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VALUE - BASED EDUCATION AND INTERVENTIONS: IMPORTANCE TO SOCIETY

Abstract

Modern societies are facing a lot of challenges related to youth education and development. The idea that young people need high self-esteem in order to be psychologically healthy is responsible for the creation of 'generation me', so named because of the consistent rise in narcissism levels. People with high self-esteem are also just as aggressive and engage in antisocial behavior like cheating, as often as people with low self-esteem do. Therefore, value – based education is one of the essential concerns of modern society, because it could create a learning environment that opens up possibilities for students to develop their emotional intelligence and acknowledge the values in their lives. Research indicates that value – based education could bring desirable consequences for a society. For example, intervention programs enhancing compassion and self-compassion result in psychological well-being, emotional intelligence and wisdom. The paper analyses how the value- based education and interventions could help create more compassionate and cohesive modern society.

Key words: formation on the basis of values and interventions, a society.

Аңдатпа

Қазіргі қоғам жастардың қалыптасуы және дамуымен байланысты көптеген мәселелермен кездеседі. Оның мәні, жастар өздерін жоғары бағалауды қажет ететіндікпен, психологиялық тұрғыдан сау болуынан, «өз ұрпағын» құруға жауаптылығынан, нарциссизм деңгейінің кезекті өсуі тұрғысынан ашылады. Өзін жоғары бағалайтын адамдар да агрессивті, өздерін төмен бағалайтын адамдар тәрізді алдану сипатындағы қоғамға қайшы әрекеттерді қолдаушылар тарапынан табылып жатады. Сондықтан да құндылықтар негізінде қалыптасу қазіргі қоғамның басты мақсаты болып табылады, себебі ол студенттер үшін мүмкіндіктерді беретін, олардың эмоционалдық интеллектін дамыту және өмір құндылығына енгізумен байланысты білім алу аясын құруға жағдай жасайды. Зерттеу жұмысы, құндылықтар негізінде қалыптасу қоғам үшін жағымды алғышарттарға алып келетіндігін көрсетіп отыр.

Тірек сөздер: құндылықтар негізінде қалыптасу және араласу, қоғам.

Аннотация

Современное общество сталкивается с множеством проблем, связанных с образованием и развитием молодежи. Идея, что молодые люди нуждаются в высокой самооценке, чтобы быть психологически здоровыми, отвечает за создание «поколения себя», названного так из-за последовательного роста уровней нарциссизма. Люди с высокой самооценкой также агрессивны и становятся сторонниками такого антиобщественного поведения как обман также часто, как и люди с низкой самооценкой. Таким образом, образование на основе ценностей является одной из основных забот современного общества, потому что оно может создать среду обучения, которая открывает возможности для студентов, чтобы развивать свой эмоциональный интеллект и привносить ценности в их жизни. Исследования показывают, что образование на основе ценностей может принести желательные последствия для общества. Например, программы вмешательства, повышающие сострадание и сострадание к себе, имеют результатом психологическое благополучие, эмоциональный интеллект и мудрость. В статье анализируется, каким образом образование на основе ценностей и вмешательств может помочь в создании более сострадательного и сплоченного современного общества.

Ключевые слова: образование на основе ценностей и вмешательств, общество

As a member of European Union since May 2004, Lithuania is witnessing emerging processes of globalization, technological development, and reevaluation of public development potential. Modern Lithuanian society is facing a lot of challenges that are present in other Western societies. One of these dilemmas is related to youth education, learning and personal development. For example, the idea that people need high self-esteem in order to be psychologically healthy is a truism in Western developmental sciences. Teachers are told that one of their most important tasks is to nurture children's self-esteem so that each could feel proud and special. Obviously, high self-esteem is associated with less depression and anxiety, as well as with greater happiness and life satisfaction. However, high self-esteem is also strongly correlated with narcissism. Twenge (2006) argued that the emphasis placed on self-esteem in Western schools and culture at large is responsible for the creation of «generation me», so named because of the steady and consistent rise in narcissism levels. Moreover, self-esteem is also associated with the need to feel superior to others just to feel okay about oneself, and research shows that most people think they are funnier, more logical, more popular, better looking, nicer, more trustworthy, wiser and more intelligent than others (Alicke & Govorun, 2005). To be average is unacceptable in Western society, and this tendency creates interpersonal distance and separation that undermines connectedness. Even more, self-esteem does not appear to improve academic or job performance, to improve leadership skills or to prevent children from smoking, drinking, taking drugs and engaging in early sex. Bullies are as likely to have high self-esteem as others, and in fact, hassling other people and putting them down is one way that bullies feel good about themselves (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). People with high self-esteem are also just as aggressive and engage in antisocial behavior like cheating, as often as people with low self-esteem do. Therefore, value – based education is one of the essential concerns of modern society. It creates a learning environment that opens up possibilities for students to acknowledge the values in their lives. Values and spirituality are inherent issues of education regardless of the subjects taught, age groups, personality, interests, or abilities of their students, and it can be learned by anyone who teaches, as suggested by Hooks (1994). The interconnectedness of spirituality and education is widely discussed in the field of education from a philosophical point of view in terms of spiritual curriculum (Llewellyn, 1998; Miller, 2000), spiritual intelligence (Sinetar, 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) and literacy (Wright, 2000), spiritual teaching (Kessler, 2000), nurture and awakening (Nakagawa, 2000), education from early childhood (Hart, 2003), and adult education (English et al., 2003; Tisdell, 2003; Zinn, 1997). However, spirituality in education requires a new paradigm of thinking or a new style of consciousness, it is necessary to evaluate the current understanding and process of education in general, as claimed by Tacey (2004). This understanding of spirituality implies an evolving process that acknowledges the human quest for meaning, self-actualization, and application of ultimate values to daily life.

Research indicates that value – based education could bring desirable psychological consequences for a society. For example, compassion and self-compassion are strongly associated with psychological well-being, emotional intelligence and wisdom (Neff, 2009), higher levels of self-compassion are linked to increased feelings of happiness, optimism, curiosity and connectedness, as well as decreased anxiety, depression, rumination and fear of failure. Moreover, value- based education could have positive impacts on character strengths. Perseverance, love, gratitude, and hope predicted academic achievement in middle school students and college students (Park & Peterson, 2009a). Those character strengths that predict GPA in college students are perseverance, love of learning, humor, fairness, and kindness (Lounsbury et al., 2009). Higher hope levels are related to greater scholastic and social competence and to creativity levels (Onwuegbuzie, 1999). Effective teachers (judged by the gains of their students on standardized tests) are those who are high in social intelligence, zest, and humor in a longitudinal study (Park & Peterson, 2009a). Grateful individuals report higher positive mood, optimism, life satisfaction, vitality, religiousness and spirituality, and less depression and envy than less grateful individuals. Grateful people also tend to be more helpful, supportive, forgiving, empathic, and agreeable (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). The focus on cultivating love toward oneself and/or others was found to increase feelings of social connection and positivity toward others (Hutcherson et al., 2008), as well as positive emotions, sense of purpose, and mindfulness in general (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

Researchers have been interested in interventions incorporating mindfulness training over the past three decades, and popularity of programs increase rapidly in the world. The concept of mindfulness is translation of Buddhist word «sati», and it means «intentness of mind», «wakefulness of mind»,

«lucidity of mind» (Davids, Stede, 1995, from Glomb ir kt., 2011). Mindfulness is a state of mind and it brings attention to the present experience on a moment to moment (Farb, Anderson, Segal, 2012). It involves observation of constantly changing internal and external stimuli as they arise (Baer, 2003). Interventions of mindfulness include Eastern meditation, however, concept of mindfulness has no religious connotation (Hagen, 2003, from Glomb ir kt., 2011). Mindfulness meditation encourage people carefully explore the internal and external experiences occurring in each moment, such as bodily sensations, thoughts, emotions, sights and sounds (Baer, 2003). Neff (2003) suggests that mindfulness involves turning toward ones painful thoughts and emotions and seeing them as they are, without suppression or avoidance.

Competition between people is increases in the western world. People do not feel safe: they are afraid to lose their jobs, feel stress and anxiety, feel pressure of society to look and behave perfectly and flawlessly, self-worth reduces, and sense of worthlessness, anger, cynicism and hostility increase. When people experience failures (including those are beyond their control, such as job loss, severe disease) they are not merciful to their selves and condemn their selves, also they tend to use phrases, that disparage their selves. It is an actual problem in Western society. One way of help is to involve people into value – based education and mindfulness programs that increase subjective well-being.

The pioneer of mindfulness research is Jon Kabat-Zinn. He worked in medical school and created Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) for people with chronic pain and stress-related disorders (Bar, 2003). The best known exercise is the body scan, when people observe carefully sensations, emotions and thoughts with eyes closed without judgment, elaboration or attempts to control them. An important consequence of mindfulness practice is the realization that most sensations, thoughts, and emotions fluctuate or are transient, passing, by «like waves in the sea» (Linehan, 1993 p. 87, from Baer, 2003). MBSR practice is involved into others mindfulness programs, one of them is Germer's, Neff's (2013) mindful Self-compassion training program (MSC).

Research suggests that mindfulness may foster changes in cortico-limbic circuits responsible for stress and emotion regulation (Adrienne, Creswell, Gianaros, 2013). That may explain why mindful individuals reduce stress reactivity. Baer, Carmody, Hunsinger (2012) found that significant increases in mindfulness after 2 weeks, whereas improvements in perceived stress did not occur, but stress significant reduced in the end of the program.

The other research showed that participants from MBSR program increased mindfulness, self-compassion and reduced fear, suppression of anger, aggressive anger expression, worry and difficulties regulating emotions (Robins et al., 2012). In patients with affective disorders limiting cognitive elaboration in favor of momentary awareness increase self-evaluation, tolerance for negative affect and pain and help to engender self-compassion and empathy (Farb, Anderson, Segal, 2012). Higher levels of mindfulness were associated with fewer stress-related symptoms and less mood disturbance in woman with breast cancer (Tamagawa et al., 2013). Men with HIV after MBSR program improved positive affect and psychosocial functioning; and reduced avoidance and depression (Gayner et al., 2012). Positive result of the program was found also after 6 months. MBSR intervention program is also affective to treat people with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Kearney et al., 2012). It was found that significant reduced symptoms of depression and PTSD; and increased acceptance, behavioral activation and mindfulness after 6 months. Mindfulness program is effective for adolescents with attention and behavior disorders (ADHD) (Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012). It was found decrease in behavior and attention problems and improvement in executive functioning in adolescents after 8 weeks. It was suggest that adolescents with ADHD should practice MBSR meditations constantly, because it is useful to maintain achieved effect (Weijer-Bergsma et al., 2012).

Researcher described effect of mindfulness for healthy mother-infant relationship and safe attachment of baby (Snyder, Shapiro, Treleaven, 2012). Transition to parenthood is stresfull and mindfulness meditations reduce mother's stress and anxiety and improve emotion regulation. Other researcher involved pregnant women in mindfulness program and they found decrease in stress, anxiety and depression; these improvements continuing into the postnatal period (Dunn et al., 2012).

Germer, Neff (2013) summarized researches of self-compassion and they found that greater self-compassion is linked to less psychopathology and greater subjective well-being. Authors described that people with greater self-compassion have kindness for their selves and for others; they tend to collaborate rather than compete; they learn from they own mistakes without condemn and criticism

for their selves; they have better sense of self-worth; they understand better their strengths and weaknesses. Mindful self-compassion (MSC) differ from others mindfulness programs, in this program people are educated not only skills of mindfulness but also they are learned to behave gently and be compassion to their selves. So after this program increase self-compassion and subjective well-being more than after others mindfulness programs (Germer, Neff, 2013).

However, the above listed surveys were conducted in the USA and Western European countries, but there were no data on importance of value – based education in the Baltic States. Therefore, we conducted a study in 2012 – 2013 to identify factors related to constructive thinking and positive traits of students.

Methodology

This study used a test design utilizing a heterogeneous random sample of 100 adolescents from Lithuanian schools, mostly from Vilnius region. Participants were personally asked to participate in the study. The subjects of the study were 32 boys and 68 girls. Adolescents' age ranges from 15 to 18 years. The measures used in this study included: Constructive thinking inventory (CTI) (Epstein, 1993), Gratitude Questionnaire-six Item Form (GQ-6) (M. E. McCullough, R. A. Emmons, J. Tsang, 2001), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) (L. Y. Tompson, C. R. Snyder, L. Hoffman, 2005). Each questionnaire demonstrated acceptable reliability in this study: for example, Constructive thinking inventory Cronbach $\alpha = 0,850$.

Results

The study clearly demonstrated relationship between students' thinking qualities and personality qualities. As it is shown in Table 1, ability to forgive is positively significantly related to constructive thinking ($r=0.372$; $p=0.035$) and negatively related to categorical thinking ($r=-0.207$; $p=0.040$).

Table 1. Relationship between students' ability to forgive and constructive / categorical thinking (Pearson correlation, $n=100$)

		Constructive	Categorical
Ability to forgive	r	0,372*	-0,207*
	p	0,035	0,040

The study has also demonstrated strong relationship between students' ability to be grateful and constructive thinking. As it is shown in Table 2, the relationship is statistically significant ($r=0.490$; $p=0.000$).

Table 2. Relationship between students' ability to be grateful and constructive thinking (Pearson correlation, $n=100$)

		Ability to be grateful
Constructive thinking	r	0,490 **
	P	0,000

To sum up, constructive thinking of Lithuanian students is statistically significantly related to their positive personality qualities, including ability to forgive and ability to be grateful.

Conclusions

This Lithuanian research complements the previous studies done in various countries. It showed that there is relationship between students' thinking qualities and personality qualities, ability to forgive (which is strongly related to compassion) is positively significantly related to constructive thinking and negatively related to categorical thinking. Moreover, it showed that there is a strong relationship between students' ability to be grateful and constructive thinking. Therefore, as it was discussed above, value – based education and interventions could help create more compassionate and cohesive modern society.

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