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## The Influence of the Boarding School Environment on the Psychoemotional Development of Children

*The article examines the problem of the environmental influence on the development of personality; the author describes the social environment of the boarding school where the child learns social regularities and relations which has a decisive importance for the psychoemotional development and manifestation of adaptation abilities of orphan children. The process of adaptation of personality is considered in the light of correlation with the socialization concept. The article brings forward the analysis of the data obtained experimentally corroborating the necessity of psychological support for children in conditions of deprivation.*

**Key words:** adaptation, orphan children, socialization, environment, psychoemotional development, psychological support, boarding schools.

The problem of influence of the environment on the development of personality is not new. A. S. Makarenko, M. M. Pistrak, V. N. Soroka-Rosinsky, K. D. Ushinsky, etc. recognized the importance of the environment in education and development of personality. In connection with problems of socialization, social adaptation, etc. there is a considerable interest of researchers in the environment phenomenon in recent years.

Relying on the environmental approach we consider that the social environment in which the child masters social regularities and relations has a decisive importance for psychoemotional development of the child. If they bring up and develop a child in unfavorable conditions when he/she is completely or partially deprived of necessary emotional influences (parental warmth, care, attention, etc.), then, as domestic and foreign scientists consider (I. V. Dubrovina, V. V. Kovaliev, E. M. Mastjukova, V. S. Mukhina, A. M. Prikhozhan, A. Maslow, A. Freud, etc.) such environmental influence is a special form of psychotraumatic factors – an emotional deprivation. Its overcoming depends to a large extent on the level of development of the child's adaptive abilities.

The researches reflecting various aspects of phenomena "adaptation", "adaptive abilities" show that the concept of "adaptation of personality" is considered in the light of correlation of the concept of socialization and the development of personality (E. L. Andreyeva, G. A. Ball, L. G. Babiyeva, L. K. Grishanov, V. D. Tsurkan, I. B. Dermanova, I. K. Kryazheva, etc.). Therefore, in this context it is necessary to speak about social adaptation.

Existing researches show that social adaptation is understood as a social and psychological process which leads the person to a condition of adjustment, being shown in features of the person's relations with a group [1]. Social adjustment enables the person to develop a certain mode and style of life; to define ways of self-



assertion in the new environment and in a new kind of activity; to develop patterns of thinking and behavior which reflect the system of values and norms of the given collective. Thus the person's degree of adjustment is defined by his/her emotional health. But, as practice shows, today there are more and more situations when people, owing to objective and subjective circumstances, experience negative emotions. And, first of all, it is necessary to speak about children who found themselves in a deprivation situation when there are no conditions enabling the child to carry out self-realization, self-manifestation and natural assimilation, learning of the purposes, values, norms and styles of behavior accepted in society of satisfaction of not only higher, but also basic needs. This, in turn, generates homelessness, vagrancy, formation of asocial groups, etc. This fact is caused by instability of social and economic life of the country, a low standard of living of the population, increase in the number of divorces and the quantity of one-parent families.

Realizing the whole acuteness of the situation the state creates special establishments on prevention of child neglect, and also supports children who have found themselves in a difficult life situation or without parental support.

But, in spite of the fact that they create real conditions for support of such children (programs for a child's return in a native or foster family, guardianship or patronage, etc.), the number of children educated in government institution does not decrease, but it increases annually [3]. Therefore, relying on the existing researches connected with psychological ensuring of the development of personality [2, 4], our purpose was creation of certain conditions in the boarding school environment which can ensure children's safe psychoemotional development, increase of their abilities to adapt, and prepare them for independent life in the future.

Revelation of conditions, factors which already exist (or which can be created in the boarding school environment), which can provide stabilization of the child's psychoemotional condition and increase his/her ability to adapt was important for our study.

The program developed by us, which main purpose was psychological support to children at the stage of social and psychological adaptation to conditions of the boarding school became one of such conditions. We have assumed that the developed program will prevent and decrease negative consequences of social and psychological deprivation.

Besides, the content of the program was focused on the prevention and correction of already available personal problems of children of various ages. In particular, blocks of the program were developed in such a way that made it possible to prevent, minimize, correct disapproved characteristics, behavior forms which were a consequence of unfavorable conditions of family upbringing and a psychotraumatic situation connected with a family loss.

For our research we have created samples of pupils of different ages. The first sample included children at the age of 5–7 years (the group of preschool-age chil-



dren; 55 persons). The second sample included children at the age of 8–10 years (junior school-age children; 55 persons). The third sample included teenagers at the age of 12–14 years (55 persons).

The theoretical analysis of a the problem of influence of the environment on children's psychoemotional development, our own observations showed that each age stage faced various difficulties in development which are caused by the specificity of the boarding school environment. In particular, at the stage of pre-school age there are emotional disorders connected with insufficient self-control, manifestation of desadaptive behavioural reactions in relation to adults and children, undevelopment of communicative skills and negativism in communication. At the junior school-age they display emotional instability, aggression, lack of skills of standard behavior, low social activity. At the youthful age they display distrust of adults, enmity, affectivity, aggression and demonstration of substandard behavior, personal nevrozization, and restriction of social contacts.

All this made it possible to distinguish in the program of psychological support a number of blocks filling of which content took place with due regard for the criteria of adaptation of orphan children to conditions of the boarding school environment and age and psychological features of adaptation process:

- the adaptative block is focused on acquaintance with new conditions of activity and the system of requirements and rules;
- the emotional block is focused on the decrease in emotional intensity, anxiety, formation of emotional stability of children and teenagers;
- the autopsychological block promotes self-understanding (understanding of own personality), development of the need for self-knowledge, formation of skills of self-analysis;
- the self-estimated block assumes formation of a steady adequate and positive self-appraisal, overcoming of disorders of self-appraisal at junior school age and younger school and adolescence;
- the block of social activity promotes realization of personal resources, development of the person's integrity and training in the decision-making mechanism;
- the communicative block develops skills of effective communication and promotes harmonious development of the child's personality.

Each of the above-named blocks had three areas of activity: diagnostic and analytical, organizational and methodical, practical.

The experimental research was carried out in three stages: ascertaining, forming and control. At the control stage of experiment our attention was concentrated on reveling of the dynamics by criteria of adaptation in each age group. For the purpose of comparison and revelation of effectiveness of the system of psychological support developed by us, children of each sample were differentiated into two groups: control and experimental (in groups of 24). In each group we have carried out psychodiagnostic researches by means of the methods of



diagnostics which we used at the ascertaining stage. For more detailed analysis let's consider changes which took place in experimental groups.

Signs of adaptation of the preschool age orphan children who were in experimental group have had a steady positive dynamics. Their psychophysiological features influenced their psychological state to a lesser extent, since they have obtained regular medical aid during their residence at establishments. The level of their psychophysical development increased; mental development approached age norms. Children mastered cultural and hygienic skills, learned to look after themselves and their clothes, became neater and more well-groomed. It is also possible to emphasize the stabilization of children's emotional state. During the supporting work the increase of indices by this criterion was 15–18%. Children became quieter, disposed positively, more open for communication, trustful in relation to adults; they feel upset, take offense, and cry less. Sleep and appetite were stabilized among 66,7% of children. Children began to play orderly, easier contact to contemporaries and adults, show an initiative in communication (70,8%).

Contradictory behavior in relation to adults and children became less noticeable (37,5%). Children learned how to follow the rules of the game, became less aggressive, their demonstrative reactions decreased, they learned to hear the teacher and to react to his/her demands and instructions adequately.

We should note that 66,7% of children had an increased vitality, since children started initiating contacts; their level of anxiety and emotional lability were decreased. Children learned to consider the adult as a partner in communication and activity, to ask for the help and to use it.

Thus, the process of adaptation to the boarding school environment became less painful and more productive among the preschool age orphan children who took part in the system of psychological support. It corroborates the data obtained by E.V. Morozova concerning the role of interpersonal relations in adaptation of teenagers to the pedagogical environment of an orphan asylum [5]. Therefore we explain the obtained data by that the stabilization of the child's psychological state, improvement of emotional contact with adults, increase of trust in them, creation of partner relationship made it possible to influence features of interaction with the world around and, therefore, to soften psychophysiological manifestations of adaptive processes, to level disadaptive behavioural reactions of children in relation to adults and children, to raise their vitality.

Studying junior school age orphan children, who were a part of the experimental group, we have concentrated the attention on satisfaction of natural biological and social needs of this age. After implementation of the developed program of psychological support in this group we have observed positive dynamics in realization of the need for recognition (83,3%). The children whose behavior became standard in connection with the careful organization of their activity, observation for a regimen, support in various situations, decrease in a number of penalties and punishments, receiving appreciations, became less anxious.



Analyzing school success of children, we have also noted positive dynamics. 45,8% of them had an increase of educational activity. Thus, reactions of children became more predicted, stable since their learning ability as a whole increased due to the development of cognitive processes. In a success situation children began to demonstrate more activity at lessons. Poor progress remained among 20,8%, 75% had good results, 4,2% had perfect results. The behavior of the majority of children was stabilized. In particular, children ceased to violate the rules of discipline, learned how to occupy themselves and contemporaries with outdoor games in free time, some were fond of board games, ceased to be distracted at lessons, honestly to perform the teacher's tasks (it is revealed among 66,7% of examinees). 58,3% of children had better relationship with teachers and contemporaries. Besides, after implementation of the program we have revealed the decrease in sharpness of negative reactions in relation to children, to teachers; children had more trust in people around, they improved their emotional health (such results were revealed among 54,1% of examinees). 29,2% of children started to demonstrate anxiety, chagrin, sometimes fear, sensitivity, irascibility, irritability (there were 51,2% of them before the experiment), 16,7% of children had the same aggression which was show in relations with children and in the relations with the teacher (39,5% have had it).

We should note that emotional lability, instability, negative experiences became less expressed. The social and psychological status in the group of contemporaries has increased due to acquisition of abilities of active productive activity, improvement of scholastic achievement, change of teachers' relation, and, respectively, to decrease in hostility and aggression.

20,8% of children have demonstrated decrease in the vitality and restriction of social contacts. The others became more opened for communication, less sensitive, they have learned to overcome difficulties to some extent, to ask adults for the help and to use it, after failures to repeat attempts with the adult's support. Self-control and organization of actions have also increased. Increase in this criterion have made 21%.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that during psychological support junior school age children realize their basic needs, especially needs for recognition by development of the main mental processes of children, that enabled us to influence their school training positively. Improvement of results, relationship with teachers and contemporaries have made it possible to stabilize children's psychophysical and emotional state, to raise their vitality, the intensity of social contacts and the social and psychological status in the group of contemporaries that have had a positive influence on the process of adaptation to the boarding school environment as a whole.

Orphan teenagers in the experimental group have also had positive changes after the organization of psychological support. Thus, by the criterion of development of the strategy of behavior among teenagers the increase has made



31%. The greatest results were obtained concerning indices of self-acceptance (70,8%) – self-rejection of (29,2%), acceptance of others (54,1%) – rejection of others (45,8%). Indicators on scales adaptability (50%) – disadaptability (50%), domination (41,6%) – dependence (58,3%) were much lower. By the scale emotional comfort (54,1%) – emotional discomfort (45,8%) we have had the lowest increase. New data indicate that behavior strategies of teenagers have changed towards increase of their efficiency, controllability and activity in comparison with reactivity and spontaneity.

As for relationship with adults, the increased anxiety in relation to adults has decreased on the average by 13% and was observed among 87,5% while hostility has decreased even less – by 10% (79,2%), asociality of behavior has decreased by 11% (70,8%), mistrust of the new – by 21% (37,5%), depression – by 16% (61,8%). It means that the need for friendly, benevolent relations with adults and the need for the self-affirmation, peculiar to this age, became less contradictory, and the negative experience of relationship in dysfunctional families interfered with high achievements. Teenagers became more opened for adults, ready to accept teachers' support, to implementation of their requirements, but the extent of these changes was less, than in other groups.

In relationship with contemporaries tendencies of domination, leadership remained, but besides aggression, conflicts, suppression, there were new opportunities: rivalry, partnership, dialogue. In particular, at the ascertaining stage of the experiment we have fixed that the process of establishment of relationship with contemporaries is connected with the level of psychophysical and emotional state (it is characteristic for this age period). Therefore we have carried out the work for stabilization of experience of emotions, increase of self-appraisal, training in acceptable ways of self-affirmation and so forth. This have made it possible to raise psychophysical and emotional state that had a beneficial influence on establishment of relationship, emergence of normal friendly relationship with contemporaries; in its turn, children felt self-confidence.

Thus, in result of the carried out work we have revealed that in this group changes were the least expressed. Nevertheless, existence of insignificant, but positive dynamics confirms the expediency of psychological intervention, at the stage of adaptation to the boarding school and at the subsequent stages of restoration of social skills among orphan teenagers. This results are from the fact that teenagers in the presence of favorable conditions not only feel need, but also are capable to establish positive relationship both with adults and with contemporaries for realization of the need for self-affirmation, formation of new skills and behavior strategies. Their realization promotes stabilization of psychophysical and emotional state, development of internality, and expansion of social contacts.

Comparing the obtained results with results of a repeated section in control groups we have established that there are positive and negative, i.e. unstable, dynamics practically by all indices in all age groups within 2–3% that indicates the



spontaneity of changes whereas in experimental groups this dynamics is steady, positive in the range of 11-33%.

The statistical analysis by  $\chi^2$ -criterion have showed the importance of distinctions in distribution of orphan children of control and experimental groups in different age categories on levels of adaptation to conditions of the boarding school environment (the empirical value of the criterion surpasses the critical value equal to 7,81, at  $p < 0,05$ ). Thus, the carried out analysis of results at the control stage of experiment made it possible to draw conclusions concerning the system of effectiveness of psychological support of orphan children at the stage of adaptation to the boarding school environment. In result of implementation of the program it was established that this activity is the most effective in groups of preschool children and junior schoolchildren, in the group of teenagers the positive dynamics is lower. But as a whole there are positive changes in all groups:

- preschool age orphan children have had stabilization of a psychological state, improvement of emotional contact with adults, increase of the general level of development, improvement of sleep, appetite;
- junior school age orphan children have had positive dynamics in realization of the need for recognition, school success, psychophysical and emotional state; their need for intensity of social contacts has increased;
- orphan teenagers have demonstrated the decrease in manifestation of disadaptation, shown in formation of new skills and behavior strategies, optimization of the process of relationship with adults and contemporaries, increase of emotional stability, internal control (internality), actualization of the need requirement for self-affirmation.

The carried out research have shown that adaptation of all groups of children to conditions of the boarding school environment happens according to three levels: normal, complex and critical, bordering on disadaptation. Thus difficulties were observed in each group. In particular, we have established that for teenagers it was the most difficult to adapt; preschool age children are most easily adapted.

For minimization of manifestations of disadaptation among children members of pedagogical collective were actively involved. In our opinion, it is obligatory since the psychological comfort in the new environment children depends not only on such necessary environmental component as psychological support, but also from that position which is taken by the teacher as its organizer. It is also possible to consider it as a determinant influencing psychoemotional condition of children and the teenagers in deprivation conditions.

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