

# Evolution of Communicative Competence in Adolescents Growing Up in Orphanages

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The article describes features of the communicative competence evolution in adolescents growing up in orphanages. The specificity is revealed and definition is given to key concept of the research, namely "communicative competence". Authors emphasize and demonstrate the evaluation peculiarities of the adolescents, growing up in orphanages. The paper deals with the evolution forms and methods of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages. Additionally, the article presents the results of experimental work on the evolution of communicative competence in such adolescents. The study proved the effectiveness of the "Effective Communication" program on the evolution of communicative competence in adolescents growing up in orphanages.

*Keywords:* competences, communicative competences, adolescents growing up in orphanages

## INTRODUCTION

### Actualization of the problem

The conventional education policy in residential institutions in Russia is unproductive: they reign in children antagonism, mutual rejection, increased anxiety, and conflict-proneness (Valeeva, 2013). Children, growing up in the orphanages, are characterized by distortion in communication with adults (Dubrovina & Lisina, 2003). On the one hand, children have heightened need for attention and benevolence from adults, human warmth, tenderness and positive emotional contact. And on the other hand, they face complete dissatisfaction of this need, which is expressed in rare communication with adults, low level of personal, intimate contacts, emotional poverty and sameliness. This communication is mainly

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aimed at regulating children' behavior (Prikozhan & Tolstykh, 2007). Consequently, the question on the evolution of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, becomes quite acute. The urgency of studying the peculiarities of the communicative competence evolution in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, is manifested by significant interest of pedagogics and psychology towards this problem.

## **Theoretical background**

To date, there are certain preconditions for solving the problems of communicative competence evolution control in adolescents, growing up in orphanages. For example, the theory and practice of communicative competence formation is developed by Yu. M. Zhukov (1987), N. N. Obozov (2008), etc.; the problems of entering orphans into independent life, as well as the causes of these problems are revealed in studies by I. V. Dubrovina (2003), B. C. Mukhina (1991), A. M. Prikozhan & N. N. Tolstykh (2007), etc.

However, despite the relatively broad interest towards the raised problems, the need to develop communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, is obvious. century. According to Yu.N. Emelyanov (1985), communicative competence refers to a group of key concepts that has a particular importance in human life, therefore its formation should be under close attention. Communicative competence in science is understood as the ability of a person to establish and maintain the necessary contacts with other people (Stolyarenko, 2009), in terms of a system of internal regulating means of communicative actions (Andreev, 2002).

## **Status of the problem**

Analysis of psychological and educational literature allowed us to come up with the conclusion that researchers still are not clearly distinguishing the concepts of "competence" (in terms of expertise) and "competency" (in terms of adequacy).

Currently, the Russian science distinguishes the following approaches to these concepts. The first approach, which is currently being actively developed, is associated with study of competence (expertise) and competency (adequacy) within the general education framework. Scientists of this approach (Bolotov, 2003; Hasan, 2003; Khutorskoy, 2007) believe that competences are defined by knowledge, proficiencies, skills and modes of activity, whereas competency is an accomplished personal quality that is defined by the level of competencies possession.

Followers of the second approach (Zeer, 2005) believe that the competence reflects a certain set of requirements to the person, who intends to occupy the appointment and implement professional features based on the active, responsible life action.

The conclusions made by N. T. Farukshina (2007) are of particular interest. Stating that competences are actively used knowledge, proficiencies, and skills, she emphasizes that competences cannot be reduced only to the proficiencies or skills, because their capabilities are much broader, and they manifest themselves in a particular situation by mobilizing all of the knowledge and practical experience.

Based on the available interpretations of the communicative competence concept, proposed by R. T. Bell (1980), R. Verderber (2003), C. Leung (2005), D. Hymes (1972) and others, we arrive at the following definition of this concept: communicative competence is an integrated system-related consolidation of interrelated knowledge, proficiencies and skills, as well as work methods, determining the ability of a person towards effective communicative interaction in the situations, arising from any kind of activity.

Psychological research show that the overall physical and mental evolution of children without parental care, differs from the evolution of their peers, growing up in families (McGuinness & Pallansch, 2000). Pace of mental evolution of foster-children from orphanages and boarding schools is slow, and their evolution has a number of negative features, such as the following: these children have lower level of intelligence, poorer emotional sphere and imagination, their ability to control own behavior as well as self-control abilities, etc. are formed much later and are quite poor. These features are observed at all stages of childhood, from infancy to adolescence and beyond (Narad & Mason, 2004).

According to V. S. Mukhina (1991), a child, growing up under the conditions of residential care, does not master the skills of productive social communication. His contacts are rather tenuous, nervousness and haste, he solicits attention and rejects it, moving to aggression or passive detachment. Identification of effective forms and methods of pedagogical measures is necessary element for the evolution of communicative competence.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The aim and tasks of the research**

The aim of the present paper is a theoretical substantiation and experimental testing of the forms and methods for evolution of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages.

### **Theoretical and empirical methods**

In compliance with the goal, the following methods have been selected:

- theoretical - analysis of the pedagogical and psychological literature; study and generalization of innovative pedagogical experience, analysis, synthesis;
- empirical - participant observation, questionnaires, tests, interviews, conversations.

The study involved 129 children from orphanages of the Republic of Tatarstan. To prove the hypotheses of the study, we have used the mathematical statistics methods, t-Student test and G-sign test to verify the hypotheses on the fidelity of averages. The level of formedness of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, were examined based on three indicators: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. To assess the emotional indicator of communicative competence, we used the test "Ability to listen", and the questionnaire for the diagnosis of the empathic ability, developed by A. Mehrabien & N. Epshteyn (2005).

The "Ability to listen" test aims at to assess in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, ability to listen each other. The questionnaire for the diagnosis of the empathic ability by A. Mehrabien & N. Epshteyn, consisting of 33 proposals and statements, makes it possible to reveal the level of empathic tendencies. In the course of studying the empathic abilities in adolescents, four subgroups were identified depending on the level of adolescents' empathic tendencies: these are groups of high, average, low, and very low level of empathic tendencies.

To assess the cognitive factor, we used the technique of "Diagnosis of communicative and organizational aptitudes (COA)" by B.A. Fedoryshyn (2005). This technique allows one to assess the level of communicative and organizational aptitudes in test adolescents.

To study the behavioral factor, we used the questionnaire "Evaluation of individual's conflict-proneness". The questionnaire is designed to assess individual's conflict-proneness level.

The level of communicative competence formedness was detected as an integrative factor of all above mentioned techniques. The level of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, is defined as follows: low level corresponds to 1 to 6 scores, average level ranges from 7 to 12 scores, and the highest level varies from 13 to 15 scores.

### **The trial infrastructure and stages of the research**

The study involved 129 children from orphanages of the Republic of Tatarstan. The study was done in three stages: stating, forming and controlling.

Stating experiment covered evaluation of examined listening ability level, empathic trend maturity, communicative and organizational aptitudes, and personality conflict-proneness. . On the basis of the results there was developed a program named "Effective Communications" containing various forms and methods such as a socio-psychological training, brainstorming, role-playing game, business game, a round table discussions, etc.

During the formative experiment we implemented the "Effective Communication" program, which was based on the forms and methods, such as game (business and role-playing), discussion, debate, training, round table and brainstorming. The program includes five units, each consisting of 5-6 sessions with duration of 1-1.5 hours, given several times a week. Classes were given stepwise, following the sequence logic of the units focused on advancement of relevant skills, such as communication and organizational skills forming unit; communicative competence forming unit; unit on formation of readiness to overcome conflicts; creativity forming unit; and self-confidence forming unit.

Sessions were constructed in such a way that each participant "experienced" various situations, where he determined his abilities for communication, support, creativity, recognition of another person, conviction, ability to defend own position, organize himself and others, as well as understanding and accepting another person, etc.

Control stage of the experiment was aimed at identification the result of the work conducted.

### **RESULTS**

At the stating stage of the experiment, we examined listening ability level, empathic trend maturity, communicative and organizational aptitudes, and personality conflict-proneness. All these indicators were low in the ascertaining stage of the experiment. The level of communicative competence proved to be dominant (50%). Average level of communicative competence in the group was found in 37.5% of adolescents. High level was diagnosed in 12.5% of adolescents, growing up in orphanages. Thus, the results of ascertaining experiment suggest that deliberate efforts are required to advance communicative competence in the adolescents, growing up in orphanages.

Control stage of the experiment was aimed at identification the result of the work conducted. After carrying out a formative experiment in the group of test teenagers, the high level of listening ability increased from 16.7% to 37.5%, the average level increased from 33.3% to 41.7%, while low level dropped from 50% to 20.8%.

The empathic tendencies in a group of teenagers showed positive trend. High level of empathic tendencies increased from 25% to 33.3%, the average level of empathic tendencies increased from 25% to 29.2%, whereas the low level has dropped from 29.2% to 20.8% (changes amounted to 8.4%), and very low level of empathic tendencies has dropped from 20.8% to 16.7%.

After conducting a formative experiment, a significant dynamic was revealed in the levels of communicative and organizational aptitudes. In a group of teenagers, growing up in orphanages, after the experiment, medium level of conflict-proneness became the dominant one, reaching 50%, a low level of conflict-proneness after the experiment was 33.3%, the high level of conflict-proneness after the experiment was 16.7%.

High level of communicative competence in a group of teenagers, growing up in orphanages, after the experiment increased from 12.5% to 29.2%, low level has dropped from 50% to 20.8%, and the average level dropped from 37.5% to 30.4%. Thus, we can state that in the result of the work conducted, significant changes occurred in the levels of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages.

As a result of the Student's t-test, we found that the differences between the average levels of communicative competence evolution before and after the experiment are valid, since  $t_{exp} > t_{cr}$  ( $t_{exp} = -7,49$  at  $p = 0,01$ ); application of G-sign test also showed a positive trend in terms of this indicator.

## CONCLUSION

As a result of this study, we can say that the evolved "Effective Communication" program focused on the evolution of communicative competence in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, based on forms and methods of pedagogical effects, such as business and role-playing game, round table, training, discussion, and brainstorming turned out to be effective. Use of this program in adolescents, growing up in orphanages, makes it possible to improve the level of communicative competence. Thereby we can achieve effective interaction of teenager with peers and adults, as well as his adequate self-esteem, a feeling that he is highly sought and valued in community, and that he is rightful and respected member of society.

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