Abstract

The management of motivation processes of education is changing nowadays. On the one hand there is activization of competences. On the other hand such factors as social isolation, alienation and shyness are appearing. The problems are getting more serious. There is shortage of experimental research and analysis of students' social isolation. The aim of the research conducted is to examine the early forms of social isolation, mechanisms of its genesis and relations with subsequent social emotional development and training. The research was carried out in student groups by using the temperament evaluation and behavior social regulation methods (panel survey and laboratory experiment).

Keywords: Educational technology, educational activities, social isolation of young people, motivities in education;

1. Introduction

With the development of new systems of interaction between individuals in the society (information communities, social networks, etc.) intrapersonal principles of identification with social groups are undergoing changes. Managing motivational processes of educational activities in this regard is evolving as well. On the one hand, one may observe a set of competences put forward, on the other hand, such terms as social exclusion, alienation, shyness describing as they do an inner state of a lonely person, are being re-interpreted. Semantically close to them are such concepts as social anxiety, feeling of insecurity, fear of the outside world. These issues are truly relevant these days, but experimental studies devoted to identifying the causes of social isolation of younger generation are very few.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The model of socio-emotional regulation of behavior by K.Rubin

This model analyses the problems of human relationship with the environment (Rubin, 1982; Rubin, 1985; Rubin & Berwick, 1984; Rubin & Le Mare, 1987; Rubin & Mills, 1988; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). According to this

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model socio-emotional development at the initial stage of intellectual development is regulated by intertwined intraindividual, interindividual and macrosystemic forces.

Intraindividual forces are examined through particular temperament which is based on innate physiological processes (Goldsmith, 1987; Rothbart, 1981; Rothbart & Derryberry, 1981; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Rubin’s interpretation of interindividual forces is borrowed from the theory of attachment, in particular from the work of M. Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1991). In this context, interindividual forces are looked at within the child communication with the parents which is interpreted in terms of security and insecurity relationships.

In the first case, parents carefully and sensitively react to emotions, needs, thoughts of their children, are able to foresee the results of their behaviour, maintain their self-confidence. The consequence of this attitude is emergence of the child confidence in the world and intensive exploration of social and material environment, at first in joint activities with adults, and later with their peers. In the case of insecure relationships where the parents are irritated, trust to the world is not formed which negatively affects the development, suppressing cognitive activity, lowering self-esteem, leading to isolation from the peers.

In the subsequent social interactions these relationships and communication principles are transposed to the levels “colleague-colleague”, “worker-subordinate” etc. It is necessary to point here to a problem of excessive control and over involvement of parents into children's contacts with peers. Extreme protection granted by adults probably leads to the child’s morbid dependence from them, the fear of new challenges and situations, which ultimately results in formation and consolidation of insecurity feelings.

In the case of a favourable state in every one sphere optimal conditions for their interaction, and hence for the problem-free development of the individual, are assured. Difficulties in one of them can deform their harmonious interaction. For example, conflicts may disrupt smooth relations; temperament of a single individual (e.g. severe anxiety) can cause irritation or indifference of supervisor.

2.2. Motivational theory

Motivational theory is developed by J. Asendorpf (Asendorpf, 1990; Asendorpf, 1991, Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). According to this theory, the emergence of various types of deviations in social development is seen through the motivational approach and avoidance. Disturbances in the interaction of these motives lead to difficulties in communication. J. Asendorpf identifies three possible types of such deviations.

The first is characterized by low approximation motivation. People with this motivation prefer to stay separate from the others. This behaviour is manifested at an early age in a single constructive and exploratory activity of the child and is not associated with poor social adaptation; the presence of low approximation motivation is due to the predominance of interest towards material world at the early stages of personality formation. If it is extensively demonstrated in an older age, especially during the period of intellectual formation, it signalizes problems in the sphere of social relationships.

The second type relates to the conflict of motivations of approach and avoidance. It implies that an individual would like to communicate with other people, but for some reason, avoids contacts, especially in new situations. Such conflict can lead to behavioural compromise manifested, for example, by observing the situation from a distance or by engaging into a lone intellectual activity nearby the main group. These individuals experiencing conflict of motivation are characterized by caution and shyness. The cause of the conflict of motives may be conditioned by both biological nature and certain educative conditions (negative assessment, offences, excessive supervision by adults) (Asendorpf, 1990; Buss, 1986).

The third type of disturbances in the interaction of motives is shown in a combination of high motivation of social approach and low avoidance motivation. These individuals are very sociable but they lack for interaction limits and contact restrictions. Peers often avoid them because of excessive obsession. People with such deviations tend to be aggressive.

2.3. Communication with peers as a factor of social and personal development

This area is taken into account in the above models of behaviour regulation, although it has not been given a deep theoretical consideration. The conceptions of communication with peers and its impact on mental development are
backed by the studies of J. Piaget, G.H. Mead, G. Sullivan (Piaget, 1995; Mead, 1934; Sullivan, 1953), as well as supporters of the social learning theory. Taken together the findings of these authors can be summarized as follows: the interaction with equal partners contributes to making contacts easily, coordinating one’s actions, thoughts and feelings with actions, thoughts and feelings of others, foreseeing cause-effect relations in social interaction activities, reducing the cognitive egocentrism in social relations and, consequently, improving the individual systems of cognitive coordination, developing reflection, forming social sensitivity and moral values.

According to K. Rubin, such terms as social exclusion, social withdrawal, reticence, or inhibition, shyness, sociometric rejection, often used interchangeably, in fact, reflect different phenomena, each of unique psychological and biological nature.

In his works, K. Rubin and his colleagues prefer the term social distancing, which is milder in comparison with social exclusion and does not imply a complete alienation from other people, situations or objects. This preference is also explained by the fact that, speaking of social exclusion, we cannot always be sure of its true meaning – whether it is a personal choice or a result of social rejection (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). The concept of social distancing is viewed by the mentioned scholars as an ‘umbrella’ term that embraces the different forms of solitary behaviour, initiated by the child and not his or her environment. Social distancing may take different forms. One of them is shyness, which manifests itself in anxiety or fear when encountering strangers primarily in new situations or when dealing with new problems with an unknown solution algorithm (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993).

In this case, the motivation may be linked to fear of social assessment. Another form of social distancing is constraint, or sluggishness, in respect to new situations as such. This attitude is correlated with cautious behaviour (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Its motive is the fear of newness and social assessment. It is an internally conflicted behaviour based on the struggle of approach/avoidance motives.

Close, though not identical to that form of social distancing, is restrained behaviour. The latter may be seen in those situations where during the formation of a working group for a new project a specialist keeps aloof from contacts with the other participants, preferring to watch them acting. This behaviour reflects the anxiety. At its core there is a conflict of approach/avoidance motives too.

3. Methods

Our studies were conducted in the student groups using the techniques of temperament and social behaviour regulation valuation. Besides the questionnaires we used a laboratory experiment in the form of training tasks and situations. The studies carried out share common goals: the study of early forms of social exclusion, mechanisms of its appearance and correlation with the subsequent socio-emotional development and motivation in education. Particular attention is paid to prediction of future difficulties in communication and, accordingly, to changes in the motivational principles of intellectual component of corporate culture in the sphere of intellectual labour including school and university education. The studies are longitudinal in nature and data processing is based on correlation analysis of the relevant parameters.

4. Discussions and Results

The research results of our laboratory experiment have coincided with those described in the work of J. Kagan and his colleagues at Harvard University (Kagan, Garcia-Coll & Reznick, 1984; Kagan, 1988), in which characteristics of children reaction to stimuli were revealed. In particular, children of 0-2, showing a timidity when being exposed to new stimuli (their number is about 15%), manifest specific and stable types of psycho physiological reactions that reflect an enhanced activation of the sympathetic nervous system, high heart rate, elevated levels of cortisol, and significant dilation of pupils.

It was found that about half of these children show this tendency until their adulthood: they behave shyly, feel anxiety, and are prone to social isolation (Kagan, 1988). However, the subjects of the other half of the sample with the same signs of fear or slow response were proved later to compensate for handicaps and ultimately in terms of socio-emotional development did not differ from their peers who did well in this respect.
Analyzing the different types of behaviour of subjects, J. Kagan concluded that the differences between the two groups of children should be viewed not in one continuous space, but rather in essentially different dimensions. In contrast with the standard point of view, common for American psychology, of continuity of psychological or biological dimensions, J. Kagan believes that the selected types of behaviour are rooted in different physiological processes conditioning absolutely different children’s responses and combinations of responses to certain stimuli.

Comparison of these data and types of temperament proved that at the early stages of socialization individuals who are prone to constrained behaviour and belong to the “resistant” type of attachment in childhood were notable for calm reaction to the frustrating situation, and vice versa, those behaving in a relaxed manner in new situations and manifesting “avoidant” type of attachment responded to frustration negatively.

Discussing the results, it is also possible to identify another important factor affecting the social behaviour – the ability and skill to regulate one’s activity and the related behavioural strategy of team leader either supporting this ability or, conversely, hindering its development. The behaviour of a person prone to frustration may serve as a model of such interference. The person may acquire a high level of self-regulation, if a system of managing his or her actions and motivation is founded on a higher level of freedom and lower level of personal actions control. Following this behavioural strategy, a subordinate will develop independence in the study of social and material world.

The role of early social isolation in socio-emotional development of children is studied in the works aimed at research of social isolation, aggressive behaviour in children and ways of their development from pre-school age to adolescence (Hymel, 1990; Rubin & Mills, 1988; Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). One of the remarkable facts obtained in these studies is different psychological values of the selected form of single activity in various ages.

While in the preschool period a frequent single-passive play does not correlate with the constrained behaviour reflecting the difficulties of personal and social development, in primary school it steadily correlates with low self-esteem and difficulties in communication with peers (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). The convergence of the two behavioural types in the ontogeny results in caution and social anxiety serving as behavioural indices. In turn, single-active type of behaviour throughout both the pre-school and school age provides evidence of the child aggressive tendencies and leads to stable negative attitude of children towards their extremely impulsive peers.

5. Conclusion

The experiment allowed finding the correlation between the innate qualities of temperament and the subsequent manifestation of slow response: a large part of highly responsive children showed disturbances in socio-emotional sphere when encountering unknown adults and objects.

Excessive individualization at the early socialization stage may subsequently give rise to several problems:
1) weak initiative in interaction with peers,
2) inadequate evaluation of initiative contacts with peers (they are limited primarily by attracting attention with no meaningful attempt to develop the contact, nor stand the ground), which the researchers attributed to reduced need for social self-assertion, the latter leading to deterioration of leadership factors,
3) lack of independence in resolving inter-personal problems, frequent recourse to the elders or leaders of social groups,
4) weaker authority among peers,
5) reduced level of verbal communication: a lower number of statements, appeals, requests and non-situational conversations, weaker verbal competence, prevalence of nonverbal communication.

Persons seeking social isolation possess reduced levels of social cognition and self-esteem. In their behaviour and self-esteem there are observed clear signs of oppression and self-doubt.

The general consideration of all relations obtained permits to conclude that inhibited behaviour at an early age is not directly related to the specificity of temperament later in young age. Rather, it is explained by its interaction with the type of attachment. Unfortunately, the small sample of subjects and weak correlations do not let to consider the data quite accurate, but they do outline a number of trends waiting for a stricter experimental verification.

Thus, we made an overview of most significant experience in researching social exclusion at different levels of social formation. Thorough studies based on experience and empirical data of the European and American
psychologists as regards the early age of personal formation were corroborated by the experience of and Russian students and young people.

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