

## FORMATION OF ADOLESCENTS' SOCIAL COMPETENCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract.** *The study is devoted to the actual problem of the formation of social competence of adolescents. The aim of the research is to present the theoretical essence of the social competence and try the method of forming the social competence of teenagers out in practice. It is stated that the formation of the personal social competence is one of the key tasks of the present-day school due to the main school documents and the guidelines for the schoolchildren education in educational institutions. It is justified that social competence is an acquired skill that can be formed and developed throughout the person's life. The developed social competence determines the status of an individual in society and affects personal success in further professional activities.*

*In the study, the social competence is presented as universal personal qualities, knowledge, skills, behavioural models, which are required for person's successful socialization. The key features of social competence are: 1) recognition of the person's value-motivational sphere; 2) readiness to solve complex tasks (state of internal psychological mobilization); 3) persistence of the manifestation of this quality. It was found that important components of social competence for today's adolescence are: the ability to find constructive models of behaviour in various problem situations; navigate in the information space; apply the acquired theoretical knowledge in practice; the ability to work in groups, to cooperate with peers and older people; the ability to resolve productively conflict situations, based on the understanding of mental,*

*ethnic, and cultural characteristics of different social strata of the population; the ability to conduct business electronic correspondence with various recipients, etc.*

*Diagnostics for determining the manifestation of social competence of schoolchildren is presented, which is based on Doll's theory of social competence. The study describes the method of forming the social competence of teenagers by means of the case method. The didactic requirements for the use of the case method in order to form the researched quality are revealed, namely: saturation of the content of the cases with a meta-subject social context, multi-problems; connection of tasks with life priorities, interests, values of teenagers; the use of cases, that involves a combination of curricular and extracurricular activities, actualization of interdisciplinary knowledge, social experience of students; use of cases based on group work; implementation of the principle of cooperation in the process of solving cases, performance by the teacher of the role of moderator.*

**Keywords:** *adolescents, application of case method, components of social competence, didactic requirements, educational institution environment, key features of social competence, person's social competence.*

## **Introduction**

In modern conditions, the problem of formation of adolescents' social competence is extremely relevant caused by the search for appropriate ways of preparation for independent life. Responsibility for the life, family and country, in general, creates conditions for development of social competence as social experience, which is connected with features of social relations, offers effective self-realization in the society.

Social competence allows teenagers to engage effectively with other people and act independently, responsibly, using necessary information and their own social experience at their adulthood.

The article is aimed to describe the method of forming social competence of adolescents in conditions of educational institution environment by means of case method.

The methods of the research are: theoretical methods (analysis of psychological, pedagogical, scientific, research, analytical literature; generalization of pedagogical experience); empirical methods (observation of the educational process of pupils in conditions of general educational institution, conversation, questioning, and case method); pedagogical experiment and comprehensive analysis of its results.

## **Theoretical Background**

The concept of «social competence» was introduced firstly into the scientific literature by the German philosophy and pedagogue Roth in the late 60-s of the 20th century. The scientist distinguished three types of person's competence: self-competence (self-knowledge), social competence (interaction with others) and subject competence (practical action) (Roth, 1969). The interpretation of the

social competence of the German researcher became the basis for subsequent scientific research. Kanning (2002) considered social competence as a multifaceted generalization concept that combined a lot of human competences. It was a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities that ensured the quality of social behaviour. The author claimed that social behaviour was the behaviour that promoted realization of the personal goals while preserving socially acceptable behaviour. The social competent behaviour was provided by a set of such methods of action, which determined mutually beneficial and successful cooperation of all participants of such interaction (Jackson, & Cunningham, 2015; Kanning, 2002; Petermann et al., 1995).

In developmental psychology Doran (2002), Emerson (2007), Raino (2008), White (2005) etc., social competence is often equated with the adaptation of an individual to the surrounding world in the process of socialization during education. Riemann, & Allgoewer (1993), Frosch (2002) expanded the interpretation of social competence by understanding that social competence also implied cooperation with the surrounding world (other people), and at the same time confrontation with it through certain personal aspects. Petermann et al. (1995), Seyd (2004) described the reflection characteristics of social competence, which ensured the realization of a balance between personal requests and the expectations of other people.

The latest studies presented the interdependence between high levels of social competence and emotional and well-being regulation and academic results of teenagers as well (Arslan, 2019; Franco et al., 2017). Some studies described the connections between social competence and sociocultural competences (Varela et al., 2020; Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2019). The relation between social competence and self-esteem were described in several studies. They showed that adolescents with higher level of social competence were more resilient and present higher self-esteem (Arslan, 2019; Waldeck et al., 2015). Consequently, the social competence had a significant effect on self-esteem (Bedard et al., 2020; Dembińska et al., 2020).

In some research, it was investigated and proved the important meaning of social competence in educational process (Franco et al., 2017; Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2017). In order to increase the educational success, it is not enough to improve cognitive skills but to promote social skills (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2017; Luna et al., 2020). Simultaneously, social skills strengthen interpersonal relationships between students and other participants of the educational process (Bessa et al., 2019; Cronin et al., 2018). Special attention was paid to examine the impact of social competence of adolescents on interpersonal skills in the educational process for positive and quality learning (Gómez-Ortiz et al., 2017; 2019; Bessa et al., 2019).

We consider that the essence of social competence is based on the balance between cooperation and confrontation of the demands and interests of the parties

in situations of interpersonal interaction. Thus, the social competence is a combination of universal personal qualities, knowledge, skills, behavioural models, which are required for person's successful socialization (Dmitrenko et al., 2021; 2022a). The key features of social competence are: recognition of the person's value-motivational sphere; readiness to solve complex tasks (state of internal psychological mobilization); persistence of the manifestation of this quality.

Thus, the social competence is characterized as the process result feature and sophisticated integral formation of personality. It is perceived as integral virtue of personality, represented by the system of personal traits and features, capabilities and socially meaningful faculties providing accordance of individual to the social group and determines the achievement of successful realization of personal and public meaningful aims in heterogeneous society.

### **Methodology**

We have chosen a case method to form the social competence of adolescents. Study of the general features of the case method, as one of the productive interactive methods of teaching, allows to formulate specific didactic requirements to the use of the case method in the process of formation of social competence of pupils of the secondary school: the intensity of the case content with a metaphysical social context, the multi problems of the considered situations, which do not allow to find an unambiguous solution; connection of tasks with pupils' priorities in life, interests and values; use of «cross-cutting» cases, implementation of it involves combining of educational and extracurricular activities, updating of inter-subject knowledge, social experience of pupils; involving pupils in the choice of topics and improving the content of cases; the advantage of using group work, which provide considering individual peculiarities of pupils; realization of the principle of cooperation in the process of case solving, the teacher's role as a moderator in the process of search for the optimal ways of solution by pupils of secondary education.

The variety of cases (project cases, role cases, task cases, analytical cases, internal-operational or external-strategic cases, additive cases, etc.) does not change the cases' creation and structure. They should have: a plot, participants (their roles), a problem (and its features), a task (made / missed decisions), a question and a task to the case (Dmitrenko et al., 2022b).

All cases have the property of a multi-variant choice of a solution. Cases do not have the wrong solutions. Any result is the materials that can be included in the case for the next participants in the future. The teacher acts as a moderator, who ensures that the case is clear. The teacher does not suggest or give advice in

choosing the «correct» decision. And the pedagogue does not act as a mentor or does not exert pressure or «authoritative opinion» for participants.

### **Sample**

Before starting experimental training for formation the social competence of adolescents by means of the case method in educational institution environment, we developed a set of methodical materials aimed at forming separate social competences. In the complex of materials, 5 cases were developed with the help of a psychologist. Those cases were met specified didactic requirements and compiled with consideration of knowledge and needs of teenagers. The case «Implementation of the Electronic Educational environment» was based on the real situation in which pupils were involved in the approbation of the introduction of the electronic educational environment. The change of external factors required the formation of new competencies, which would allow not only to acquire innovations, but also to get the maximum benefit. The students realized that they could influence the life of the school, while working on this case. Teachers and parents were equal participants of the educational process. The pupils took part more actively in the case concerning introduction of electronic educational environment, interacting with the project supervisor, the teacher and peers. Pupil's attention were attracted by the case, which forming the ability to conduct business e-mail with different addresses, cooperate with peers and older people, and achieve the set goal.

A quest-style case, as opposed to a training or seminar, allowed participants to gain experience as a result of independent search. Those cases formed social competence through experience more effectively, because pupils did not perceive the game reality as a learning task that it was distant from real life. There was an opportunity to model both abstract and real situations and create a storyline that would «lead» a person from habit to skill throughout the game. Thanks to the game format, participants «lived» different roles. An essential feature of that case was that it had no ready-made solutions, and the teacher and pupils worked «on equal terms».

Each case offered to the pupils was supplemented with new components: analytical materials, draft decisions obtained in the process of performing tasks. Participation in the creation of didactic materials, rather than just performing the task set by the teacher, increased the level of responsibility for the work results.

### **Participants**

The study involved 58 adolescents aged 13-14 years. The experimental training was conducted in a secondary school among eighth grade pupils. The pupils were divided into two groups: control (29 participants) and experimental

(29 participants). The participants and their parents were informed about the purpose and the structure of the study and assured that their surnames would not be used in the study result reports.

### **Instruments**

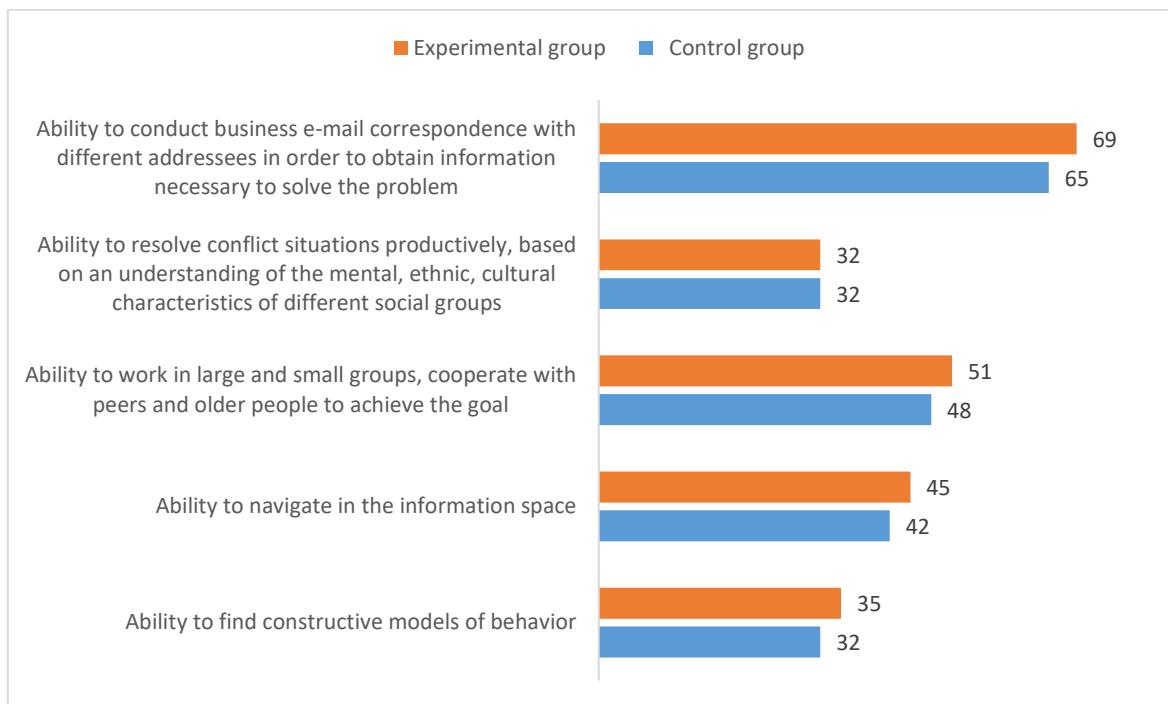
The questionnaire was adapted version of the Adolescent Multidimensional Social Competence Questionnaire (AMSC-Q) (Gómez-Ortiz et al. (2017)), that included the following parts: cognitive reappraisal, social adjustment, prosocial behavior, perceived social efficacy, and normative adjustment. The instrument helped to measure the level of formation of the following components of social competence of adolescents: 1) ability to find constructive models of behaviour in different social conditions; 2) ability to navigate in the modern information space, which reflects the cultural, economic, political life of society, different social groups; 3) ability to work in large and small groups, cooperate with peers and older people; 4) ability to resolve conflict situations, understand the characteristics of different social groups; 5) ability to conduct e-mail correspondence.

All indicators in the questionnaire were transformed into statements. In the process of filling in the questionnaire, it was necessary to evaluate to what extent the statement correctly described the behavioural patterns of the respondent on a five-point Likert scale: from «completely agree» (5 points) to «completely disagree» (0 points).

The participants of both groups filled in the self-assessment questionnaire of social competence at the beginning and at the end of the experimental training. During the experimental training, in order to form social competence, the pupils of the experimental group were taught with specially developed cases. The pupils of control group were taught traditionally without any changes in the program.

### **Results and Discussion**

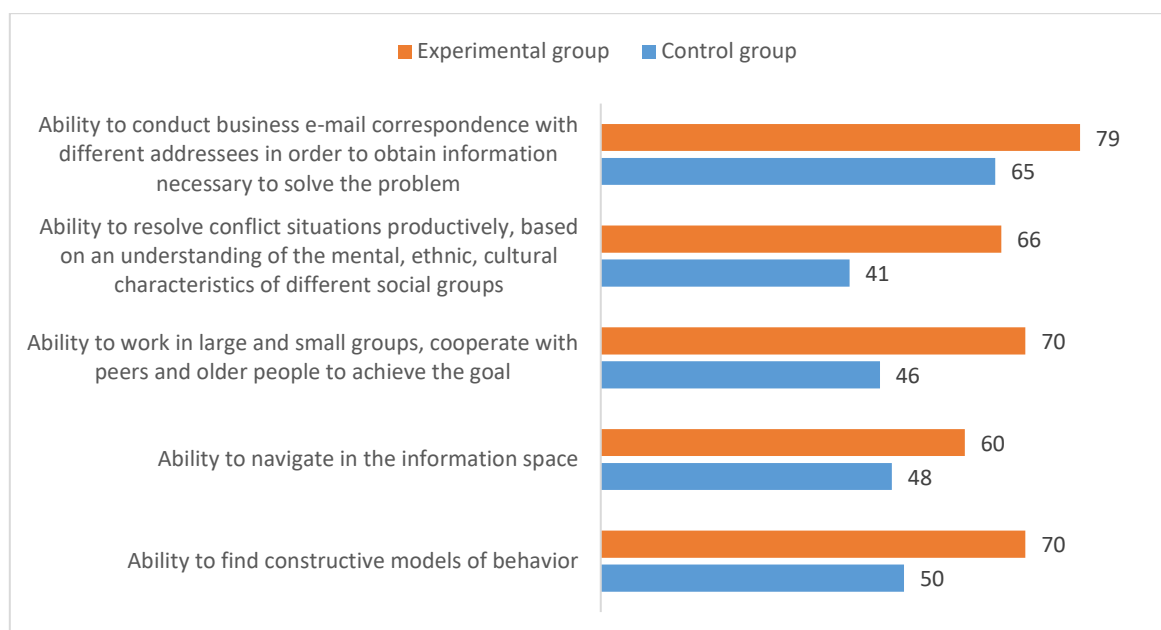
At the beginning of the study, respondents were offered a questionnaire for self-assessment of certain indicators of social competence (Fig. 1).



*Figure 1 Self-assessment of pupils' social competences at the beginning of the experimental training (made by Authors)*

The obtained results showed that the level of social competence in both groups differed insignificantly at the beginning of the experimental training.

At the end of the experimental training, the comparative results regarding to the formation of certain social competencies of pupils according to the determined behaviour indicators were received (Fig. 2).



*Figure 2 Self-assessment of pupils' social competences at the end of the experimental training (made by Authors)*

At the end of the experimental training, according to the questionnaire results of pupils' self-assessment of the formation of social competence, the experimental group showed the formation of such qualities as the ability to work in large and small groups, to determine their own role in the work of the group and to fulfil it, to cooperate with peers and older people much more than the control class. The number of respondents increased to 19% in the experimental group, and in the control group the dynamics is negative.

Productive conflict resolution is an integral part of long-term group work on the case, which had a positive impact on the formation of competences in a fairly short period of time. The number of pupils in experimental group almost doubled: from 32% to 66% who believed that they learned to solve conflicts effectively, in contrast to the control group, where the number of respondents increased only to 9%.

Working with cases, teenagers showed the ability to 1) empathize, understand experience, condition and interests of others, and 2) critically perceive the positive qualities and shortcomings of themselves and their friends. The skill to prevent and productively resolve interpersonal conflicts was formed. If at the beginning of the experimental training the teenagers could make critical statements about their classmates, by the end of the training such behaviour became extremely rare. Pupils began to understand each other much better, there were fewer negative situations. Teenagers have formed an understanding of the unproductivity of excessive mutual criticism. These results converge with other previous research papers that analyze the effectiveness of social competence formation (Bessa et al., 2019; Luna et al., 2019).

The questionnaire results at the initial and final sections showed that the number of pupils who believed that they could find constructive patterns of behaviour in various situations doubled in the experimental group. In the experimental group in contrast to control group, there were significant positive changes according to the criteria "orientation in the information space", "ability to conduct electronic correspondence".

In the control group, where case studies were not used in the educational process, we noted the desire of adolescents for individualization, separation from a large group, closure in small primary groups. This situation could be reflected in difficulties related to further educational and professional activities.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of the study, it is concluded that social competence can be formed effectively in the educational institution environment. The age of adolescence is favourable for its formation and a case method is an effective method for it. The main didactic requirements for the case method are: saturation of the content with meta-subject social context, multiproblems; connection of tasks with life



priorities, interests, values of adolescents; use of cases, the implementation of which involves a combination of lesson and extracurricular activities, actualization of interdisciplinary knowledge, social experience of pupils; involvement of children in the choice of topics and improvement of the content of cases; the advantage of using cases based on group work; implementation of the principle of cooperation, the role of the teacher as a moderator. The use of the case method in classroom and extracurricular activities throughout the school year, constant work with a certain base of created cases provided positive dynamics in the formation of social competence of pupils. It is concluded that an adolescent with high level of social competence 1) has a strong system of knowledge about human interaction in the educational process, and developed social intelligence, 2) understands and accepts social values of other people, 3) is able to cooperate with other participants of the educational process, 4) perform different social roles, 5) is able to adapt to the requirements of a new society, 6) is able to carry out constructive communication and prevent conflicts.

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