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Unconscious Mechanisms of Social and Psychological Adaptation of Mentally Retarded Children

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The paper is focused on one of actual problems of special psychology and pedagogics, which is studying identity of people with intellectual disability. The analysis of mechanisms of psychological protection and semantic installations as a factor of adaptation of the individual for school students with intellectual disability is submitted. The author marks out main regularities of social and psychological adaptation for children normal and pathological development; makes conclusions about the general approaches for development of personal potential in case children have intellectual disability.

Keywords: personality, children, unconscious, unconscious mechanisms, social and psychological adaptation, intellectual disability.

1. Introduction

The most important task of modern correctional psychology is to ensure the harmonious development of the child. This task in its turn raises the question how to organize psycho-prophylactic work both for separate categories of children and for educational environment as a whole. However, despite the fact that during recent decades Russian educational institutions, including special ones, have been actively developing infrastructure to support children development, this assistance in the harmonization of socio-emotional development remains insufficient so far.

2. Theoretical framework

The system of specialized care for children with various forms of mental deficiency, developed and created by the efforts of local special education teachers (A.N. Graborov, G.M. Dul'nev, L.V. Zankov, V.I. Lubovskii, V.G. Petrov, B.I. Pinski, I.M. Solov'ev, Zh.I. Shif and etc.), has made a significant progress in addressing the challenges of diagnosis and correction of disorders in children cognitive activities. Nevertheless, much less attention has been paid to the study of the genesis and very specifics of personal problems that these children inevitably face during the socialization process.

Meanwhile, this very kind of problem, encompassing a complex mix of organic and social factors in the child development, lead to a variety of phenomena of behavioral disorders, total or partial maladjustment, often resulting in illnesses or infringement of the law, and, in fact, these situations may require the intervention of law enforcement agencies, on the one hand, and child psychiatrists, on the other hand. Effectiveness of the intervention of the first part is actually reduced to zero, the second part involvement is unproductive and of short duration, since the scope of the impact in both cases does not include many causal factors, causing abnormalities of personal development, but rather external and, more often, secondary manifestations of these abnormalities at the behavioral level.

In this regard, there is special urgency to study the process of socio-psychological adaptation in case of intellectual disability; the process, which on the one hand acts as a source of conditions and influences that determine the process of personal growth and on the other hand is based on social inclusion as one of the foundations of social and psychological mechanisms. Thus, a close relationship with such key issues of the modern human studies as an individual and social adaptation has either directly or indirectly contributed to drawing attention to the problem of socialization in its philosophical, social, psychological and pedagogical and only psychological aspects.

Specific features of the process of social and psychological adaptation for intellectually disabled children are presented at the conceptual level in the works of well-known scientist L.S. Vygotsky. They were researched in the form of the most common trends in psychosocial development of a child and up to now they have served as reliable methodological guidelines for analysis. However, one can hardly speak of adequate specialization of these ideas, which should have been supported

by relevant experimental studies and modern psychological and pedagogical practices, suitable for solving important problems, the most important of which is the successful social adaptation of these children and the related problems of deviant behavior prevention.

Despite this fact, there is evidence of constant and careful attention to these issues in Russia. Numerous studies include psycho-pedagogical (M.S. Pevzner, V.I. Lubovskii, V.Iu. Karvialis, V.P. Voronkova, Zh.I. Namazbaeva, I.A. Korobeinikov, L.I. Lychagina et al.) and clinico-psychological (S.S. Mnukhin, D.Ie. Melekhov, D.N. Isaev, Kuz'mina-Syromiatnikova, K.S. Lebedinskaia, O.Ie. Freierov et al.) on various aspects of social adaptation of people with intellectual disabilities.

3. Statement of the problem

The urgency of studying the problem of socio-psychological adaptation of children with intellectual disabilities is caused by to the following reasons:

1. Lack of Russian research in the theory and practice of personal development of children and adolescents with intellectual disability. This situation generates the need to study the mechanisms of social and psychological adaptation as a factor in the study of the personality of children with intellectual disability.
2. A comparative study of the mechanisms of social and psychological adaptation of normal and abnormal children will help to reveal additional stages of emotional and personal progress in the course of normal mental development.
3. A need for scientific programs to optimize social and emotional development of children and adolescents with intellectual disability as an effective means of social and psychological adaptation.

4. Lack of research and theoretical generalization of relation of personal development to the parameters of the subjective world, when applied to children and adolescents with intellectual disability.
5. Formation of social and psychological adaptation of children with intellectual disability is one of the most important issues of social and professional vocational guidance for children with intellectual disability. To evaluate the mechanisms of social and psychological adaptation of children with intellectual disability we will rely on the conscious and unconscious meta-categories of mental reflection: psychological defense and activity set.

4. Methodology

The combination of these two meta-categories is the main novelty of the research, as it allows to expand an analysis of the personality of children with intellectual disability, as well as predetermine developmental parameters and exposes the genesis of social and psychological adaptation of an individual. These meta-categories of mental reflection characterize the features of social and emotional development of an individual. The term "social and emotional development" outlines the area of personal development, which is related to the ability of a child to communicate and feel, and that should be expanded and deepened with the development. Distortion of social and emotional development may lead to violations of the process of psychological adaptation of the child and adolescent, to improper learning and communication activities, as well as to violations of the state of their physical health. Social and emotional development is an individual path of the personal development, which is formed in the dynamic interaction with the environment.

Substantial characteristics of social and emotional development have a direct impact on social and psychological adaptation. In our opinion, it seems unfair that correctional psychologists have not paid enough attention to these categories as a factor causing successful socialization and integration of an individual with intellectual disorders.

The issue of defense mechanisms has been fully studied in clinical psychology (S. Freud, A. Adler, C. Rogers, E. Erickson, F.V. Bassin, V.M. Volovik, B.D. Karvasarskii, V.A. Tashlykov, V.A. Abramov, K.R. Aidinian, F.B. Berezin, M.M. Kochenov, I.I. Kut'ko, T.G. McGlynn, G.L. Metcalf, A.N. Mikhailov, R.K. Nazyrov, I.M. Osadchii, A.M. Prikhozhan, V.S. Rothenberg, Iu.S. Savenko, G.K. Ushakov, Sh. Ferentsi, R.S. Lazarus, D. Hamburg, I. Adams, R.A. Emmons, etc.). This is consistent with the idea of L.S. Vygotsky that "the essence and nature of the phenomena studied in psychology are revealed in their purest form only in their extreme, pathological expressions" (Vygotsky, 1927). To describe the specifics of defense mechanisms of behavior we will use the definition of F.V. Bassin: "Psychological defense is a normal, well-detectable mechanism aimed at preventing conduct disorders and physiological processes not only in the conflict between consciousness and unconsciousness, but when quite conscious, but affectively rich sets are confronted".

In set theory, developed by D.N. Uznadze (2001) and his followers (A.S. Prangishvili, 1966; B.I. Khachapuridze, 1962; A.Ie. Sheroziia, 1979; I.T. Bzhalava, 1968; D.T. Amirejibi, 1986; I.G. Grigolava, 1987; A.T. Kintsurashvili, 1971; V.G. Norakidze, 1975; I.V. Imedadze, 1989; N.I. Sarjveladze, 1989; Sh.N. Chkhartishvili, 1971, 1978, and others) set means a consistent (psycho-physiological, mental) state of an individual, a modus of personality, willingness to work in a certain way.

Analysis of the unconscious of mentally retarded children from the standpoint of the theory of activity allows, firstly, to identify problems and trends, in line with which A.G. Asmolov stated the following classes for the studied phenomena (the problem of transfer and assimilation of experience, the problem of determination of activity, the problem of voluntary regulation of higher forms of behavior and automatization of various kinds of internal and external activities, the problem of finding the sensitivity range), and secondly, to isolate in the flow of events four qualitatively different classes (supraindividual supraconscious phenomena, unconscious motives and semantic orientations of the personality, unconscious regulation mechanisms of modes of activity, unconscious reserves of sensory organs) and to identify the genesis and function of different classes of phenomena in the subject's activity. The need for substantial characteristics of the unconscious as a form of mental reflection, in which the subject and the world are one indivisible whole and also the need for such a classification of unconscious phenomena are due to the frequent opposition of all three different phenomena along with the complete loss of their specificity, which makes it difficult to progress on the difficult way of studying these phenomena. Meanwhile, only the identification of commonalities and specificities of these "concealed" planes of consciousness, according to L.S. Vygotsky, will help to find appropriate research methods to reveal the function in the activity regulation, and thus not only to complement, but also to change the existing pattern of ideas about activities, consciousness and personality of children with intellectual disability.

Common parameter, which is the basis for the formation of the protective (unconscious) mechanisms of behavior and activity set is the social experience of individuals, which determine

the direction of an individual, and the biological factor (psycho-physiological characteristics, the brain integrity) is an opportunity that allows to generate the specificity of social and psychological adaptation. At the same time the level of intellectual disability affects the production of only conscious defense mechanisms and formation of semantic sets.

5. Discussion

On the basis of theoretical and experimental studies of unconscious mechanisms of social and psychological adaptation of children with intellectual disability there can be made conclusions that reveal the specifics of defense mechanisms.

1. Students with intellectual disability have common (normal) and specific for this category of children patterns of psychological defense mechanisms' functioning and coping strategies of behavior, these strategies are apperceived in some parts only.
2. Children with intellectual disability possess dominantly inefficient mechanisms of conscious psychological defense, while the apperceived coping strategies in problem situations are not well developed.
3. Common parameter, which is the basis for the formation of the protective (unconscious) mechanisms of behavior is the social experience of individuals, which determines the direction of an individual, and the biological factor (psycho-physiological characteristics, the brain integrity) is an opportunity that allows to implement a strategy of coping behavior and to resolve an internal conflict.

Also for understanding the unconscious mechanisms of social and psychological

adjustment of children with intellectual disability, we will rely on the characterization of the unconscious motivators of activity that have always been the central subject of study in traditional psychoanalysis. They participate in the regulation of activities, acting as semantic sets.

In the study of semantic sets of children with intellectual disability the next important features should be marked out:

1. The main of many regularities is that the development follows the same laws as that of the normally developing children.
2. Unconscious and fixed sets in the case of mentally retarded children are formed in the active interaction with the social environment and managed by the leading individual needs.
3. The main criterion for the formation of semantic sets in the case of children with intellectual disability is individual emotional and personal experience gained during the preschool years.

Characterizing semantic sets of mentally retarded children, we can distinguish their specific features that appear in an unstable straightforward activity, conservatism of sets, which determine the rigidity of behavior. Weakness of semantic set's stability complicates the decision making

process and arbitrary control of the activity in standard situations.

Unconscious motives also determine both the content and dynamics of the set. It is known that the motives of children with intellectual disability are unstable, socially important motives are difficult to form. These features, as pointed out by many researchers (M.S. Pevzner, V.G. Petrova, S.Ia. Rubinshtein, E.A. Chereueva, etc.) are caused by the intellectual deficiency. But as shown by some of the facts of our research, for children with mental retardation and intellectual disability the leading role in the formation of socially important motives is played by the social factor. But it should be noted that we should not be optimistic to think that with proper organization of the process of child rearing we will be able to generate high levels of need-motivational sphere, yet the intellect "sets the bar" (in the content sense), and dynamics is determined by society. But we defend the idea that the behavioral (even mechanically formed) program enables a child with intellectual disability to have behavioral patterns at an unconscious level; these patterns under appropriate conditions of favorable social and psychological support can become the basic conscious component of behavior.

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**Бессознательные механизмы
социально-психологической адаптации детей
с нарушениями интеллектуального развития**

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В статье затрагивается одна из актуальных проблем специальной психологии и педагогики – это изучение личности лиц с интеллектуальными нарушениями. Представлен анализ механизмов психологической защиты и смысловых установок у школьников с интеллектуальной недостаточностью как фактор адаптации индивида. Автор выделяет основные закономерности социально-психологической адаптации детей при нормальном и патологическом развитии, формулирует выводы об общих подходах развития личностного потенциала у детей с нарушениями интеллектуального развития.

Ключевые слова: личность, дети, нарушения интеллекта, бессознательное, бессознательные механизмы, социально-психологическая адаптация.
