
INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MODERN BULGARIAN EDUCATION

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Abstract: What could the individual psychology give to the education is presented in the article. Good Bulgarian practices connected with the ideas and democratic principles of Individual psychology are discussed. Some difficulties and challenges in the implementation of Adlerian educational paradigm are described.

Individual psychology could give the education system a holistic approach, which includes methods of encouragement, positive thinking, a way of conceptualizing the four common goals of misbehavior, and psychological and pedagogical concepts for the development of democratic schools by using the main principles and methods of Individual psychology. Individual Psychology was formulated by Alfred Adler with a view toward development of a democratic society. It includes fundamental principles on which teachers should operate to develop a democratic society. In Individual Psychology, a person is a social being whose main desire is to belong. A man does not see reality as it is, but only as he perceives it. All behavior is seen as purposive and based on decisions made by the individual. A person is a whole being who cannot be understood by some partial characteristics. Individual Psychology provides ground rules for a democratic classroom. It understands the necessity of order and limits while involving the children establishing and maintaining rules. Individual Psychology understands that the group needs leadership and also understands that a class cannot function democratically without trust and faith. A spirit of cooperation has to replace competitiveness in the classroom. The model requires a skilled teacher, trained in the principles and practices of democratic education and group leadership, to integrate the class for a common purpose. Group discussion is essential. Four basic skills are needed in a democratic school and democratic society: responsibility, cooperation, self-esteem and confidence in your ability to succeed. These are basic to the Individual Psychology model. A happy learning environment is also essential to the model and only possible if teachers are friendly and kind but also firm. Democratic teachers are oriented to the encouragement of positive goals and this means that teachers initiate positive behavior. Individual Psychology's education system promotes the idea of democracy in school and at home. It focuses on equality, peaceful conflict solving, and responsiveness to individual differences. The Corsini 4R Educational System developed by Dr. Raymond Corsini is a model for the democratization of educational systems through development of respect, responsibility, resourcefulness and responsiveness ('the four R's' as it is popularly referred to).

Good practices in Bulgaria connected with individual psychology. Over the last 20 years Trakia University contracted with ICASSI (International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes) for several teacher training programs, joint research work, and outreach to other Bulgarian educational and scientific institutions. The Contracting parties plan to spread the Adlerian ideas by articles and books, connecting Individual Psychology with the Bulgarian standards of education, publishing, and printing activities. The main implementation of Adlerian ideas so far is in the teacher-training programs with leaders from ICASSI faculty. These programs are related to the paradigm of Alfred Adler in education, modern educational approaches based on Individual psychology; work with children with special educational needs. Research projects with team members from Trakia University using Adlerian principles and methods are being conducted. The project goals are to help teachers to develop their own positive approach in educational process and to use Adlerian principles in practice.

Keywords: Individual psychology, education, democratic teacher

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern Bulgarian education is oriented towards discovering and using new opportunities for developing a democratic education system. Such an opportunity provides the individual psychology of Alfred Adler and his followers. What could the individual psychology give to the education is presented in the article. Good Bulgarian practices connected with the ideas and democratic principles of Individual psychology are discussed. Some difficulties and challenges in the implementation of Adlerian educational paradigm are described.

2. WHAT COULD THE INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY GIVE TO THE EDUCATION

Individual psychology could give the education system a holistic approach, which includes methods of encouragement, positive thinking, a way of conceptualizing the four common goals of misbehavior, and

psychological and pedagogical concepts for the development of democratic schools by using the main principles and methods of Individual psychology^{45,46,47,48,49,50,51,52,53}.

Individual Psychology was formulated by Alfred Adler with a view toward development of a democratic society. It includes fundamental principles on which teachers should operate to develop a democratic society⁵⁴. In Individual Psychology, a person is a social being whose main desire is to belong. A man does not see reality as it is, but only as he perceives it. All behavior is seen as purposive and based on decisions made by the individual. A person is a whole being who cannot be understood by some partial characteristics.

Individual Psychology provides ground rules for a democratic classroom⁵⁵. It understands the necessity of order and limits while involving the children establishing and maintaining rules. Individual Psychology understands that the group needs leadership and also understands that a class cannot function democratically without trust and faith. A spirit of cooperation has to replace competitiveness in the classroom. The model requires a skilled teacher, trained in the principles and practices of democratic education and group leadership, to integrate the class for a common purpose. Group discussion is essential.

Four basic skills are needed in a democratic school and democratic society: responsibility – the ability to make decisions and accept the outcome of those decisions; cooperation – the ability to work together with others towards a common goal; courage - confidence to take known risks for a known purpose; and self-esteem – having a positive opinion of yourself, and confidence in your ability to succeed. These are basic to the Individual Psychology model.

A happy learning environment is also essential to the model and only possible if teachers are friendly and kind but also firm⁵⁶. They always plan their work well before the class starts. They treat all students with equal respect by listening to their opinions and considering their feelings. They constantly encourage. They are able to integrate the class as a whole or divide it for group work in order to get optimum learning. They are not mistake oriented, and always accent the positive by marking only the correct answers.

Democratic teachers are oriented to the encouragement of positive goals and this means that teachers initiate positive behavior. They let the students know that their contribution is counted. Teachers encourage decision-making and show appreciation at the display of any interest in cooperation. Teachers recognize the students' efforts to act maturely. All this helps the students to realize that they are responsible for their own behavior. In such positive environment the student's goals become: cooperation, self-reliance, contribution, and resiliency.

Individual Psychology's education system promotes the idea of democracy in school and at home. It focuses on equality, peaceful conflict solving, and responsiveness to individual differences. Children are trained to be tolerant. Teachers treat each child with equality; and principles treat teachers with equality. Every child's learning style is respected. In academic area every child works at its own speed. According to Individual Psychology's education methodology, all human beings are different but every person has human rights. Individual Psychology is a workable human system of teaching and raising children. Research has shown that students have better academic results than in traditional educational system⁵⁷.

The Corsini 4R Educational System developed by Dr. Raymond Corsini is a model for the democratization of educational systems through development of respect, responsibility, resourcefulness and responsiveness ('the four

⁴⁵ Adler, A. *Individual Psychology*. Sofia: Health and Happiness Press. 1998

⁴⁶ Adler, A. *Raising Kids*. Sofia: Health and Happiness Press. 1998.

⁴⁷ Adler, A. *The Meaning of Life*. Sofia: Health and Happiness Press. 1998.

⁴⁸ Dreikurs, R., & Cassel, P. *Discipline without tears*. New York: Hawthorn. 1972.

⁴⁹ Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B.B., & Pepper, F.C. *Maintaining Sanity in the Classroom: Illustrated Teaching Techniques*. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.

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⁵¹ Dreikurs, R. *Social Equality: The Challenge of Today*. Chicago: Adler School of Professional Psychology. 2000.

⁵² Dreikurs, R. *Encouraging Children to Learn*. USA. 2000.

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⁵⁴ Dreikurs, R., & Cassel, P. *Discipline without tears*. New York: Hawthorn. 1972.

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R's" as it is popularly referred to)⁵⁸. It provides independent thinking, community feeling, academic achievement, social understanding, and creative problem solving. The Corsini 4R System could promote a culture of peace. It gives strategies and techniques for the accomplishment of the democratic goals established by the Charter of Children Rights of the United Nations. Comparing Individual Education methodology with the goals of the United Nations could prove this.

3. GOOD PRACTICES IN BULGARIA CONNECTED WITH INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

What has been done at Trakia University in Stara Zagora?

Over the last 20 years Trakia University contracted with ICASSI (International Committee of Adlerian Summer Schools and Institutes) for several teacher training programs, joint research work, and outreach to other Bulgarian educational and scientific institutions. The Contracting parties plan to spread the Adlerian ideas by articles and books, connecting Individual Psychology with the Bulgarian standards of education, publishing, and printing activities, Internet discussions, participating in scientific forums, intercultural relationships, and lifelong learning activities. Educational institutions like the Bulgarian Union of Sciences, schools, regional inspectors of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education are also interested in this cooperation.

The main implementation of Adlerian ideas so far is in the teacher-training programs with leaders from ICASSI faculty. These programs are related to the paradigm of Alfred Adler in education, modern educational approaches based on Individual psychology; work with children with special educational needs.

Results of these programs are the following knowledge and skills:

- Basic knowledge of Individual Psychology – basic concepts, principles and methods; initial skills of using Individual Psychology in educational practice.
- Knowledge about the group work - fundamental problems appearing in groups; skills for facilitating groups and using group methods in different contexts.
- Knowledge about effective communication; skills of being an encouraging communicator in different environment; skills of dealing with difficult people.
- Knowledge about the art of encouragement; skills in using consistent optimism in language, attitudes, strategies, and interventions that heighten self-esteem.
- Knowledge about the classroom management with a focus on the effective use of Adlerian principles and methods to develop democratic leadership skills; skills of different teacher's roles; skills of understanding different student's roles.
- Knowledge about the evaluation in school with a focus on the attitude toward mistakes, evaluation, standards, tests; skills of placing the emphasis on efforts not only on the outcomes.
- Knowledge about the discipline without punishment; purposefulness of the human behaviour; skills of democratic solving problems.
- Knowledge about the democratisation of the education; responsibility, mutual respect and encouragement; Skills of establishing democratic rules in a democratic manner.
- Knowledge about management in schools with a focus on the showing how a common purpose can be established between teachers, parents and students; skills for establishing of life-long learning.
- Knowledge about the career choice; skills of understanding person's purposes from Adlerian point of view.
- Knowledge about conducting parents meetings; skills of leading parents meetings (after lecturer's demonstration and teacher's practice in own classes).
- Skill of being persuasive, flexible and untraditional in giving presentation; skills to attract attention, to understand spectators' attitude.

Research projects with team members from Trakia University using Adlerian principles and methods are being conducted. The project goals are to help teachers to develop their own positive approach in educational process and to prepare them to teach civic education. The Individual Psychology approach of Adler and Dreikurs has been the biggest contribution to theoretical argumentation and practical design of the projects in-service teacher-training programs. A very large influence in the project work has been the co-operation with ICASSI, including joint work with some ICASSI faculty members and the participation of Bulgarian university teachers in several Rudolf Dreikurs Summer schools.

Most useful among the ICASSI courses have been:

- "The Art of Encouragement" - training in encouraging skills. It's main emphases are: enhancing use of the consistent optimism of language, attitudes, strategies and interventions that heighten self-esteem and social

⁵⁸ Corsini, R. Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology. Sofia: Science and Art. 1998.

- interest; differences between praise and encouragement; how to create an encouraging message with three components - something specific, a feeling and future contribution⁵⁹.
- “Lifestyle and the Encouraging Communicator”⁶⁰, and “Leadership and Management Institute”⁶¹ - courses including a system of activities for forming an encouraging communicator and successful leader and manager. They show an impact of gender and life style on the communication process and effective communication strategies for dealing in the work place, in school, and at home.
 - The course “Adlerian Psychology on the Workplace” helps in solving problems in the workplace, in school, at home, and in improving human relations in all settings^{62,63,64}.
 - “Adlerian Activities for Experimental Learning” involved participants actively in experiential activities based on holistic principles, purposive behavior, lifestyle, social interest. One of the goals of the training is to help the participants to develop a more optimistic life philosophy.
 - The course “Raising Kids Who Can” assisted in learning how to teach children how to cooperate, take responsibility, communicate positively, care about others and solve problems in order to be more successful in life. Adults (teachers, parents, and society) need training in how to produce these qualities^{65,66}.

In analysis of theoretical sources and practical experience it is important to think about the national psychology of Bulgarians, cultural problems, social development of Bulgaria and the condition of the educational system⁶⁷. Formation of a positive approach is a complicated process and needs time. It is connected with the value system and attitudes of teachers, their democratic style index, problem solving skills, and cooperation. Learning encouragement strategies and techniques requires recognizing discouragement factors such as: negative expectations; unreasonably high requirements; overambitious expectations; overemphasis on competition; focusing on mistakes and the development of more encouraging beliefs and behaviors such as: focusing on the positive; focusing on effort and improvement; emphasizing contributions, assets and strengths; becoming accepting; recognizing and changing irrational beliefs; becoming aware of language which invites discouragement. This is time-consuming work but there is help available.

Recently Adlerian Psychology has been presented both in academic university programs in Bulgaria and in pedagogical practice. Except for some books of Adler and Corsini’s Encyclopedia of Psychology⁶⁸, practical books like “Positive Discipline”, based on Adler’s and Dreikurs’ theory about mutual respect, were translated in Bulgarian^{69,70,71}. They present both a challenge and opportunity for teachers and parents to experiment in working together, to learn mutual respect and responsibility, and to create positive atmosphere. The publishing house of Trakia University publishes the translated into Bulgarian language "Introduction to the Individual Psychology of Prof. Eva Drejkurs-Ferguson. Bulgarian educational journals publish Adlerian articles from Bulgarian and foreign authors.

4. CHALLENGES IN SPREADING AND IMPLEMENTING ADLERIAN PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

Presenting Adlerian ideas is a difficult job, filled with risks. Bulgarian teachers have studied a lot of theories. On the first glance Adlerian theory is one of them - workable or not, it doesn’t matter. Therefore in order to be motivated Individual Psychology should be included in other topics. For instance, such topics as developing a

⁵⁹ Nash, E. The Art of Encouragement. ICCASSI, Netherlands, Elspeet. 2001.

⁶⁰ Kern, R. Life Style and the Encouraging Communicator. ICASSI, Zuoz, Switzerland. 2000.

⁶¹ Kern, R. Leadership and Management Institute. ICASSI, Zuoz, Switzerland. 2000.

⁶² Ferguson, E.D. Adlerian Principles and Methods Apply to Workplace Problems. Individual Psychology, Vol.52. No 3. 1996.

⁶³ Ferguson, E.D. The Life Task of Work. Paper Presented at the Congress of the International Association of Adlerian Psychology. Chicago. 1999.

⁶⁴ Ferguson, E.D. Individual Psychology is Ahead of Its Time. Journal of Individual Psychology, Vol. 56, No 1. 2000.

⁶⁵ Bettner, B. L., Lew, A. Raising Kids Who Can. Connexions Press. 1996.

⁶⁶ Lew, A., & Bettner, B. L. Responsibility in the Classroom, Connexions Press. 1998.

⁶⁷ Semov, M. Bulgarian National Psychology. Sofia. 1999.

⁶⁸ Corsini, R. Concise Encyclopedia of Psychology. Sofia: Science and Art. 1998.

⁶⁹ Nelsen, J., Erwin, Ch., Glenn, H. Positive Discipline for small children. InfoDAR. Sofia. 2001.

⁷⁰ Nelsen, J., Lott, L., Glenn, H. Positive Discipline from small children to teenagers. InfoDAR. Sofia. 2001.

⁷¹ Nelsen, J., Lott, L., Glenn, H. Positive Discipline in the classroom. InfoDAR. Sofia. 2001.

positive approach and civic education. Teachers need encouragement and positive thinking to work and succeed. They need democratic teaching methods as well. The feedback shows they are impressed and excited. They see that the principles and methods of Adlerian Psychology increase effectiveness in the classroom and they want to learn more about them. The first undisputed results of their Adlerian training are some knowledge, encouragement, and recognition of the importance of democratic rules and group work, and a desire to experiment step by step in their classrooms. A big problem is how does an Adlerian trained person create an Adlerian atmosphere in the school or in any other work place. This needs systematic work for a long time with the whole faculty or organization. It needs to deal with conservative principals, who are not so interested in philosophy and theory as they are in the outcomes. It seems that they don't want to be persuaded. As E. Dreikurs Ferguson says about applying Adlerian principles and methods on the work place, "An idea is one thing and implementing is another." Many organizations are autocratic and people are told what to do. Autocratic pasts exist in the present. When we try to move to the democratic process, a mistaken way appears – the laissez-faire process. But avoiding mistakes is very difficult. For example, autocratic is order without freedom, laissez-faire is freedom without order and democracy is freedom with order. Another problem is the lack of experience of giving choice and for poorly trained Adlerians the result is failure in class, in family and other places. Important to democratic practice is shared decision-making. An individual who has learned shared decision-making could not apply it with success in the work place without a democratic process. The young Adlerian leaders and parents miss using an agreement with partners before starting new ideas or continuing them. It's useful to have discussions about what is the value of new ideas and what are the dangers we see in them. We know the democracy does not have guarantees.

Most educational organizations don't have an established sense of sharing. People aren't working together for a common goal. Mutual respect is not established. In many cases school principals neither feel nor show respect. This is a very discouraging fact for teachers attending Adlerian seminars or seminars connected with modern educational technologies. These teachers really want to contribute but they feel disappointed. In the first stages of applying Individual psychology it is easier to encourage an individual than the group as a whole. The efforts of encouraging the group and using shared decision-making give great results like cooperation and sense of belonging.

5. CONCLUSION

People, who have studied Individual Psychology, couldn't easily change their schools and society to democracy, but they have a lot of advantages. Adlerian principles are a way of interacting with others. Adlerian methods provide ways for effective dealing with children, and changing goals of misbehavior to positive goals. They help in self-understanding and understanding others. Adlerian principles help one to accept reality as it is and to develop a more optimistic life philosophy. All this means good personal development. A self-confident person could use the power of Dreikurs's saying "Children need encouragement as plants need water"⁷². They would try step by step to contribute with love, respect and responsibility. Now our work is encouraged by other R. Dreikurs words - teachers in undemocratic society and schools could create democratic classrooms as the nature creates in the desert green oasises⁷³.

Individual Psychology is already known in Bulgaria. In the future it will become more popular. There are reforms going on in Bulgarian education. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education and many educators search new educational strategies and investigate other educational systems. Maybe the educational model of future democratic Bulgaria will include the principle and methods of Adlerian Psychology.

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