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IDEAS OF SENIOR PUPILS WITH DISORDERS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT ABOUT ADULTHOOD

Abstract. The article reflects the structure and content of collective ideas of adolescents with disorders of psychological development about adulthood. The article shows the ideological diversity of the corresponding collective ideas formed by a unity of individual concepts of *adulthood*. The authors single out the ideas of the kernel zone including the activity-based, mental and behavioral definitions of adulthood. The article compares the collective ideas about adulthood of senior pupils with disorders of psychological development with those of senior pupils with intellectual disabilities. It has been revealed that the mental characteristics of an adult are used by the respondents with disorders of psychological development significantly more often than by their peers with intellectual disabilities. These characteristics include utterances about the ability of an adult to understand himself, about his life experience and lines of reflection. The data obtained can be used as a basis for designing learning actions allowing the pupils with disorders of psychological development to specify the meaning of the categories and concepts making up the semantic field of the concept *adulthood*. The conclusions and generalizations presented in the article, and the fragments of the judgments of the respondents with disorders of psychological development characterizing their specific categories and concepts outline the zone of real and proximal development of ideas of senior pupils with disorders of psychological development about adulthood and can be used for research and rehabilitation-educational purposes in the educational process of the general education school for the pupils of this category.

Keywords: ideas about adulthood; maturity; adulthood; collective ideas; disorders of psychological development; DPD; adolescents.

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The study of ideas of senior pupils with disorders of psychological development (DPD) about adulthood would facilitate the development of rehabilitation-educational practice focusing on formation of social competences of pupils with DPD, and on the development of a more mature perspective than the one revealed in persons of the given category by many researchers [1; 2; 5; 6; 8; 11; 13; 14, etc.]. Information of this kind is necessary for determination of significant ideas recommended for acquisition by pupils with DPD in the context of modern requirements to their education [12; 13; 14; 15]. The facts that pupils with DPD use certain concepts in their speech and understand their meanings show that they have certain ideas about “social voices” [7; 15]. In order to form social competences of the pupils, special psychologists have the right to construct a discourse able to reinforce certain “social voices”, if they are unable to facilitate the attenuation of them [4; 7]. Attentive consideration of semantic peculiarities productive for the development of discourse of adulthood and

of their explication in the verbal speech of persons with DPD may be useful in the future for constructing pedagogical discourse represented by learning texts and tasks.

The aim of our research is detection and comparative analysis of the structure and content of collective ideas about adulthood, on the one hand, of adolescents with disorders of psychological development, and, on the other hand, of adolescents with intellectual disabilities (the data about the structure and content of collective ideas of senior pupils with intellectual disabilities about adulthood were presented in the article by Yu. T. Matasov, E. A. Steblyak “Collective Ideas of Senior Pupils with Intellectual Disability about Adulthood” (on the sample of 36 pupils) [10]). The article shows the ideological diversity of the corresponding collective ideas formed by a unity of individual concepts of *adulthood* [9].

A modified procedure of M. A. Kholodnaya “Provisional Interlocutor” has been used in our study. The instruction stimulated those tested to make up micro-texts consisting of coherent utterances

rather than separate words like it is in the original variant [16, p. 111]. At the beginning of the interview, the respondents were offered the following instruction: *Imagine you are talking with a person who has never heard the word “adulthood” before. He asks you to explain the meaning of this word. How would you explain the essence of “adulthood”?* The task was not limited in time, and the respondent stopped talking himself if he considered that he had explained the meaning well enough. After that, some questions were discussed with the respondent: *What kind of temper is typical of an adult? What behavior has he got? How old is he? What is the difference between an adult and a child?*, etc.

26 adolescents with DPD aged 15-17 years, learning in grades 8-9 of a general education school, took part in the experiment (19 males and 7 females).

The technique of inductive identification of categories and coding was used for the interview data analysis [3, p. 194].

Results

In the course of content analysis, we have singled out 131 utterances about adulthood, including 9 cases of tautology, for example “The man grew older” (6.9% of all utterances).

The analysis of the rest of the utterance database allowed us to identify the following categories:

1. Characteristics of occupation and kinds of activity (42 %).
2. Mental (cognitive) characteristics of an adult (20.61 %).
3. Characteristics of behavior, relationships and temper (19.1 %)
4. Characteristics through correlation with age (5.4 %).
5. Bodily characteristics of adulthood (3.05 %).
6. Characteristics of adulthood in terms of age-based periodization (2.3 %).
7. Characteristics of the factors determining the behavior and temper of an adult (0.76 %).

The list shows that activity-based ($\varphi^*_{emp} = 2.821$, $p \leq 0.01$) and mental ($\varphi^*_{emp} = 1.704$; $p \leq 0.05$) definitions are used in the utterances of those tested with DPD about adulthood significantly more often than in the control group. Both groups of utterances characterize the kernel zone of collective ideas of the respondents with DPD about adulthood (55 and 27 respectively). Thus, the respondents with DPD characterized the following *occupations and kinds of activity* of an adult: starting a family, being a married person and a parent (10.7 %); work, employment (9.92 %); getting well-off (5.34 %) ($\varphi^*_{emp} = 1.803$, $p \leq 0.05$); getting education, including supplementary one (3.82 %); housework (2.3 %); driving a car (2.3 %); communication with the family of the parents (2.3 %); going in for sports

(1.52 %); serving in the army, hobbies, achievements, spending money, travelling and entertainment (0.76 % each).

In contrast to the respondents with intellectual disability, those tested with DPD paid significantly greater attention to achieving material wellbeing. The changes of percentage of the utterances of other categories did not exceed the threshold for statistical significance, but there are changes in their content. Let us consider them in more detail.

A little more than half of the respondents with DPD (14) expressed their opinion about the content of family and parental duties of an adult, for example: *He has to think about the family. / You can marry, have children, maintain the wife, children – etc.* Functioning in the role of a family man is expressed with the help of predicative associations denoting creative process-focused aims (*creates*), pedagogical efforts (*educates, thinks (about marks, if there is enough of everything ...), grew up, to feed, to take to, to take care*). In comparison with the control group, the concepts of *relationships* and *duties* are used in the speech of the respondents with DPD for the first time. This fact arouses one's interest in the future explication of their content. The predicate *think* denoting mental action was also used with reference to the topic *family* for the first time

(3). But the predicative associations denoting communicative actions have not been used, which seems to be non-productive for the development of the corresponding discourse and needs correction.

Being placed third after family duties and work, the category of achieving wellbeing characterizes the financial-economic status of an adult in the following way: *Man has to provide for himself. / He has a flat. / He earns money for the car, flat, and maintains the family himself. / You can earn money, have a second job. / The duties: to pay taxes. / Pension. / You earn your money yourself and don't wait till your parents help you* (7). The relatively small category of getting education included, for the first time, considerations about using the Internet with educational purposes and about learning foreign languages (5). The same as in the control group, the mentions of hobbies, travels, entertainments and other forms of leisure activities of adults are rare: *To think about vacation, to go on holiday. / To be keen on sport, dances. / You can go in for sports. / You may have a hobby, for example, woodwork, engraving on wood, glass, etc.* (4).

In comparison to the persons with intellectual disability, the respondents with DPD paid significantly more attention to regarding *mental characteristics* of an adult ($\varphi^*_{emp} = 1.704$; $p \leq 0.05$). It can

be seen from their content that the number of utterances about the ability of an adult *to understand themselves and their life experience and the directions of reflection* have significantly grown ($\varphi^*_{emp} = 2.213$, $p \leq 0.05$). The discourse of understanding oneself is used by the relative majority of the respondents with DPD (20 / 15,3 %). Due to heightened interest in the given ideas, let us present the utterances in more detail: *The experience has grown. / Old age does not always mean wisdom. / He gains more experience with years. / He's grown smart. But there are people who keep on being foolish. / You become cleverer. / Man can be disabled, or may be like a child. / When one becomes smarter with years. / People define adulthood. Define it by knowledge, speech. / There is experience. / It is wise to have one's own resources. / You know how to do it right or wrong. / Thought about his life. / Brains, you must think about what you do. / To improve your mental development each year. / He will realize what he's doing, what he did in his youth. / Careful planning of actions. / You begin to treat things more seriously. / You realize what you are doing, and feel you are to blame. You have done wrong, and haven't realized it.* – etc.

The concept *experience* closely associated with the meanings *to become smarter, wiser, cleverer* is rather frequently used. We have

registered the qualities expressing accumulation of experience-wisdom – they are speech and knowledge. The cited utterances contain polar assessments of the intellectual dynamics of an adult: *Old age does not always mean wisdom. / Man can be disabled, or may be like a child. / But there are people who keep on being foolish.* These suppositions reflect understanding of the relative nature of intellectual achievements of an adult forming in the minds of the pupils with DPD. The respondents compare various alternatives of understanding/non-understanding of their own actions and deeds, and regard *careful planning, awareness and seriousness of attitude to something* as the dominant meaning-based life motivation of an adult.

Finally, let us look at the ideas about the temporal perspective of an adult: *It is when everything is changing, what happened in the past becomes just a memory. Adulthood – it's when you mistrust the future and believe in the present.* The respondent has identified the way in which life experience is accumulated – keeping in memory, in recollections. The given utterance rests on the implicit naïve conception of the development of mind according to which the consciousness (*belief*) of an adult focuses on the problems of the present. This conception opposes the period of adolescence with its typical accent

on looking into the future and planning the future adult life, and the period of adulthood. It is only natural that dreams about the future are replaced by *belief in the present*.

The planned nature of thinking and behavior of an adult are seen in the following utterances: *Certain plans you have must be realized, for example at work. / When a person gets older he has different plans for his being older, another fate* (1.52 %). An adult's ability to *make independent decisions and solve problems* is expressed in the following way: *Take decisions for oneself and other people. For those who ask what's best to do. / It's when you make your own decisions. / Decides what to buy, what to wear, where to go. / Of course, it's a difficult period of life. / Many ways have opened up* (3.82 %). The utterances underline the abundance of trying situations and various alternatives for behavior and actions in adulthood, and describe the character of decisions taken and the persons whom an adult helps in making decisions.

The utterances characterizing *behavior, relationships and temper* of an adult were produced by the majority of those tested (25 / 19.1 %), which also makes it possible to refer them to the kernel zone of collective ideas of the respondents with DPD about adulthood. *Responsibility and independence* in the image of an adult were charac-

terized most frequently, for example: *Independence is developing. / One has to use his own brains. / When you live an independent life on your own. / To become responsible for everything. / Responsibility means I must see to it that he doesn't run away, make a mess, or isn't run over. / The adult is responsible for the family and relatives. Must protect and help. / Be responsible for one's actions – etc.* The accent on the definition of responsibility as abstaining from breaking rules of behavior is evident. On the background of a negative definition of responsibility, other utterances sound declarative and tautological, and the concepts *to be responsible for one's actions* and *use your own brains* – semantically fuzzy.

An adult's *behavior* was described by the respondents with DPD in the following way: *Actions do not change. / You begin (some people) to drink, something goes wrong. / Communication ... changes with time. / Live on your own, according to you own rules. / An adult can walk till late at night. You mustn't drink, smoke. / You are no longer young. You can't make merry any longer. At 30 you still can. Get-togethers, parties. / You must do more of everything – eat more, dress more, spend more money. For example, a boy plays with little toys, when he gets older – studies and gets, for instance, a car. / Behave like an adult, study* (6.1 %). The

contradiction between the suppositions about the non-temporal stability of behavior and its changeability in time attracts our attention. The utterances about changeability associate it with the change in the person's behavior and emergence of bad habits. The respondents name the factors influencing the behavior of an adult: social prohibition of smoking, drinking and live a riotous life. The utterances about the necessity to do more of everything illustrate replacement of qualitative change in behavior by quantitative growth of consumption (of food, clothes, money, etc.).

The utterances about the temper of an adult present them as one possessing good personal traits, quiet, never hurting others, living a normal life (3.82 %). The respondents stress changeability of temper: *Temper changes. / Temper changes with time.* In comparison with similar utterances of the respondents with intellectual disability, there is absolute absence of negative characteristics like *does not fool around*, and scarcity of personal traits and properties, which makes us conclude about the absence of the given concepts in those tested. In other words, the implicit conception of the temper of an adult needs further specification.

Characterizing adulthood via correlation with age (5.4 %), the respondents with DPD marked the boundaries of adulthood differently,

for example: *People come of age at 18 in Russia. / Adulthood begins at 40. / From the time a person becomes responsible for oneself. It may happen earlier than the well-known 18 years. / Adulthood is middle age. It is when you are about 40 and think, how old I am. / 40-50. / Maturity of a person.* The relativity of ideas about the boundaries and typical features of the period are illustrated by the following utterance: *If a little child asks you, "I am 2-3 years older than you, am I an adult?"* Suppositions representing implicit age-based periodization quite rationally oppose childhood and old age. Bodily characteristics of adulthood have been found in only 3.05 % of all utterances, for example: *The voice changes, the hair grows dark, when you have formed*".

And finally, it should be noted that we have registered a singular case of utterance about passing experience from adults to children and referred it to the corresponding category: *Parents say, "You sit here with a switch". Adults pass their experience to their children.* This utterance explicates the rule-like form of experience fixation, i.e. the one that dominates in the pedagogical discourse of special classroom.

Thus, the kernel zone of collective ideas of the respondents with DPD about adulthood is made up by three categories of utterances: characteristics of occupation and kinds

of activity, mental (cognitive) characteristics and characteristics of behavior, relationships and temper of an adult. While giving mental characteristics of an adult, the respondents with DPD spoke about the adult's ability to understand themselves, about their life experience and directions of reflection significantly more often than the control group children. The features of responsibility and independence interpreted as abstaining from rule-breaking behavior prevail in the category of characteristics of behavior, relationships and temper of an adult. Characteristics of behavior contain contradictory ideas about non-temporal stability of behavior and its changeability in time. Temper descriptions are marked with scarcity of traits and properties and absence of negative characteristics present in the utterances of the respondents with intellectual disability.

The utterances of the respondents with DPD presented in the article may serve as initial material for constructing a pedagogical discourse of maturity including design of problem situations and other learning tasks included in the zone of proximal development of pupils with DPD. Design of learning actions should take into account the contexts in which certain categories and concepts are used, so that the pupils could specify their meaning, and those who have reached understanding, could translate it to others.

In order to construct the discourse of adulthood, it is necessary to specify the typical semantics of the concepts included in the semantic field of the concept of *adulthood* (*to pat on the head, to indulge oneself, own business, own problems, choice of responsibility, to make plans, to consult, to ask, to rely, communication, to be responsible for oneself, to live one's own life, to realize what one is doing, to think about, to treat seriously, resources, experience, etc.*), and to test the learning tasks based on the given discourse experimentally.

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