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Senior school children's cognitive motivation in the competitive educational context

The spectrum of application of competitive types of activity in educational practice and educational process is very wide. One of the directions is academic competitions. However, there are no researches revealing motivation of senior school children which determine dynamics of their participation in these kinds of activity.

Key words: *motive, sense sphere of personality, purposes in life, competitive motivation, context-forming and stimulus motivation.*

In the conditions of dynamically changing realities of the contemporary world, when habitual axiological norms and stereotypes can not serve as a guide-book in reality, the man can find his life journey under conditions of having specific axiological context attitudes towards life, experience, life events, and behavior strategies. Municipal educational space treated as the unity of the comprehensive school and the system of additional education, becomes this institution, which doesn't propose to the pupil a definite set of knowledge, but gives him an impulse to personal growth, that intention which will make the man search for and reveal the purposes of his life, to govern his unique life way. So there is a need to assess from the new point of view what triggers an adolescent, what determines his quest for knowledge. Traditionally, in psychology under initiating causes of activity they mean a motive as an object-oriented activity having the definite force, as to knowledge – they are specific cognitive motives. A lot of psychologists studied the motivation, that's why in modern psychological science there are different definitions of this phenomenon (L.I. Antsiferova, L.I. Bozhovich, T.V. Dragounova, I.S. Kon, D.A. Leontiev, A.N. Leontiev, A.R. Louriya, O.U. Mikhailova, V.S. Moukhina, V.F. Petrenko, S.L. Roubinshtein, D.B. Elkonin). Leaving apart the particularities of definitions in different theoretical contexts, by motivation they basically understand the set of psychological traits, explaining human behavior, their origin, trend and activity. Motivation explains purposeful nature of the action, state of being organized and activity stability, directed towards the goal achievement.

The particular part of the theory of motivation is occupied by studies of motivated behavior as specially organized educational activity, when the cognitive activity is exposed to the controlled impact from the teacher.

A.K. Markova uses the term of "learning motives" in reference to pupil's personality trend towards different aspects of educational activity. Correspondingly the motives can be cognitive, if they are connected to the content studies, and social, if they are related with communication of pupils with each other and teachers. Psychologists speak about positive and negative motivation, about situational and stable motives.

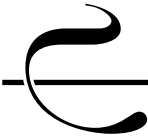
The more penetrating insight into motivation is contained in the activity approach to the theory of learning (P.Ya. Galperin, D.B. Elkonin, V.V. Davidov, N.F. Talizina and others). This theory attracts by its simplicity and severity: the motives can



be external or internal depending upon the relation of the man to neogenesis. The core of this model consists in differentiating motives-stimulus and sense-forming motives. Clearing up this matter of principle, that the bases of motives-stimulus are the category of the "object", and the bases of context forming motives are the category of "context relation", gave the possibility to study cognitive motivation as a process, that is to say as the object – context unity, consisting, from one point of view, of completed structures (motives-stimulus), and from another – of adding up between them context relations, constructing the content of sense-forming motives.

D.A. Leontiev determines the activity motive as «subject, included into the system of relation realization to the subject – world as an object in this system acquiring the possibility to initiate and govern subject activity. This attribute is not included in the subject itself, but it is stipulated by its combined sense, by the involvement in the systems of context connections, generated by real subject needs». They distinguish two characteristics of the motive: 1) motive connected to the concrete activity– «each activity has only one motive; it appears together with it and ends its existence synchronously with it; 2) its «poly-need character», in other words its relevance simultaneously to a number of needs. «The motive context is prescribed, as a rule, by its connection with a need, by a range of needs. The systematic and context interpretation of the motive allows finding its exact place in the system of factors, motivating activity, and also to describe its main functions- – initiation and sense –forming– as internal indissolubly connected factors». In the context model of sense regulation of the activity, motive plays the role of situation building context structure, determining at this base, the system of context regulation, corresponding to each activity taken separately. «Motive main functions are initiation and context forming ». If the motivation is external, it doesn't mean, that it is bad, it means, it has certain advantages and disadvantages. It is known, that prestige and competitive motivations are widely spread in school environment and they often lead to good academic results. Competitive motivation is a typical phenomenon of the secondary school, when children try to keep pace with each other. Prestige, competitive motivation operates if the senior school children try to assert themselves, demonstrating their knowledge in this or that field.

As adolescents have competitive trends, it allows them to make actual their potential abilities and especially in organized activity (contests, competitions, academic competitions), it helps them to look in a new way at themselves, adequately assess their level of aspiration and their self-concept. However, it is clear, that motives, which influence school children in competitions, differ. Who is the winner more often? Which factors become the barriers on the way to success? How to organize academic competition or contest, decreasing to the utmost the risk of the competitive stress? Unfortunately, modern psychological and pedagogical science doesn't give answers to these and other dependent questions. Competitive motivation is only studied in the context of organizing sport competitions, but the competitions connected to the



rivalry in intellectual and informational fields of the knowledge are rarely the object of psychological analysis.

Studies carried out in recent years among senior school children –participants of district, city and regional academic competitions, showed, that these school children have the following personality features:

- adolescents- participants of academic competitions have different cognitive trends: intellectual, creative and a leadership ones;
- differences in cognitive trend are based upon specific context forming motivation and it creates different purpose-in life orientations, which form the particularities of the interaction of the adolescent with the environment;
- adolescents with the strategy of intellectual trend are oriented to the life process and its purpose, they give rather high marks to the passed life distance, they control their choice, their life; the adolescents with leadership strategy are oriented to the process and life purpose, but it manifests itself less, they are especially interested into the social significance if the activity results; teenagers with creative strategy are oriented to the process and results, they are characterized by the lack of controlling themselves and their life in comparison with two other strategies. The adolescents with leadership trend have the highest indices of life meaningfulness, those with creative strategy have the lowest indices.

Senior schoolchildren, who have more often success in academic competitions and who consider the need in competitive activity as necessary (it helps me to assess myself objectively, it makes me more confident, stronger and etc) they have the following purpose-in life strategy:

- goals in future which give the meaning to their life ;
- time outlook;
- the highest index of self-actualization desire;
- highly expressed quest to creative realization and humanitarian values of self-actuating personality, harmonic being and healthy relations with people, at the same time the incredulity into the possibility of sincere and harmonic interpersonal relations, lack of confidence in people and low level of spontaneity (liberty, disengagement, easiness without effort);
- the most important values – «interesting work», «active life» and «assertion», in this regard «public vocation» and the desire of “personnal growth” don’t matter;
- perception of the environment and themselves is carried out through awareness of content of laconic abstract signs and symbols and emotional relation to themselves;
- high level of the achievement need;
- harmonic relation towards their future profession and its high significance, demonstrated through domination of internal motivation;
- high dissatisfaction of the current knowledge level;
- the highest significance of teaching quality;
- highly expressed need in further personal growth.



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