
THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY FOR GAINING SOCIAL EXPERIENCE AND ACQUIRING BEHAVIORAL MODELS AT PRE-SCHOOL AGE

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Abstract: Pre-school age is an intensive period in the life of a person which offers great potential for development. The dimensions of the impact of the social environment (children, parents and other adults) on the child's personality are multifaceted. This accounts for the emphasis on social norms, goals and ideals. Education is the one factor that can best provide the socialization of adolescents.

The changes in modern society have led to redefining the parenting patterns for bringing up children. The role of the family as an environment for transferring social experience has never lost its significance. Children need continuous care in order to handle societal failures; they need support for mastering the culture of behavior, as well as timely and appropriate help for ensuring conflict-free communication and for enabling them to take responsibility for their own choices and actions.

Psychological studies show that various factors influence both the upbringing of children as well as the parents' attitudes toward them. The relevant factors include: the childhood experiences of the parents; the unrealized needs of the parents; interpersonal relations in the family that are characterized by emotional depth and style that are considered to have established "a standard".

The parameters of the actuality of the research problem are based on the interrelationship of the social and educational aspects that are related to the position of the child and his personal assertion in society:

- At pre-school age, the child gradually fits into the social system, which is the result of learning experiences, actions and relationships, awareness and rediscovery of the self and the world of other people.

- The child becomes aware of the norms of behavior and the meaning of actions – their own and other people's – and learns to take responsibility for their actions.

- One year before school starts, the child develops the ability to accept the position of others and to take into account their own and others' perspective.

- For a successful personal realization, it is important for children to have the skills to work together and communicate in a group. This is the competence that directs their behavior towards co-ordination, co-operation and synergy.

The abovementioned specific features of the child's personality are the result of the intentional educational interactions between the kindergarten and the family and are related to the acquisition of knowledge, rules and norms, and of value-oriented patterns that define behavior. The foundations for this are laid during the pre-school age and are considered the most stable and lasting, often referred to as the "basic personality structure". Along with them, the "behavioral potential" of the child, which is demonstrated at different ages, is shaped and developed through upbringing. Consequently, behavior is seen as a specific manifestation of the personality associated with its selective attitude towards the influence of various factors in the social environment. The direction of the educational activities inspires the motivation for personal behavior aiming at growth and self-actualization. Hence, the presence of a certain skill level which imposes a new approach to learning – replacing the mechanical reproduction with the acquisition of competences for and attitudes towards interaction in a changing environment. What is appropriate for achieving these goals is the application of functional models for cooperation, individualization and differentiation of the educational process. These ensure that the child is provided with conditions for activity and for mastering basic, sustainable rules for conscious participation and development that are important for the success of each of his activities. This is a type of social education that is achieved through exploring the social fabric and acquiring the skills for learning, choosing and communicating.

Keywords: family, preschool age, children, social experience, behavioral patterns

1. INTRODUCTION

The changes within the social and demographic environment at the end of the past century have had a permanent impact over public relations. Issues have occurred as a result of the lowered standard of living which shifted the focus of the public from education, values and the behavior of individuals. Over the years this has been affecting interaction on all levels. These deficiencies are still valid today. Society has to change in a positive way through education.

Human is a social being who develops upon real interaction with his fellows. He is adapting to the social environment through communication. Socialization is a life-long process. Talcott Parsons relates it to education which lays the main value-orientation patterns during childhood. They stay in human's mind forever without changing significantly and are considered as 'a structure of the basic person' [3]. Communication which is oriented to teaching social experience, offering different and alternative patterns of choice, is of particular interest for education. For example, in P. Natorp's view, 'education rather depends on living conditions than on the child's mentality' [2]. In this regard, family environment is of particular interest. Its educational function has never lost its significance. Being part of families, children make their first steps in social life, the foundations of its development are laid – patterns of communication and behavior are adopted which are crucial for making a choice about being part of other social groups. The younger the child, the greater the role of the family environment for its development as a person and individuality.

2. EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF THE FAMILY

The social system has a strong impact over education. Family is a product of society and society itself has a decisive role for the formation of views and educational ideals. Family is the child's relation with society. Its educational function has a leading and enduring place for the child's development. Family is a factor under the impact of which the child develops the notion that it is necessary for it to adapt to the existing social environment and to contribute to its stabilization. Upbringing can be viewed as an education process where children learn to play different social roles. According to A. Adler, all circumstances and all relations of life and the surrounding world have an impact during childhood [1].

The development of a behavior in children is a process which starts from their birth and does not happen rhythmically. Each stage is distinguished with peculiarities of the surrounding environment impact and the age sensitivity which changes throughout life. This requires orientation in the appropriate moment which is defined by L. S. Vygotsky as the 'zone of close development' and in this zone achieved results and future opportunities are established.

The age of 3-7-year-old children is a sensitive period during which they manifest needs, interests and abilities combined with strong perception of certain aspects from reality. The adoption of social experience is closely related to gained personal experience from the child's own activity. Activities which provoke interest and desire lay in the base of its emotional satisfaction. The optimal use of these peculiarities is important so that basic behavioural qualities, abilities and skills for communicating with peers and adults are developed as well as adequate behavior compliant with the requirements of the environment – so that rules are observed and own individuality is manifested.

The surrounding reality, social, economic and cultural conditions of life have a strong impact over the formation of 3-7-year-old children's behavior. A micro-environment is created where culture is taught through education, where culture has an impact over natural development and creates specific forms of manifestation – initiative and expression of own opinion and attitude, active interaction and self-assertion.

The formation of behavior is closely linked to educating emotional and social skills leading to higher emotional intelligence. Positive communication with children encourages and develops goodness and tenderness in relationships, it teaches them to recognize and control their feelings. If we assume that a person's behavior can be 'programmed' through appropriate educational incentives, therefore the use of interactive methods and technologies is a suitable type of interaction with children [Watson, 1989].

The issue related to the formation of behavioural competence corresponds to different aspects of social and educational relations and associated activities and interactions. Tasks related to the establishment of the below mentioned are assigned on this basis:

- psychological aspects of 3-7-year-old children's relationships;
- is there a link between a person's behavior and acts as an expression of his attitude towards other people and the surrounding social environment.

The family environment is a main source of information related to children's behaviour and competence and it is significant for developing personal qualities.

A partially standardized individual inquiry is developed in line with the assigned tasks. The items in this inquiry are shown in such a format which provides the necessary minimum of empirical indicators. 103 parents took part in this research.

The application of this inquiry as an observational method for the collection and processing of empirical data is bound by goals in our research plan which are provisionally divided into two leading guidelines. These are:

- skills in children for observing rules of behavior towards themselves and others – family and friends;

- interaction during children’s leisure as a part of the behavioural culture within families

A starting point for the interpretation of the results is the understanding that the cognitive, family and social environment that are mutually determined and stimulated have an impact over the general development of the individual.

The next set of questions (Nr. 1 to Nr. 6) establishes the extent up to which parents express requirements to their children for the observation of behavioural rules towards themselves and others – in their families and towards their friends (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Results from the inquiry related to skills in children for observing rules of behavior towards themselves and others – in their families and towards their friends

Question	Number of indications according to preferences			% expressed preferences		
	Yes	Sometimes	No	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Do you make your child a part of household chores and help to educate certain skills and behaviors?	67	33	3	65.0	32.03	2.91
2. Do you make sure that your child observes good manners whenit communicates?	99	2	0	96.11	1.94	0
3. Does your child show qualities like appreciation, gratitude, respect, compassion, sympathy?	67	28	8	65.0	27.2	7.8
4. Do you encourage your child to apply habits for eating, games and rest at home which it has learned at the kindergarten?	90	8	5	87.4	7.8	4.8
5. Are there family rules that youinsist your child should respect?	55	33	15	53.4	32.3	14.6
6. Which of the techniques do you applywhen developing the behavior of your children?						
6.1. Providing choice	67	33	3	53.4	35.9	10.7
6.2 Distraction	55	37	11	51.5	17.5	31.0
6.3 Time for readjustment	53	18	32	46.6	23.3	30.0
6.4. Cooperation	48	24	31	40.7	25.2	34.0
6.5. Narrations that contain motivating messages	42	26	35	54.4	13.6	40.7
6.6. Using strategies	56	14	42	35.9	23.3	40.7
6.7. Humour andentertainment	37	24	42	27.2	25.2	47.6

Children’s acquaintance with social reality is an opportunity for them to acquire communication skills and competences, to justify their behavior in line with their own needs related to social norms of life in the world. This is a reason for 65% of the parents who persuasively assign duties to their children which shall form interest and help to master rules of behavior. As a support for the data to question Nr. 1 where ‘Sometimes’ is chosen as an answer (32.03%), the greater trust towards children for assigning duties and responsibilities within families can be interpreted positively.

Observing good manners in communication is related to conscious attitude and behavior. When asked the question ‘Do you make sure that your child observes good manners whenit communicates?’, almost all parents

(96.11%) answer that they do and that they control this. The information about good attitude towards people and observing rules is received by a 'small social group' as family is but family is the initial source for adoption of behavioral culture and competence. A parent's personal example and responsibility are essential for establishing an educational environment.

The answers to question Nr. 3 (Does your child show qualities like appreciation, gratitude, respect, compassion, sympathy?) show that more than half of the parents (65%) notice expressions of social skills in their children which are at the base of friendly relations. These are qualities which help a person to be liked and popular. During the process of interaction with their close ones – their parents and later on with peers and other adults, children adopt models of behavior for politeness, tact and compassion which enhance their competence related to: social understanding, self-assertion, orienting in specific situations of competition or cooperation, partner relationships with children.

A quality indicator for the trust between teachers and parents and the projections of this cooperation over the developing personalities of children are the answers of question Nr. 4 (Do you encourage your child to apply habits for eating, games and rest at home which it has learned at the kindergarten?). 87.4% of respondents gave a unanimous answer regarding the requirement for observing rules and behavior at home which are learned at kindergartens. Observing these rules turns into a routine which is at the basis of the rapidly changing reality. This is a successful way to adopt recurrent activities and is an opportunity to manifest security and competence when performing these activities. These habits allow children to perform these activities without any tension and give life a more familiar aspect.

The answers to question Nr. 5 (Are there family rules that you insist your child should respect?) show that 53.4% of families have established family rules observed by everybody. This is a positive starting point which unites both parties participating in the interaction – kindergarten and family – the educational potential is enhanced through adoption of rules of behavior, the communication between children and parents is improved, the integrity of family is strengthened.

The results of question Nr. 6 (Which of the techniques do you apply when developing the behavior of your children?) are of particular interest for the research. Each parent has his/her own established techniques when interacting with his/her child. The technique which is most preferred by respondents (53.4%) is the provision of an opportunity for 'choice in communication' (option 6.1). This is a technique which reduces the dominance conflict and enhances cooperation. The rest of the respondents (35.9%) said that 'sometimes' they do apply this technique, while only 10.7% of parents are explicit and answer negatively. Thus, as a result of the interaction they provide opportunities to their children so that they can use their abilities in a positive way.

The techniques 'Distraction' (51.5%) and 'Narrations that contain motivating messages' (54.4%) are dominant and preferred. The results (17.5%) and (13.6%) are approximately equal for those respondents who hesitate and apply them 'sometimes'. The large number of parents who do not use these techniques when communicating with their children is of particular interest – (31%) for the second technique (option 6.2) and (40.7%) for the fifth and sixth technique (options 6.5 and 6.6). Telling stories to children that contain events with hidden message is an opportunity to teach own and someone else's experience, to draw a lesson for certain deeds and behavior. Communicating with children in such way helps parents to get to know them better, this creates conditions for mastering moral principles, values and family traditions.

When analyzing the 'Time for readjustment' technique (option 6.3), it is interesting that those who responded positively (46.6%) and those who responded 'sometimes' (23.3%) are more than half of the respondents. This technique allows the transition from one activity to another which provides 'time for preparation' for the child. Here is a risk that parents may manifest dictatorial attitude, i.e. making a transition from conventionality to obliging. The number of respondents who do not support this technique is not so small (30%).

The results of the next technique are amazing – 'cooperation' (option 6.4). Only 40.7% of respondents answered that they use cooperation as one of the various forms of interaction with their children. Furthermore, 25.2% have answered that they do this 'sometimes'. It turns out that the desired cooperation skill in children is not used by 34% of respondents. It brings great joy as a way of mutual experience of nice moments. This is a behavior the core of which is mutual respect that would make relationships between adults and children easier. On the other hand, cooperation would give 6-7-year-old children the opportunity to make decisions, it would give them independence, self-control, negotiations or discussion - skills that contribute to healthy relationships within the group of peers and adults. Cooperation used in a family environment is a key value which children should master from early age.

'Using strategies' (option 6.6) is another technique that is essentially close to cooperation. The approximately same data as that from the previous technique ('Cooperation') make an impression. Only 35.9% of

parents shared that they apply it. Those who do not use it to communicate with their children are 40.7%. Using strategies is associated with opportunities which can turn many moments into a game and avoid conflicts and 'clashes' in communication. Through them it would be easier to adhere to established rules, to create trust and improved relationships between a parent and a child.

An interesting way to achieve good relations within the family is to use humor and entertainment (option 6.7) when solving various situations close to children's thinking and activity. Here 47.6% of parents strongly deny applying this technique unlike those who use them - 27.2%. The possibility of spending quality time and solve various joint activities with the child in an environment filled with humor and entertainment is a great way to educate culture of behavior and acquire skills to be successful in life.

3. CONCLUSION

The interaction between parents and children is oriented to teaching changed own views on the perceptions of the world - cultural orientations, attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Children adopt social skills which are valid for civil society. It is important for parents to pass their skills to children related to coping with failures in society, to form proper and realistic idea of happiness and success in them. Getting familiar with the world of one's own child is positive towards understanding the environment in which it communicates - adults, peers and other children, relations between them, how they deal with conflict situations. By communicating with the child, parents improve their own social and communicative skills. A success for parents will be not to repeat the mistakes of their own parents when raising their own children. It is necessary to encourage enterprising children in the direction of thinking, interests, communication, problem solving. Enterprising children turn into happy adults.

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