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Rufina Dobrovolska | The Educational Potential of the Music-aesthetic Space of a Comprehensive School

Kwartalnik

Svitlana Hubina | The Interaction between the School and the Parents in Upbringing of the Adolescent

Olena Stoliarenko | The Problem of Teaching Tolerance as a Leading Educational Value and the Basis of Productive Cross-cultural Interaction

Czesław Gerard Toboła | *Aggressive Behavior of Selected Youth Subcultures*

Inessa Vizniuk | Hypochondria – Principles and Mechanisms of Behavioral Disorder

Urszula Kazubowska | Postparental Love – the Specificity, Symptoms and Significance for the Growth of a Child in the Family



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Socio-psychological Mechanisms of the Minimizing Principle of Educational Influence or the Application of Newton's Third Law in Pedagogy

Abstract: We tend to believe that our behavior comes from our attitudes and beliefs. However, social psychologists have experimentally proved a possible reverse dependence: our purposes, views can be a consequence of our behavior. People usually advocate what they believe in, but they also believe in what they stand for.

Based on scientifically proven psychological mechanisms of the development of the motivational-value sphere of the individual, we will try to find out why the principle does not work in the upbringing — "the more, the stronger, the better", and the opposite principle is operating — to minimize the educational effect, that is, the weaker and less noticeable the educational stimulus is used by the educator, the more strongly the views, settings, beliefs of the pupils change.

Both from the point of view of the theory of dissonance and from the point of view of the theory of self-attribution, the effect of "less means more" has one additional consequence. Sometimes "more" can mean "less". In the presence of very strong motives, changes in settings may be less significant than those that would have occurred under the influence of moderate incentives.

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Have you ever thought why is that when you want something a lot, you very often do not get what you expected and vice versa? Some people call it a kind of life "law of deceit". It turns out that it also works in upbringing.

Remember how you felt being upbrought when you were severely pressed or openly forced into something. Most likely, you have found many reasons not to obey. Conversely, when something was forbidden, remember how you tried to taste the "forbidden fruit". The educational practice suggests the existence of some "law of inverse force" in pedagogy, which in physics is called Newton's Third Law: for every action, there is an equal reaction.

Concedering the fact that everything in nature is interconnected, and also taking into account the objective nature of pedagogical principles, we will try to justify as an important principle of modern pedagogy (which concerns education) the principle of minimizing educational influence, which can be considered a conditional manifestation of the Newton's Third Law in pedagogy.

Since we are talking about Newton's Third Law, we briefly recall its essence: "The forces with which the bodies act are equal in modulus and directed in one straight line in opposite directions". This means that if the first force (FA) acts on the body A from the body B, then at the same time, the second force (FB) will act on the body B from the body A, so FA – FB.

The relation between the modules of accelerations and the bodies that interact with each other is determined by the inverse relation between their masses and does not depend entirely on the nature of the forces acting between them. A more massive body receives less acceleration, and lighter – more of it.

It would seem that this physical law, which extends only to physical phenomena, has no relation to social phenomena, particularly to education. However, in fact, this is not the case, because everything in nature is interconnected. Because of that fact we will try to substantiate the principle of minimizing educational influence as a manifestation of Newton's Third Law in pedagogy.

In modern science, the principles are defined as the essential, initial basis of a certain theory, guiding ideas, basic rules of conduct, activities. In pedagogy, the principles reflect the basic requirements for the structure, content and organization of the pedagogical process as the interaction between the teacher and the pupils.

Principles of education have an objective basis and reflect the logical sociopsychological relationships between teachers and pupils. At the same time, they are a result of scientific reflection on the achievements of pedagogical practice.

As it is well known, the first attempts of scientific substantiation of the principles of education were made in the works by Y. Komensky, J. Russo, J. Pestalozzi and other prominent educators. In accordance with the level of development of anthropological sciences at that time, they treated as a rule and mechanically tolerated the laws of the organization of living nature in the conscious activity of a man. At the same time one of the principles was proclaimed as the leading one and on its basis they built up the whole system of pedagogical grounds. For example, Y. Komensky based his "Great didactics" on a promptly interpreted principle of natural correspondence and from it he derived other principles (visibility, continuity, accessibility, etc.).

Extrapolating the effect of the Third Law in pedagogy – "the force of action is equal to the force of counteraction", we can assume that the stronger the teacher influences (presses), the more the influenced pupil "resists" to that demand. Hence, the effectiveness of education will be inversely proportional to the strength of the teacher's influence, that is, the less tangible is the influence (pressure) on the part of the educator on the upbrought, the more effective is the whole process.

Predicting the possibility of accusing us of simplification, we will try to prove our assumption about the truth of the principle of minimizing educational influence based on the socio-psychological mechanisms – "cognitive dissonance" and "self-observation".

Mechanisms of education are the ways of development the motivational-value sphere of the person in the process of assimilating his or her social experience. It must be borne in mind that these mechanisms, as well as regularities, exist objectively. The principles of education are only their subjective reflection. As a result, we find out what kind of social and psychological mechanisms underlie the principle of minimizing educational influence.

People always try to keep a certain harmony in the system of their beliefs. When a person is aware of his or her contradiction or incongruence between views and behavior, the cognitive dissonance appears, an unpleasant tension, discomfort that he or she seeks to get rid of. This happens when we realize that we have acted without sufficient reasons, contrary to our convictions. For example, in

order not to be a black sheep, a teenager in a smoker's environment tries to smoke only "as a company", although he or she knows that smoking is harmful to health.

We tend to believe that our behavior is derived from our attitudes and beliefs. However, social psychologists have experimentally proved that possible reverse dependence can be a consequence of our behavior. People usually advocate what they believe in, but they also believe in what they stand for. The mechanism of cognitive dissonance, proposed by L. Festinger [1957], explains how the behavior of an individual can change his or her purposes. Cognitive dissonance arises when the actions of the individual diverge from his or her self-concept (self-awareness). If a person has resorted to behavior that contradicts his or her views, without tangible external pressure, then the only opportunity to remove dissonance remains the change in their own beliefs, perceptions of himself or herself, bringing them in line with actual behavior. Therefore, an individual must be induced into actions that contradicts his or her by using the least stimulus to do so.

Why, in fact, the stimulus should be of minimal force? As a rule, in education, as well as in life, we are accustomed to direct proportionality: "the more, the better", "the stronger, the more productive". This illustrates appropriately the well-known proverb, namely "you will not spoil the porridge with butter", nevertheless, another proverb says that a person can "over-egg the pudding". Obviously, only one proverb can neither confirm nor deny anything, especially if it relates to such an extremely complex phenomenon as upbringing. To prove the truth of educational principles, it can be used the knowledge of psychology, in particular, the socio-psychological mechanisms of development of the motivational-value sphere of the individual. It is based on scientifically proven psychological laws and we propose to find out why the principle "the more, the stronger, the better" does not work in upbringing, but the opposite principle operates well (to minimize the educational effect, that is, the weaker and less noticeable educational stimuli the educator uses, the more changes of the views, purposes and beliefs of the pupils.

Fritz Heider [1958], the founder of psychological research in the field of the so-called theory of attribution, suggested that a person has a vital need to believe that the environment is under its control and prediction. We seek to understand why people carry out certain actions in order to be able to anticipate what happens to us in the future and to manage these events.

Causal attribution is one of the sources of control over the situation and serves as a guide to action. We usually explain the behavior either by dispositional or situational reasons. Dispositional attribution means that the causes of behavior are

in the individual peculiarities or motives of the individual, while situational attribution means that the causes of behavior are seen in the social or physical environment. We judge the nature of causality by analyzing the peculiarities of the results of particular person's behavior or by relying on well-learned rules (heuristics), indicating the causes of typical behavior.

In attribution considerations there is some cognitive bias. We are prone to oversimplification of the picture and the most noticeable and vivid moments of the events we observe have a very strong influence on us. We are also inclined to re-evaluate the role of dispositive factors and to underestimate situational factors. This kind of bias is called the fundamental mistake of attribution [Zimbardo, Lyayppe 2001, p. 110].

Whenever we observe behavior and try to understand what was the cause of it, our thoughts may be subject to distortion of two kinds. If the cause of behavior is not obvious, then we are inclined to re-evaluate the role of dispositive factors and to underestimate situational factors. Watching the course of "behavioral drama", we are unwittingly focused on the personality traits of the characters, but we do not want to take into account the peculiarities of the stage space in which and on the basis of which the action unfolds. For our culture, the "cult of Ego" is characteristic, in which particular attention is paid to the individual initiative and personal responsibility for successes and failures, sins and guilt. Therefore, it is not surprising that we are more inclined to see a person who has fallen into a particular situation than a situation that makes a person as we see his or her.

An illustration of this conclusion may be the results of well-known experiments by the American psychologist S. Milligram, connected with the typical conformal behavior of most people on the influence of the authority [Deci, Ryan 1985, p. 82]. The scientist asked some participants in the experiment (in the role of teachers) for punishing others (being in the role of students) with the electrical discharge when they forget the word pairs presented to them previously and say them wrong. It was treated as the demonstration that bad memory is simply shocking. From the group of first 40 men who served as teachers (at the age from 20 to 50 years), 25 "teachers" (63% of them) used the entire scale from 15 to 450 volts to punish "students", that is, most "teachers" gave the maximum possible lethal electric discharge to his innocent "student".

The high level of subordination to authority, obtained in the course of this scientific experiment, is very surprising to people tested who do not believe that they themselves may have acted quite conformably in a similar situation in reality. For example, college students, interviewed by S. Milgram before conducting experiments, admitted

that normal people, on average, could reach 135 volts, and then simply refuse to comply with the orders of the leader and cease to play "teacher". Most students were confident that nobody would reach 450 volts — on average, the odds were equal to one in a hundred. According to 40 interviewed psychiatrists, this number should be equal to one out of a thousand — and this person should have been a sadist. Milgram also expected to receive a very small percentage of full subordination.

What explains this unexpected and sad nature of behavior – causing a strong, deliberate, dangerous pain to another person only because one person is endowed with power which forced him or her to do so. With the help of laboratory studies, Milgram demonstrated to us that absolutely mentally healthy, well-adapted adults are able to inflict pain on others. Giving these data submission to persons with a great authority is interpreted not as a weakness of nature, but as a consequence of the work of significant situational factors.

One of the most important truths obtained by social psychology is that human behavior depends on situational variables much more than we usually consider or we are prepared to admit [see Watson 1982].

The processes of self-attribution, that is, the same attribution analysis of our own behavior that we could conduct by a third-party observer, come into action when we carry out unplanned acts or when our installations are weak or ambiguous. Since the situational influence on behavior can be barely noticeable, we sometimes judge our own settings based on our own behavior.

If the educator can ensure that the pupil, supports ideas that contradict his or her current settings, or behaves contrary to them, performing a role, it can become an effective means of changing purposes and behavior. The mechanism of self-observation illustrates the well-known pedagogical method: if a class is too active and insubordinate, the class teacher assigns a restless student to be responsible for discipline. The role of the "defender of order" sometimes quite changes the behavior of the "defender", unexpectedly causing his genuine desire for order.

When performing a role whose content contradicts the purposes, there are processes of self-attribution and self-assertion, that is, the generation of the object of persuasion of arguments in favor of change.

A person can persuade himself or herself more effectively than others do and create more convincing evidence for himself or herself.

The phenomena of self-attrition and the reduction of dissonance have similarities. In particular, both of them can contribute to the effect of "less means more": the pupil can be forced to change their purposes if the force of the inductive factors

is barely sufficient for him to behave as the teacher wants. In terms of the theory of cognitive dissonance, excessive incentives (orders, instructions) are additional consonant cognition, through which the change of settings becomes unnecessary. From the point of view of the theory of self-attribution in the presence of strong "impulses", a person has the opportunity to explain his or her behavior by situational reasons, which reduces the probability of dispositive self-attribution.

In his new interpretation, Claude Steele [1988] goes further, arguing that under certain types of dissonance there is a threat to the integrity of the I-concept, a person feels insignificant, impolite or immoral, or in his or her perception some other negative features of his or her personality are amplified. If there is an action to maintain in the minds a positive image of the "I," or there are any other positive factors, then there is no need to spend the power to achieve a cognitive sequence. In this case, the need for self-assertion becomes stronger in need of consistency. Essential in this case will be the brief analysis of some of the effects of these three processes: dissonance, self-assertion and self-affirmation.

Both from the point of view of the theory of dissonance and the theory of self-attribution, the effect of "less means more" has one additional consequence. Sometimes "more" can mean "less". In the presence of very strong motives, changes in settings may be less significant than those that would have occurred under the influence of moderate incentives. In one study, preschoolers were given a set of colorful "magic" markers, and some of them promised that the author of the best drawing would receive a prize [Lepper et al. 1973]. In two weeks it turned out that children who expected to receive a prize spent less time drawing than children who did not expect any prize and painted just for pleasure. In other studies, it turned out that if the performance of an initially interesting action involves a prize or reward, then these actions lose attractiveness for both children and adults [Deci and Ryan 1985]. Apparently, in such cases, the act can be explained by the desire to receive a reward, which reduces the likelihood that the processes of self-observation and self-justification will lead to the establishment of the thinking "I like to do it". We illustrate this assertion with an example taken from the book by J. Kincher [1997].

"Once there was a girl. Three of her classmates caused her a lot of trouble. They found special pleasure from the fact of hiding her school textbooks. She tried to guess them, but they continued to «play in the cache». She tried not to pay attention to them, but they still hid her textbooks. Finally, she got the idea. She told the boys that it's even cool that they hide her books, she likes it because she

has the reason not to do homework. «But – she complained, – I still have to do exercises on the language. If you even hijack my notebooks! I would pay you a quarter of a dollar every day». The boys thought it was not bad. Every day they happily hid not only all her textbooks, but also notebooks, and she gave them a quarter dollar. It lasted three days. On the fourth day the girl said she would be able to pay only 15 cents, because her pocket costs were reduced to her. On the seventh day, she has already said that she will be able to pay only 5 cents a day. The boys looked at her indignantly and said: «No, it will not go! And do not even think. If you think that we will try for you for 5 cents, you just went crazy!». After that they stopped hiding the girl's books. So the problem was solved".

As we see, in this case, the intuitive found and using mechanism of cognitive dissonance caused so-called "effect of over-justification". This over-justification effect, which results in a decrease in the internal interest in the task, arises especially when the promotion received from the outside is particularly significant and when it is perceived as an attempt to control behavior [Deci and Ryan 1985]. Under such conditions, the promised reward can turn the game into work, but when the motive that prompts this job is absent, that is, when the reward is canceled, "work" is stopped.

This does not mean that we doubted the possibilities of reward as a means of educational influence. We would rather both parents and educators understand that the use of rewards should be well-thought. With the help of rewards, you can both reinforce and increase interest in behavior where the rewards inform about the successes and achievements and are not simply used to have control over behavior. And if the desired behavior already takes place, then it is the best to follow one wise advice, changing its wording – just replacing "something" with "someone" in the old saying: "If something works, do not try to fix anything".

Thus, we have investigated the question of how a change in behavior can trigger a reaction in the form of changes in attitudes or beliefs. Intuition suggests that changes in behavior follow changes in settings, but, as it turned out, changes can occur in the opposite direction. This possibility creates processes of self-attribution, self-belief and self-justification, driven by cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance arises in cases where there are contradictions between cognition (beliefs or knowledge of one's behavior). A dissonance is called a psychologically uncomfortable inducing state from which a person seeks ways to escape, get rid of it or reduce it by changing one or more cognition. Therefore, dissonance may lie at the heart of self-justification – such a change in attitudes or beliefs that they do not run counter to the behavior caused by situational factors.

By encouraging or threatening, you can force people to commit acts that are contrary to their attitudes. As a rule, the stronger the external stimuli (incentives), the more humane the person behaves. In the same cases, when the purpose is to change the attitude of a person to the necessary behavior or to reach agreement with his or her, the principle "less means more" or minimizing influence appear.

Acts that contradict the purposes do not cause dissonance when they can be sufficiently justified by the influence of circumstances. That is why when we want to raise children in accordance with the socially important values, good tastes, correct views and beliefs, it's inappropriate to strongly squeeze a pupil using highly effective incentives (threats, intimidation, non-appeals orders, etc.). Dissonance arises only when the force of the stimulus inducing action is sufficient only to achieve subordination, but it cannot be accepted as an excuse for behavior. A person should think that behavior contrary to the purpose was chosen freely and voluntarily. Only in the absence of an important external factor capable of serving as the justification of a deed, the reduction of dissonance occurs by changing the purpose.

In order for the behavior that contradicts the purpose, there has been a change in these purposes, the individual should perceive his behavior as a freely and voluntarily elected person, to feel personal responsibility for the possible undesirable (reversible) consequences of this behavior.

Changing purpose is just one way to reduce the dissonance. There are other ways: reducing the significance of something, for example, a fox from the famous fable of Aesop, who cannot get grapes, calms himself by the fact that he has not yet reached; introduction into the cognitive repertoire of new, consonant or self-affirming cognition ("I smoke cigarettes with a filter, and they are not so harmful") or a direct decrease in stress induced by dissonance through soothing drugs or alcohol.

Thus, if "less" is "more", then, then, "more" is "less". Excessive justification of a certain behavior by external circumstances may cause that person who presents this behavior will like it less.

Indeed, for socio-psychological processes, a paradoxical but important feature is often that barely noticeable pushing to change beliefs is much easier than influencing the factors of destructive power. In this regard, it becomes understandable why it is important in upbringing to adhere to the principle of minimizing educational impact, since it is based on objective social and psychological mechanisms, the effect of which as well as the action of the Third Law of Newton cannot be cancelled.

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