

Psychology of education

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Asocial behavior of juveniles as an educational psychology problem

Asocial behavior of juveniles is still one of the most significant problems of educational psychology. The author marks out five actual directions in this area, concerned with preventive measures and correction of deviant and delinquent behaviour, as well as the role, the social institutes and psychologists of the educational system play in these processes.

In the article the author gives the official data on the number of juveniles, registered at the police departments, on uncared-for and homeless children, on juveniles' offences, amount of alcohol and drugs they are taking.

Thus, the special attention is given to the analysis of direct surrounding of their juveniles (family, friends), and also modern mass media, telecasting the scenes of cruelty and violence. All this allows the writer to regard the problem of asocial behaviour of children and juveniles as a wide-range social problem, determining in which, in the author's opinion, is the work with the family, rendering it the social (including material), psychological, pedagogical, and legal aid.

Keywords: *asocial behaviour, socialization, deviant and delinquent children and juveniles, mass media, family.*

Examining the asocial behavior of juveniles as a problem of educational psychology, we can mark out several topical areas of activity.

First direction is prevention of asocial behavior of minors, formation and implementation of strategy of preventive activity. In our opinion, in the very general plan this activity is reduced to guaranteeing the effective process of the person socialization.

It is clear that such activity is system and complex. It cannot be implemented only by forces of psychologists, so it requires participation of many other specialists, and first of all - teachers. Family plays a gigantic role in effective socialization realization. At the same time, it is obvious that effective system of preventive work and purposeful socialization of the person cannot be formed outside psychological context and without practical psychologists participation.

The second direction is special work of the educational system psychologist with deviant and delinquent children and teenagers. Within the framework of this direction we can mark out scientific and methodical

elaboration of the main approaches to correction work, programs of special trainings and individual correction work.

A separate problem is the study and professional mastering of these developments by practical psychologists. In this connection, we can mention the “deviant - delinquent” specialization of the practical psychologists.

We suppose that it is possible to consider formation of the person directivity and pro-social aims, development of the positive I - concept, formation of social and psychological competency and skills of adequate interpersonal relationship within the group, individual and correction work at different types of character disharmony to be the most significant and topical spheres of above mentioned developments. Within the framework of the same direction, important problem is formation of the effective interaction and subordinate activity (1) with teachers and (2) family.

Third direction is more precise definition of specific character and competence of different organizational forms of activity in the field of prevention and correction of asocial behavior, as well as re-socialization of deviant and delinquent juveniles.

We mean first of all such social establishments as secondary school, trade school, the PPMSS (Psycho-Pedagogical and Medico-Social Support) Centres, juvenile cases departments (JCD), specialized consulting centres, and also the special profile programs of regional and urban level as so-called designed form of activity organizing.

The fourth direction is forming of effective system of special training, retraining and improvement of professional skill of psychologists of the education system in the field of problems of asocial, deviant, and delinquent behavior of juveniles, re-socialization of person. There are not enough examples of satisfactory formation of such activity in our days.

The system of special training and retraining in this area cannot be “purely academic” and particularly theoretical. It certainly should be guided by the most advanced and scientifically reasonable psychological knowledge in the mentioned area. But at the same time, this system of training and retraining must operate the gained theoretical knowledge as much as possible, realizing it in practical techniques and programs of preventive and correction activity of psychologist.

The fifth direction is licensing of programs and activity in the field of prevention and correction of asocial, deviant, and delinquent behavior of the juveniles. Practically all professionals, working in the considered field of practical psychology mark the necessity of this problem solution. However, its actual solution is not a simple matter even if there is coordinated common request. To the evident hardships on the path to this problem solution we can

refer the development relatively universal and unbiased criteria of examination, the choice of experts and formation of system of minimizing the expert estimations subjectivity, attaching a clear legal status to the licensing procedure.

Below, we will dwell on some significant pithy aspects of the considered problem in detail.

According to official returns, the number of juveniles, registered for committing socially dangerous acts before attaining the age of 14, is about 66 thousands (Social orphanage ..., page 15). To the end of 2000, according to the information received from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, there was 41,5 thousands of informal groups of young people (in 1998 - 38 thousands, in 1999 - 42,6 thousands) and 119,3 thousand of them were registered at the police departments (About the situation... 2001; World of childhood / 3, 2002, page 54). According to the available data, 20 % of the street prostitutes are juveniles (of 13 - 17 age, mean age is 15,3) they begin their sexual life, on the average, at the age of 13,1 (World of childhood / 1, 2002, page 7).

The tendency towards increase in the quantity of offences, committed by children and adolescents, living in full families, is evident. Thus, according to the relevant statistical data, the number of children, brought up outside the family, has comes to merely 5,3 % out of the condemned juveniles, 38,9 % was brought up in the incomplete families, and 55,9 % was brought up in full families (Zabryansky G.I., 2000). The adolescents need informal, unrestricted relations with parents not less than the relations with the children of their age. However, the conducted research demonstrated that only 31,1 % of the children are satisfied with their relations with mother, and only 9,1 % of the adolescents are content with their relations with father (World of childhood / 2, 2002, page 45).

During one year alone, approximately 248 thousands of parents incur the administrative penalty for persistent neglect of their duties of bringing up and teaching children, up to 33 thousands cases are prosecuted for bringing an action on deprivation of parental rights (About the situation... World of childhood / 3, 2002, page 54).

Today, according to different estimations, the number of uncared-for and homeless children in Russia is from 1 to 1,5 million, more than 660 thousand children are registered officially as orphans and children having no custodial care. The absolute majority of them, about 90 %, are social orphans, i.e. orphans, whose parents are alive.

Orphans data analysis demonstrates that the large part of the homeless children, approximately 70 %, is 7 - 15 years old (Social orphanage ..., pages 7, 11).

The data of authoritative researches demonstrate that more than 30 % of adolescents, aged 14 and almost 4 % of 7 year-old children drink alcohol, (Gurvitch I.N. 2002). The age of children taking drugs has decreased on the average to 14,5. Analysis of the quiz among the adolescents aged 10-17, which was conducted during the special research on the level of their knowledge about drugs has shown that the main source of information in all age groups of pupils is mass media.

The older is the children, the less fear for the drugs they have, the number of the adolescents, who taste the drugs, rise. All young people are well informed about the main list of drugs: in the 5th grade children gave names of 10-12 drugs, in the 8th grade - 15-16 drugs, and in the 11th grade - 20-25 drugs. While teachers could recall only 3-5 names of drugs (Shipitsina L.M. 2000).

Considerable contribution to the formation of juveniles' asociality makes modern mass media. Every third - fourth scene on TV ends with murders, every twelfth scene – with cruel beating, every seventh - with open unconcealed erotica or coitus. Feature films take the first place by showing the scenes of violence and erotica, they take 57 % of such telecasting. The second place belongs to the advertising - 23,3 % of telecasting the scenes of violence and erotic. The third place is taken by the news items - 12,6 % (Sobkin V.S., Kuznetsova N.I. 1998).

However, modern psychology precedes from the assumption that one of the central mechanisms of formation of unsociability and aggressive behavior is the watching mechanism. Within the framework of social learning conception (A. Bandura and his followers) and at the theoretical and empirical levels of the analysis it was convincingly verified that watching can be even more “effective” mechanism of unsociability learning, than the first hand experience of person.

In this connection, we suppose that there is a need of professional commission of experts (by the forces of mass media and an independent one) for the future telecast, which will determine the programs conformity with different age groups of the youth audience.

It is also necessary (and it should be corroborated by the normative acts) to warn the audience by means of special station breaks about the age limits interposed by specific transmission (one or another program, film, etc.). The station breaks should precede the direct translation and should be published in

the printed advertising. And, finally, in general plan, the conception of execution of youth policy in mass media must be developed.

It is known that family is the most important institute of the person development and socialization. In the very family the person gains the first experience of social interaction. In fact, during a certain time family is the only place for a child to gain this sort of experience. Then, in the life of a person appear such social institutes as kindergarten, school, and street.

However, the family remains as one of the most important and sometimes even the most important factor the person socialization. *Family can be regarded as a model and form of the basic training in the person's life.* Socialization in family comes as a result of purposeful process of education and as a mechanism of social learning and imitation. The process of social learning, in its turn, also develops in two principal directions.

On the one hand, during the process of direct interaction with his parents, brothers, and sisters, child gains social experience and on the other hand, socialization is realized due to observation on the peculiarities of social interaction of other members of the family.

In the course of growing up, the attitude to the family changes. In the process of socialization, the group of coevals substitutes for parents to the great extent or, as some specialists name it, there is a "depreciation" of parents. Transfer of the socialization center from the family to the group of coevals results in weakening of emotional contacts with parents.

It is necessary to note that "depreciation" of parents in juvenile and youthful age is very widespread. Apparently, it is right as a general direction of the age development of person.

However, globalization of these representations and exaggeration of the idea about "parents replacement" by the group of coevals do not quite corresponds with the practical situation.

It is the fact that even though parents as the center of orientation and identification really retreat into the shadow in this period, it relates only to some certain sphere of life.

For the majority of young people parents, especially mother, are the main emotionally close person. So, in one social and psychological research it was showed that in the problematical situations mother was emotionally the closest person for the adolescents and then, depending on the situation in various order: father, girlfriend or friend.

In the other research senior pupils ranked, with whom they would prefer to spend their free time: with the parents, with the friends, in the company of coevals of the same sex, in the mixed company, etc. In the list of young men parents took the last (sixth) place, girls put them on the fourth place.

However, answering the question: “Whom would you seek an advice from in the complex situation of everyday life?” both girls and boys put mother on the first place. On the second place, boys had father and girls mentioned a friend (Kon I.S. 1989). In other words, it is pleasant to have a good time with friends, but in the hour of need it is better to turn to mum. It is a common and normal behaviour in juvenile and youthful age.

However, the problem is that many so-called “street children” and the “adolescents of group of risk” have no *such normal* family relations and *such normal parents*, which they could address to in the complex, problematical situations of everyday life.

The last data of the social and psychological researches into modern youth confirmed the idea of the major role of family and parents in normal development of the personality in the juvenile and youthful age. As it is shown in one of these researches (Rean A.A., Sannikova M.Y. 1998, 2003), in the system of the person’s attitude to social environment, where the attitude to coevals was determined as well, the attitude towards mother has appeared to be the most positive.

It was established that the lowering of positive attitude to mother and increase in the negative characteristics, when describing mother, correlate with the general growth of negativism in all social attitudes of the person.

It may be assumed that behind this fact there is a fundamental phenomenon of the total negativism show, that is negativism for all social objects, phenomena, and even for social and legal norms of the person, for whom the negative attitude to his own mother is typical.

As a whole, as it was ascertained during the research, the negative attitude towards mother is an important index of the general unfavourable development of the personality.

Typical for the juvenile age reaction of grouping relates to pronounced tendency to grouping with coevals. The groups can have rigid structure or they can be amorphous. The first model of group is typical for groups of criminal orientation and for male groups; the second model is typical for non-criminal groups and groups of both sexes.

We can name at least two causes making for difficulty for leaving the group. The first cause - at the rigid structure of group the walkout should be approved, i.e. allowed by the leader. The unauthorized walkout is punishable, quite often the punishment is rather severe. The second cause - more important and more widespread has deeper intra-personal nature.

The researches show that the absolute majority of so-called “difficult” children and adolescents have one of the main needs of the person - need for respect, acceptance and love - blocked. The importance of this need is

indicated by the fact that it is included in the “five” of man’s base needs: along with physiological needs (meal, drink, sleep, etc.) and safety requirements.

The school or the family, in which the opportunity of satisfaction the child’s needs in acceptance and respect are blocked, “throws” him into the street, where he is looking for and, as a result of long (and sometimes not such a long) searches, finds the group, in which his needs can be satisfied.

The psychological comfort of the child’s stay in such group explains, why the numerous attempts of parents, school, and police to drag the child out of this group by force, usually fail.

There is the way out. But it is connected not with the force acts, but with psychological and pedagogical efforts on formation and subsequent invitation of adolescents in the informal pro-social oriented group, in which the needs mentioned above would be realized.

The major direction of the practical psychologists’ activity (or activity of teachers and parents with the help of the psychologists’ methodical consultation) is development of such personal component as responsibility. In other words, internal and external locus of person control. Internality correlates with social maturity and pro-social behavior. Externality is correlatively connected to poor social maturity and unsociable behaviour.

As it is shown in the whole series of empirical researches, internals are notable for the greater tolerance, greater purposefulness, independence, lesser aggressiveness, friendlier attitude to people (including the employees of law enforcement bodies), than externals are.

According to some data (A.A. Rean, 1994), there are 84 % externals among the young delinquents, while internals take only 16 %. Researches, where the subjects of inquiry were young people of the same age, but with clear pro-social orientation and with positive scale of values (A.A. Rean, D.Y. Karandeshev, 1994), demonstrate absolutely different control type distribution. The picture “repeats”, but quite differently. In the group of young people with pro-social orientation, demonstrating high for their age level of social maturity in their behavior, there were 72 % of internals and only 4 % of externals.

In addition, there are some facts of the adolescents’ particular attitude to policemen, gathered during the special researches (Rean A.A., 1999). So, generalized portrait, image of policeman in the opinion of youth (the most often used descriptions): brutal, aggressive, suspicious, imperious, mistrustful, embittered, heartless, unjust, and indifferent. It is easy to note that the social image of policeman is only negative.

Situation does not change even though taking into consideration that suspicion and distrustfulness simply reflect the peculiarities of professional activity of policeman, included in the qualities necessary for its successful fulfillment. The negative role of such social stereotype first of all can adversely affect the efficiency of legal education, and in general, the successfulness of legal socialization of the person, formation of people's legal sense of justice.

If in the lawman description there is not a single positive characteristic, connected with the concept of "justice", and at the same time in the list of ten the most common qualities people name "injustice", "aggressiveness", "brutality", and indifference", then there is a question: whether the law (at least in its subjective perception by people) is just, or it can be changed by anyone. It may be assumed that the revealed and described here negative social stereotype of the employee of the law enforcement bodies, on the one hand is a consequence, but on the other hand, it is also a cause of legal nihilism of Russians.

In general, phenomenon of legal nihilism is more and more often regarded as a feature of Russian mentality, which has an old historical background.

Apparently, this background is really strong and besides it is not only historical, but psychological as well, having its grounds in the childhood psychology. It is quite obvious that on the basis of such opinion about the policemen, the practical dialogue between the adolescents and the specific lawmen, at the department of preventive measures against the juvenile delinquency for example, will be extremely difficult.

The problem of asocial behavior of children and adolescents, child neglect, homeless children, and social orphanage is a wide-ranging social problem. Children, who have found themselves out in the street, without care and family, need various help for one or another reason.

The data of special researches and practice of activity of social services for neglected children demonstrates that about 30 % of such children require the help of psychologist, about 50 % - require a doctor consultation (different specific specialties), 70 % require an active help and cooperation from their parents, and almost 80 % needs a broad, multiple-aspect help of social services (Syrtsev V.V.1998; Street children ...).

However, with all importance and necessity of the named needs satisfaction, all of us suppose that the main direction of the solution of problems of asocial behavior of juveniles, neglect, and social orphanage is the system of preventive and warning measures.

At such approach the center of gravity of the whole system should be moved to the family activity. This activity remains wide-ranging and includes all measures of social (including material), psychological, pedagogical, and legal aid.

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