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Dynamics of drama students' personality features at theatre college.

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Abstract

The article follows up on the cycle of the authors' research into the personal and professional formation of theatre students. Discussed here are such things as specific personal features which separate theatre college students from regular high school students (the control group), as well as the dynamics of personal characteristics during their studies. It demonstrates that the major differences between theatre college students and regular high schoolers lie within their emotional features and readiness to socialize. The analysis of personal characteristics has shown that the main transformation takes place in the 1st and 2nd years of college, and is concerned with increased anxiety and motivational tension.

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1. Introduction

The article follows up on the cycle of our research into personal and professional formation of theatre students [1],[2],[3],[4],[5],[6]. The research program implies an integrated psychological inspection with the help of a wide range of methods designed to diagnose personal features (Cattell's test 16 PF, H. Eysenck test), to determine reactions in frustrating situations (S. Rosenzweig test), to diagnose emotional intellect (MSCEIT test), to determine status in a group (sociometry), as well as to analyze the values and artistic preferences of theatre students during their course (the authors' specially developed checklist).

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While looking at the changes which take place in theatre students' personalities, it is important to focus on several points. Firstly, admission to the theatre college involves extremely strong competition, where one spot is claimed by more than 100 people who are selected by a admissions committee during preliminary auditions.

Secondly, students' age is important. The college enrolls students after the 9th grade, which normally equals to the age of 15 years, i.e. they are 2-3 years younger than first year students in a traditional theatre academy. The course takes 4 years. This situation of the early professional making, in our opinion, determines the line of future actors' personal development.

The third issue is concerned with the process of studying in the theatre college, which puts a special emphasis on professional subjects (acting method, scenic speech, scenic moves, dance, etc.) and orientation towards team work. It should also be noted that studying implies a rather drastic change of setting, i.e. communal living at the college campus, where classes and performances also take place and adaptation to the new environment and even new city (a very small percentage of the students comes from Moscow). We believe that studying students' personal transformations caused by a change in their living conditions as well as new pedagogical influences is a very interesting aspect in the formation of a professional actor.

In this article we will briefly discuss the difference between theatre college students and regular high school students, and will also describe the personality changes that take place throughout the college course.

2. Method

This article shows results which were obtained through Cattell's test 16PF [7]. This test is the basis of our research since it allows us to determine communicative, intellectual, emotional and regulatory aspects of a personality with the help of 16 independent bipolar personality scales (factors). This method was also used in researching would-be actors who studied at the Theatre Workshop by the renowned Soviet and Russian actor O.P. Tabakov, and proved its diagnostic validity way back in 1976 during both selection and evaluation of personality changes in drama students. Additionally, Cattell's test was included into some other programs of theater students' professional diagnostics [8], [9].

This research involved students of the State Moscow Theatre College (admissions in 2010-2014). The total sample size was 118 people (80 boys and 38 girls) in their first year, 65 people (40 boys and 25 girls) in their second year, 48 (28 boys and 20 girls) in their third year, 30 (18 boys, 12 girls) in their fourth year. The students' age ranged from 14.5 to 18 years. The control group was formed by 9th -10th graders from Moscow high schools, the total sample size being 145 people (76 boys and 69 girls).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Comparison of the personal characteristics of theatre students and the control group

To determine which characteristics specifically belong to theater students, we will compare the average results of R. Cattell's Questionnaire 16 PF for a group of teenagers who were admitted in 2010-2014 with those of their peers from public schools. The average profiles for these two groups are displayed in Figure 1.

Considerable differences were noted in the following factors: A (isolation – sociability, $p=.000$), C (emotional instability – emotional stability, $p=.000$), E (submission – dominance, $p=.000$), F (restraint – expressiveness, $p=.000$), G (low behavioral normativity – high behavioral normativity, $p=.000$), H (shyness – bravery, $p=.000$), I (roughness – sensitivity, $p=.000$), L (gullibility – suspicion, $p=.02$), M (practicality – dreaminess, $p=.02$), Q2 (conformity – nonconformity, $p=.000$). Q3 (low self-control – high self-control, $p=.004$).

It should be noticed that average points in scales C, E, F, G, L, M, Q3 for both groups lie within the normal limits (4-7 points), whereas those of the drama students in factors A, H, I, Q2 lie outside the normal limits, which indicates significant personal accentuations. These four factors are described in more detail below.

The high points in factor A (sociability) are interpreted as affectothymia due to their display of good nature, gaiety, emotional perception, liveliness, interest in people, openness, sociability. People with such points are worse at monotonous or precision tasks, but at the same time they easily integrate into groups, they are less afraid of criticism and more ready to compromise.

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