

# Psychodrama in the Training of Practical Psychologists

Vera P. Zeleeva<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Correspondence: Vera Zeleeva, Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya Street 18, Kazan, 420008, Russia. E-mail: zeleewy@rambler.ru

Received: January 19, 2014 Accepted: February 22, 2015 Online Published: March 30, 2015

doi:10.5539/res.v7n5p200 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/res.v7n5p200>

## Abstract

The relevance of the studied problem is to find the ways of training the students of psychological faculties for their professional work as practical psychologists. The purpose of the article is to disclose the usage of psychodrama in psychologists' training for their practical activity. The effective aspects of psychodrama experienced personally are defined applying the analysis of the participation in the psychodrama group questionnaires and analyzing psychodrama participants' essays. The principle method of the problem is a phenomenological analysis of written essays of the psychodrama groups' participants. The participants' questionnaires were also used after each psychodrama meeting. As a result of psychodrama training, students can determine their future profession and evaluate their psychological readiness for the practice. Used methods of analysis activate self-analysis of the vocational training results. The materials of the article can be useful for psychodrama directors in assessing their efficiency for group participants.

**Keywords:** practical psychologists vocational training, psychodrama, the efficiency of psychodrama group for the practical psychologists, phenomenological analysis of the written essays

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *The Relevance of the Problem*

The problem of practical psychologists training is complicated by impossibility of organization of a complete practical experience in the training process and also by the lack of practical skills in the beginning of their professional career. Active methods of training and methods of action are especially effective for professional practice preparation. In this case, the experience of psychodrama groups is extremely useful and offers some training forms, which can be used in vocational training and retraining of psychologists, physicians, teachers and social workers (Zeleeva, 1994, 2006).

The widespread interest in psychodrama among practicing psychologists is explained by the fact that psychodrama is an effective tool for the psychological support; it helps to identify professional self-consciousness, a better understanding of others and to find appropriate ways of communication (Khusainova, 2014, 2015; Chirkina, 2015).

Psychodramatic space is the space of relations and events that happen in the psychodrama group, it is a reflection of synchronous culture and its values. We can call this space cultural and educational, because in that space the exchange, research and develop of cultural values such as values of attitudes, experience values and values of creativity are put into effect. It is the space where cultural values are developed and re-created, emotional experience gains its interpretation and significance and becomes personal experience and creativity, it becomes the value in all its forms.

As a method of impact, psychodrama helps to accelerate personal growth and development, as a method of interaction it allows to expend the person's idea of the reality through the contact or "meeting" of several mental realities. As a research method, it allows to present the inner world of a person defining one's existence in external space. It is an actional method with a potential of inner growth and creativity. (Moreno J. L., & Moreno, 1944; Moreno, 1947, 1953, 1964; Moreno, 1974).

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 *Psychodrama as a form of Organization of Training Classes for Practical Psychologists*

The course "Introduction to psychodrama" allows psychology students to study the new approaches and methods of practical work, integrating theoretical psychological knowledge into experience and the analysis of a certain real situation. They get the basic knowledge necessary for practical and theoretical psychologist's training to perform professional tasks set by the governmental educational standards. They can provide consulting work not only in the educational institutions, but also in hospitals and psychological centers providing psychological assistance to the population. The future expert must form the skills of assessing the mental state and psychological situation of the counselee and ability to distinguish emotional and cognitive aspects of the client's problem. The psychodrama adjusts them to the best understanding of psychological features of people who are in a crisis or problem situation.

The psychodrama created by Moreno (1953, 1964) is based on the person's understanding of a creative being, constantly forming and developing interpersonal relationships. Method of psychodrama is based on the staging of personally significant life situations and events with the help of psychodrama group participants. Actually, it is a demonstration in interpersonal group space of some life references, strategy and roles, which a person uses in everyday life. These strategies and roles are often conservative and do not correspond to the real tasks or situations which demand a new view and a creative approach, using self-determination. Moreno (1953) says that life roles, as well as psychodrama roles should not be staged, but lived, because evaluation of important vital events assumes in the present, that is why it is relevant in present time.

The knowledge through experience is often ignored by traditional education systems oriented to the subject disciplinary approach, but it is an important part in the educational process in person-oriented approach and is important for a student getting his professional growth and developing his creativity. The knowledge and empathy that is given to the participants in the process of staging in psychodrama, creates a unique experience, which is given to them through the active participation and understanding of the events.

### 2.2 *The Questionnaire of Assessment of the Individual Meeting Efficiency*

For the prompt assessment of the participant inside the training situation of the psychodrama group, the following questionnaires can be used after each meeting. The participants were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing separate meetings same as of the group of Kochyunas (2003). The questionnaire is a list of 15 questions and the participants should answer them according to the 10-point scale:

- 1) To what extent have you felt involved in the work during this meeting?
- 2) How much have you wanted to participate in the work group today?
- 3) How active and able to influence the meeting have you felt?
- 4) To what extent have you been ready to risk today?
- 5) How much you trusted the other participants today?
- 6) How much have you trusted the group leader today?
- 7) To what extent has the today's meeting facilitated the discussion of your problem and life situation?
- 8) How much has the today's meeting affected your feelings?
- 9) To what extent have you cared about the other participants today?
- 10) To what extent have you wanted to share your thoughts and feelings today?
- 11) How clearly have you defined your goals for today's work?
- 12) How much do you want to meet the group again after today's meeting?
- 13) To what extent is the group a task-oriented one?
- 14) How united is the group?
- 15) To what extent has the today's meeting been effective for you?

The choice of the questions is justified by important internal conditions of self-determination in the new vital situation such as trust, involvement and motivation. During the questionnaires processing, the questions were grouped by topics and analyzed in the certain groups.

The 1st question shows such options as work involvement. The 2nd and the 3rd questions can be interpreted as a wish to work and participant's activity. The 1st, second and 3rd questions show participant's motivation, the 4th,

5th and 6th questions identify the participants' trust degree to themselves (4), to the other participants of psychodrama (5), and to the group director (6). The 9th and 10th questions show the participant's self-evaluation and evaluation of the other participants. The 11th and 13th questions can be united on the topic of the participant's own focus and focus of the group. The 12th and 14th questions show the wish to meet again and the unity of the group.

### 2.3 *The Psychodrama Participants' Essays*

The participants of psychodrama groups cannot always realize the meaning of that experience for their personal experience. That is why, after the training, we advise the participants to write an essay, analyzing their own experience during the work in the group and after it. The purpose of these texts is to analyze the importance of their experience in the group and efficiency of personal changes after it. The students should give full answers to the following questions:

- 1) How has the work in the group influenced your life?
- 2) Has your idea of yourself changed after the psychodrama group?
- 3) How have your relations with others changed after the psychodrama group?
- 4) Has your idea of interpersonal relations changed?
- 5) How has the group changed your life attitude?
- 6) What form of participation did you use in the psychodrama group (protagonist, role-play participant or observant)?
- 7) What important points of the work can you emphasize?
- 8) What have you learned in the group about yourself, about your life style, about your basic vital problems, about your relations with others?
- 9) What changes in your life do you at least partially connect with participation in the group?
- 10) What problems occur to you while practicing the experience gained in the group?
- 11) What questions do you ask yourself after the psychodrama group?
- 12) How have your participation in the group influenced your relatives and people important to you?
- 13) What negative consequences do you connect with the participation in the group?
- 14) Try to describe in a single sentence what the group has been for you.
- 15) Express in several sentences your idea of the psychodrama as a method of psychological assistance.

The psychodrama gives the chance to study and correct the experience by means of dramatization of actual experiences that is why J. Moreno (the son of the psychodrama founder) characterized the psychodrama as a form of phenomenological psychotherapy (Kellerman, 1998).

In psychological researches, the phenomenological analysis assumes a certain way of comprehension of subjective reality, technological part of which is written in Amadeo Giorgi's works (Giorgi, 1984, Giorgi, Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, 2003). In Russia the research of the western phenomenological school are presented by Ulanovsky (2007). The phenomenological understanding does not reduce the text; it reproduces psychological phenomena as the psychological sense for mental reality of the respondent. During an oral phenomenological interview the psychological sense is searched together with the respondent and as a participant of the research; it allows him to find a new understanding of the events happening to him. Thus, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the psychological contact thus constructed during the research. However, it is possible to carry out the phenomenological analysis of written texts. Busygina shows the possibilities of a phenomenological method in the context of qualitative researches methodology in psychology (Busygina, 2009, 2013).

The positive moment in the phenomenological analysis of the written essays is that the participant states his thoughts in the quiet, isolated atmosphere. The description of the emotional experiences is carried out after some time and it allows the participant to collect his thoughts and deeply realize what had happen during the training. In the text, the respondent explains and exposes the realized sense himself. The evaluation of the emotional experience features of participants of psychodrama group was taken from the texts of their psychological essays.

There are differences between the written and oral texts. The oral text is designed for a direct understanding between the speaker and the listener. Written text is addressed to an unknown reader, so for the author it is important to be understood, and he tries to clarify and explain what was written in the same text. It allows to

reconstruct the psychological meaning from the author's words. So, phenomenologist relies only on respondent's writing without adding any additional text, adjusting it in accordance with semantic parts.

Working with the text means its reading at first, then selecting of semantic units according to the research subject, condensating the sense of the defined units, subjects and their variations (Busygina, 2013). Using the method it is possible to define the respondent's experienced phenomenon and the characteristic of this experience.

Applying the method of the reconstruction of psychodrama experience by means of the phenomenological analysis of written essays of psychodrama group participants, we have an opportunity to reveal the efficiency of the participation in the psychodrama.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 *The Analysis of the Psychodrama Participants' Questionnaires*

Questionnaires' data were processed in the Microsoft Excel program and were analyzed in the form of the charts showing the assessment dynamics of the certain parameter in a specific question.

Participants' activity depends on psychological and physical state; protagonist's involvement to a topic; involvement in the work of the group. Thus, participants can have a different activity in different trainings. In the analysis of the individual questionnaire, the answer to the question allows to see the efficiency of the certain session for the participant, which is defined by his activity at the session. Analyzing the data of the first, second and the third questions, we saw that the involvement and activity of the participants of the psychodrama changes in a positive direction over a period of five meetings. The level of activity and involvement at the first meeting can be explained by participants' curiosity to the psychodrama, introduction to the method. In our opinion, indicators go down at the second meeting; participants define an operative level of activity, and when they advance the subject, activity and an involvement begin to increase. The wish to participate in a group work can decrease for the second day's work, because the participant does not want to be deeply involved in the group work and reveal himself freely, however, after several days it begins to increase. Comparing the participants' desire to participate in the work of the group and their activity in the group graphically, we saw that the dynamics are various. While answering the question about activity, students often mean external activity (an involvement in participant's role, a role of the protagonist), but do not keep in mind experiences as an observer (internal activity). However, the desire to participate remains in all roles (the protagonist, the auxiliary role of the participant and the observer).

While answering to the 4th question the participant shows the degree of his sincerity to himself, the 5th and the 6th questions show his trust to the group participants and the director. The increasing of their results is connected with the dynamics of the group unity. Answers to the 4th, 5th and 6th questions show a similar dynamics for the period of five meetings. It is interesting to note, that the level of participants' trust to themselves and to the other members of the group and the leader increases in any group.

The participants' emotional involvement is determined by different factors such as topic relevance, the degree of personal problems analysis, their physical state. The efficiency of the meetings in a students' training group is determined by personal or educational tasks. Their personal tasks are often in the first place, but their interest to the method increases after the successful analysis of the personal and interpersonal problems. After the fourth meeting, the participation relevance in the group reduces. It can be explained by the fact that the fifth meeting is the final one. By the last meeting, most of the participants have already experienced analyzing their problems or relevant situations. The participants' activity and their involvedness have a positive tendency during five meetings experiencing a slight decrease at the 2nd one and a stable rise afterwards.

The participant's maturity can be shown by his ability to take care and support the others and himself. It is important to find a reasonable balance between caring for himself and caring for others. That is why coming to the end of the group the readiness to care for others is equilibrated with readiness for self-support and the results are lowering slightly.

The tendencies of the answers to the 2nd question show changing participants' attitude to the training moving from the formal attitude and confrontation to positive attention to the group and the desire to meet the group again. The clarity of participants' aims are formed and supported by focused group work. The answers to the 13th question show how the participants' estimate of the group's goal-directedness is changing. According to the participants they admit growth of their effectiveness, focusing on the aim and unity, however, in this case we can mention only a quantitative estimate.

### *3.2 Phenomenological Analysis of the Written Essays of Psychodrama Groups Participants*

Results of the essays phenomenological analysis show that the participants feel their true nature: their style, individuality, stereotypic strategies of behavior, frame of freedom and responsibility; their needs and the feelings of others, their ability to get the experience. Having studied subjective aspects of the psychodrama experience, we defined characteristics of the personal meaning, experienced in the psychodrama groups. Participants express the experience in psychodrama group as a “discovery of special features of their own nature, better understanding of other participants, their demands to other people, their abilities to open themselves to the experience”; “negative emotions that evolve in the process of passing through the personal existence, through the discovery of the true not accepted as yet self, in the process of facing with situations not conforming to the values and needs”; “positive emotions of making peace with oneself or the personal life situation, accepting it and coping with the problems”; “the opportunity to probe themselves in unusual conditions while opening oneself to inner experiences and the ability to feel an increasing sensitivity to the environment and to others”; “experiencing the life extension, which can have a lasting impact”.

Students admit that the sessions unite the participants; they begin to respect and trust each other. The participants say that they had a possibility to realize their life strategies and personal meanings, even not being a protagonist only an auxiliary role player, who “lives” the other’s life. This kind of understanding also unites participants of psychodrama as an important condition of interpersonal support. This experience showed the states that are unusual for the participants, the realization of what was happening and experiencing the fillings for which it is difficult to find a suitable name at once. Emotional reactions depend on the personal experiences of each person in the group, on the open view of oneself and experienced states. Discussing their experience in the group, the participants point out the following aspects of psychodrama efficiency: “it is possible to study positive and negative emotional reactions in the psychodrama”; “with the help of psychodrama techniques the participants can master their skills of communication, understand that every person in the group is important and useful”; “the curing and educational effect of psychodrama is achieved through catharsis and learning role-playing and spontaneity”; “psychodrama promotes personal growth and extends perceptions of reality”; “studying one’s inner world a person defines one’s existence in the outer space”; “psychodrama makes people closer”.

#### **4. Discussion**

Practical psychologists’ training in psychodrama is especially effective as the technology of vocational training focused on practice. This article presents a system of subjective evaluation of the effectiveness of such training for the participants.

Psychodrama technologies form the culture of professional activity and provide a basis for the professional practice. We point out the following training aspects of such groups: educating the professional technologies and developing the value system of the future profession is an important basis for the future professional society.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Thus, valuable attitudes become relevant in the psychodrama group, such as the attitude to the world, to the person and to creativity. The educational space organized in the psychodrama becomes a space of self-determination and formation of a personal maturity of its participants, space of preparing for the professional activity as the practical psychologist.

In this research the data of the subjective experience of the psychodrama participants may be obtained by the estimating of the effectiveness of the group work by the participants themselves. This is important for self-esteem of psychological readiness for practical activities as a psychologist and for self-determination in future professional activity.

The methods used for the diagnostics intensify the results of self-questioning for the vocational training. The participants themselves admit that their personal productivity is increasing during psychodrama. Thus these methods become a part of educational process in their own turn.

The psychodrama inclusion in the training process of the professionals, whose activity is associated with creating of appropriate psychological conditions for interpersonal contacts is considered an important clause of their ethical standards formation.

#### **Acknowledgments**

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University

## References

- Busygina, N. P. (2009). Phenomenological and hermeneutical approach in qualitative psychological research. *Cultural and historical psychology, 1*.
- Busygina, N. P. (2009). Phenomenological description and interpretation: Examples of the analysis of data in qualitative psychological researches. *Advisory psychology and psychotherapy, 2*.
- Busygina, N. P. (2013). *The method of qualitative research in psychology*. Moscow: INFRA.
- Chirkina, S. E. (2015). Features of formation of future educational psychologists' professional identity during their retraining. *Review of European Studies, 7*(1), 161-165.
- Giorgi, A. (1984). Toward a Phenomenologically Based Unified Paradigm for Psychology. *The Changing reality of Modern Man Essays in Honor of J. H. van den Berg*. Capetawn: Juta.
- Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). The Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method Qualitative. *Research in Psychology Expanding Perspectives in Methodology and Design*. Washington, DC. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/10595-013>
- Kellerman, P. F. (1998). *Psychodrama closed up: The analysis of therapeutic mechanisms*. Moscow.
- Khusainova, R. M (2015). The influence of the professional stress on the communicative qualities of teacher's personality. *Review of European Studies, 7*(4), 124-127. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/res.v7n4p124>
- Khusainova, R. M. (2014). Factors of teachers' psychological health-ailment within the period of their professional activity. *World Applied Sciences Journal, 30*(5), 608-611.
- Khusainova, R. M. (2015). Specifics of Psychological, Social and Physical Health Levels Interrelation among Teachers of Different Age and Teaching Experience. *Review of European Studies, 7*(1), 166-170.
- Khusainova, R. M. (2015). Specifics of Psychological, Social and Physical Health Levels Interrelation among Teachers of Different Age and Teaching Experience. *Review of European Studies, 7*(1), 166-170.
- Kochyunas, R. (2003). *The basis of psychological consultation and group psychotherapy*. Moscow: Academic Project; OPPL.
- Moreno, J. D. (1974). Psychodrama and the future of social sciences. *Group psychotherapy & Psychodrama, 27*.
- Moreno, J. L. (1947). *The Future of Man's World. Psychodrama Monographs 21*. Beacon (N.Y.): Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1953). Who Shall Survive? *Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Beacon, (N.Y.): Beacon House.
- Moreno, J. L. (1964). *Psychodrama* (p. 1). Beacon House
- Moreno, J. L., & Moreno, F. B. (1944). The Spontaneity Theory of Child Development. *Sociometry, 7*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2785405>
- Ulanovskii, A. M. (2007). Phenomenological method in psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy. *Methodology and history of psychology, 2*(1).
- Zeleeva, V. P. (1994). The usage of the psychodrama method as a practical training in the course of "Pedagogics". In *art. collect. 2nd All-Russian scientific conference, New technologies of training, diagnostics and self-development of a creative person*. Yoshkar-Ola.
- Zeleeva, V. P. (2006). Pedagogical support of students' creative self-determination in the psychodrama. *Education and self-development, 1*.

## Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).