conception of a healthy personality; it studies any personality as a potential neurotic, but some of them are more likely to become neurotic than others. This "ideal or normal neurotic" is different from a "not normal" one in two ways: balance and sublimation. A normal person's structural subsystems are better balanced. The general energy of the organism is distributed between the three subsystems in such a way that each of them receives the amount needed for development. As a result, ego possesses the enough amount of energy for adequate perception of reality and adjustment for superego, simultaneously finding the resources for satisfying the ids. Neurotics and normal people differ in their protective tactics. Literally speaking, sublimation means de-energization of the ego instincts; it gets over their energy and spares it for its own purposes. In this case, ego turns to forming up the desired (civilized) behaviour. From social point of view, sublimation is a "successful" protection tactics, as it avoids conflicts and anxiousness and it helps implementing the things that are required by the socialization process. It is evident that a normal person can be regarded as just somebody whose ego contains more sublimed energy and so he possesses more socially approved behaviour patterns.

Frankl connects the development progress with self-determination that depends only on acquiring more control over one's life. There are no life situations that do not offer choice between alternatives, no matter how hopeless it looks.

Alternatives determination is the first step on the way to freedom. Making choice between them is the next step. The further the choice process goes in the series of subsequent steps, the faster the potential movement to freedom is. There is no person who can reach absolute freedom; however, anyone can become more free (Frankl, 1990).

Humanistic theory generally underlines, that during lifetime its qualities continuously change. K. Rogers came up with a dynamic model of a “fully functioning person”. Rogers observes health in the aspect of personal development or growth, as an attribute of a freely developing personality, open to experience of different kinds. K. Rogers offers the term of congruence as an ability of a person to act and react sincerely, expressing feelings and motives in an open way: “A fully functioning person is always in the process of universal self-actualization; they are always able to react to the life situations freely and freely experience their own reactions to it, which enables them to live true, really good life” (Rogers, 1994). A similar motive can be found in works by A. Maslow. The main health criterion by A. Maslow is “full actualization of one’s opportunities” or “self-actualization”. Self-actualizing people reach harmonic and well-functioning hierarchy of motives that contains no conflicts the motives of higher levels are not blocked by the requirements of the lower ones. In his works, A. Maslow offers a list of characteristics of self-actualizing people, which would help to imagine a portrait of a healthy personality.

E. Eriksson studied subsequent periods on the life cycle as a sequence of conflicts existential in their gist. Living through one of their phase can influence the next phase experience. If one of the conflicts fails to be successfully solved, one turns out to be unable to get over the next ones. According to the theory by E. Eriksson, the logics of personal development leads a person to the choice between maturity, health and regress; between

personal grown, self-determination and illness or neurosis. E. Eriksson claimed that as one accepts the challenge of a next psychosocial crisis, they get the chance of personal growth and widening of their opportunities (Eriksson, 1996). The theory by E. Eriksson foresees some internal connection between personal growth and health.

E. Fromm supposed that full satisfaction of specific human needs and individual solution of fundamental qualities of human existence is just as important requirement of healthy life as assimilation to the social environment. E. Fromm claimed the necessity of self-determination and choice of such fundamental life orientations as “destructivity or creativity, subtraction or integrity of perception, narcissism or feeling of fraternal solidarity and love, conformism or unique and creation” (Fromm, 1990). For this reason mental health is regarded as a progressive integration of fundamental feelings into a wider system. A healthy person on a certain stage of life has already solved the existential conflicts of the previous stages, and, therefore, they are able to constructively solve the fundamental problems of the current stage.

C. Jung also considered the problem of progressive integration in personal development. According to Jung, the unconscious includes two spheres: personal and collective unconscious. The purpose of human development is liberation of the opportunities of the collective unconscious and their assimilation in the “self”, a certain mystic centre of the personality. The theory of C. Jung describes “self” as the embodiment of maximum wholeness and perfection one can ever achieve. Progress is the process of individualization, that makes one understand the difference between the conscious and the unconscious and to recognize both their own individuality and belonging to the humankind. The transfer of these discoveries into the conscious opens us all the conflicting controversies of the human being. Such analysis

leads to the point of view at healthy personality as a progressive movement on the way of acquirement of personal experience and its concordance with the universal human experience.

This way, the mentioned theories contain direct address to the issue of actual structural and dynamic qualities of healthy personality. Concerning the first one, we can rely on the structures integration principle; in the relation to the second one, we can base on the progression principle in the development of dynamic systems. Both principles are visible in the conceptions by A. Adler and C.G. Jung, and in the works of the representatives of humanistic psychology trends. Such impulses were named differently by different psychologists: strive for perfection (Adler), wholeness and individuality (Jung), self-actualization (Rogers, Maslow); considering that the self-actualization idea itself foresees the sources of the progressive development to be found inside the person. The most important life tendency is revealing and implementing these abilities.

The model of a healthy personality built within the framework of cultural and historical conception of development by L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leontyev, S.L. Rubinstein determines the position of the integrity and wholeness of psyche, it set the dynamics of personal development at a certain age, and subsequent acquirement of various features of mental health. Mental health is regarded as something that refers not to separate psychic processes and mechanisms, but to the personality as a whole. Social situation is positioned as a unit of analysis of child's development dynamics, which is a series of rules that regulate the occurrence and structure modifications of a child's personality on every age stage, determines child's lifestyle which later models the personality features and psychic neoplasms. Social situation of development is regarded as the relation between the child and the surrounding environment, specific for the current

age: expectations and requirements of the society; the specificity of the child's understanding of their social position and relationships with the people around them (within acceptance-rejection scale). The social situation sets specific tasks for every subject on every age stage; solution of these tasks is the psychic development of the current age.

This way, mental health is the integral characteristic of the completion of the psychic functioning of a person. Understanding the mechanisms of mental health development is inextricably connected to the general ideas of personality and its mechanisms of development. Mental health is understood as maturity of the personality, integrity and activeness of personal self-regulation, responsibility, ability to realize the natural potential of the human mission. It means that building up the psychological model of a healthy personality should contain such characteristics as holism, dynamics and development structure. Health does not exist on its own; it manifests itself in complicated connections for reaching social productiveness. Coming to conclusion, we could say that health cannot be limited to "being normal" that is understood only as simple conformity to historically established social norms. It is also wrong to define health as alternative to illness, hoping that revealing the common tendencies of illness may help defining criteria and limits of healthy existence. Health is independent and contradictive; it cannot look just as a set of physical features once granted to a human being. Setting the research of mental health dynamics as a purpose enables us to turn to an integral approach to studying human psyche instead of studying separate components of the psyche without understanding the interconnection between all the levels and systems of the human organism. Mental health is an issue of structure and dynamics of the personality in the same way as neurosis or any other way of development. From the point of view of structure, a healthy

personality can also be regarded more like a process of continuous changes rather than a stable fixed system. As a general principle, personal structures strive for acquiring harmony, which would unite the impulsive, regulatory, definitive and stylistic functions into the whole. Despite of their social or ethnic origin, people who live in the modern society need to have a series of certain psychological traits that provide successful functioning within the society. These traits are usually formed on the way of step-by-step movement along various stages of development. There is a set of tasks typical for each of the stages that one has to solve, and a set of traits that one has to acquire to prepare for the next stage. This way, the assessment of mental health of an individual has to correspond to their stage of development along with their genetic heritage and cultural background.

Education possesses enough resources for building up a model of children's mental health development. Speaking of physical features of health, all these characteristics go through a sensitive period of development that occurs in the pre-school period of the child's life, for example, the functioning of the visual analyzer: by the beginning of school the child possesses stable

eyesight characteristics. Under advantageous education conditions, eyesight preserves its stability; if the conditions are worse (bad lighting, high strain on the eyesight, small fonts etc.), the eyesight decreases. Such characteristics should be understood and health preservation policy should be appropriate, however, not all parameters of health are formed in the pre-school age, including physical ones; many of them continue forming as the child is growing up. Examples of such parameters are stress sustainability, intellectual stamina, self-control, admission of indefiniteness, responsibility and other.

Aiming at developing health resources foresees creation conditions of such functioning of a child within the education environment that would aid acquiring such resources and reinforcing them, and, therefore, forming healthy personality. This approach does not contradict the ideas of education in the sphere of health and forming health values of the students, along with the idea of preservation of certain resources of health reached by the current age; but it determined orientation on forming a healthy personality, and establishes new vision of health as a developable and a manageable resource.

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Структура и динамика психического здоровья как развиваемого ресурса

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В данной статье обсуждаются проблемы здоровья школьников, характер фокусировок вокруг тематики здоровья в образовании. Представлена структура и динамика психического здоровья, концепция развития здоровья детей в образовании, анализируются традиционные подходы, ориентированные на здоровьесбережение. Здоровье обсуждается как цель и результат образования, как развиваемый и управляемый ресурс развития.

Ключевые слова: психическое здоровье, развитие ресурсов здоровья, здоровье школьников, образование, представления о здоровье.
