
THE FORMATION OF MORAL QUALITIES IN JUNIOR SCHOOLCHILDREN DURING THE STUDY OF ETHNO-CULTURAL TRADITIONS

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Abstract

The article considers the problems connected with the formation of moral qualities in junior schoolchildren while learning ethno-cultural traditions in manual training classes. Moral qualities are formed not during verbal or activity events but in complex everyday relationships when a child has to sort out, to make a choice, to resolve and to commit acts. As a result, the principles of behaviour and self-control are consolidated.

Keywords: moral education, moral qualities, moral consciousness, ideal, behaviour

1. Introduction

At all times, the problems of moral education and man's perfection worried the society. In the modern world, when one faces growing cruelty and indifference, the problem of morality becomes more and more urgent [1]. Junior schoolchildren display social scepticism and frankly parasitical mood. They do not want to take part in public activity. While solving the key problems of education, primary school should base on child's morality and intellect and try to help each pupil to determine the basic values for his activity. This can be supported by the system of moral education integrated with educational process.

A significant contribution in the development of moral education ideas was made by: A. Bandura, L. Kohlberg, A. Maslow, O. Maurer, G.W. Allport, J. Piaget, K.R. Rogers, B. Skinner, E. Thorndike, Z. Freud, V. Frankl, D.B. Watson and C.G. Jung [2].

M. Montessori, K. Lorenz, E. Fromm and others state that human moral qualities have a biological nature. It is believed that if instincts are inherited, then people have the same inheritance on the analogy with animals. This approach gave Erich Fromm the right to state that child's character is a 'plaster cast' of his parents' characters which are the base for its development [3].

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In the opinion of C.A. Helvetius, D. Diderot, J.-J. Rousseau and others, environment is the determining factor for the development and formation of personality. C. Helvetius stated that people are not born but become what they are [4].

2. Main part

The authors conducted an experimental research on the basis of school No. 4 in Elista, the Republic of Kalmykia. The students of two 3rd form classes took part in the research. Supervising teachers were Svetlana Dgodgina and Svetlana Tsebekova. The research was to determine the formation system for moral qualities in junior schoolchildren in manual training classes.

The research tasks included: problem concretization, making the formulations for the hypothesis more precise, choosing diagnostic techniques, working out the plan and program for the experiment, data processing, findings formulation.

In accordance with the tasks and goals of the research, the following 3 experiment stages were planned and performed:

- Stage I – ascertaining. The moral qualities of schoolchildren are diagnosed by observing their behaviour, analyzing their creative work, talking and using the method of M. Rokeach [5].
- Stage II – forming. The system of manual training classes is worked out on the basis of moral principles used by the Kalmyk ethnos for troubleshooting in the moral education of junior schoolchildren.
- Stage III – controlling. Moral notions are again diagnosed with the help of diagnostic methods in the experimental group.

The first stage of the research was to ascertain the initial level of children's knowledge about moral qualities based on their personal experience.

The following methods were used to diagnose the moral qualities of junior schoolchildren: a story, an observation, a talk and a survey. The authors used the methods of M. Rokeach and the modified method of M.I. Shilova [6]. A list of moral qualities (values) with a short detailing served as the stimulus material in this method. In this method, the instrumental values were defined as the understanding of what behaviour model prevails in any situation – from the personal and social points of view.

The applied method revealed that the indications of the second-level of moral and volitional qualities prevail in the control and experimental group. The most pronounced moral qualities formatting in junior schoolchildren of this group include social relations, attitude to manual labour and to people. It is necessary to pay attention to how children's attitude to labour and team develops.

It was important to get to know what content junior schoolchildren put in such qualities as kindness, honesty, justice and so on, and how they use them. The following form of work was proposed. Some notions, for example 'good' or 'kindness', were written on a blackboard in big letters with coloured chalk. Then

this quality was discussed by the group. All correct statements of students were also written on the blackboard but with another colour and in certain order. Children expressed the following characteristics: 'He helps other people', 'He is not indifferent'; 'He will not come by if someone is in trouble. He will help him'; 'He can sympathize'; 'He is happy when someone is happy'; 'He is open-hearted'; 'He shares things, food and joy with others'; 'He gives alms'; 'He does not laugh at someone's misfortune'; 'He is unhappy when someone is unhappy. He will intercede for those who are offended'; 'He will give a tip if something goes wrong'; 'He can forgive'; 'He does not remember the bad and offences'; 'He will help, caress and say kindly words'; 'He is not greedy'; 'He has respect for seniors'; 'He helps small children'; 'He does not tease'. While discussing the qualities, schoolchildren recollected examples from their life or sometimes from Kalmyk tales, movies. They commented their statements as possible. Thus, little by little, 'The Book of Qualities' was created.

Gradually, a kind of explanatory dictionary was created. Here is one dictionary entry: "Justice is when everything is distributed equally, when one does not take the best and biggest part for himself; when all play by turn, count themselves and do not reach forward; when the main person is chosen for his qualities; when in quarrel there is a fair judgement who is right and who is wrong, etc.". Schoolchildren selected Kalmyk proverbs and sayings for each value quality ('It is good to live with a kind'; "It is good to live in kindness"; "Hurry for a good deed, the bad one will fast itself"; "Kind people live on Earth"; "The kind deserves fond memories") [7].

Among other work forms in this field, there are the continuation of unfinished statements ('Honesty is...'), a circle letter, a secret list of values, writing tales about these values and game 'Me and my values'.

Obviously, one cannot speak about the complete setting of moral qualities. Junior schoolchildren are at the phase of choice and comprehension. At the same time the method helps to work out a foundation for personality. Maybe, it is necessary to know how children's understanding of surrounding world, people and life values develops. It should be noted that moral qualities mean the preference or rejection of certain examples and social and moral ideals. Unfortunately, sometimes children's ideal and example is not a romantic hero but an omnipotent and ruthless superman.

The analyses of ideals junior schoolchildren have showed the following. The pupils of three classes rarely name a concrete hero. Usually they create a generalized image of a perfect man ("I wish I was a person who knows much and has many skills, who has time for everything and gains his objects. He should not be afraid of difficulties. He should get over them" (K. Aldar); "I would like to be like one who is reasonable, reserved, who thinks not only about himself but about others" (I. Basan). Schoolchildren mark out individuality, originality and otherness: "I think every person should be individual. If all people are the same, it would be boring" (K. Kolya). About 30% of children see their ideal in their classmates and friends. They are more reasonable, clean and

responsible. They control their behaviour better. “You should always think about your behaviour, then you will be an example” (E. Bakur).

The analyses of received materials, children’s essays and statements made the authors conclude that junior schoolchildren see the example of heroes in people with strongly expressed positive qualities and such general values as kindness, family, honesty, decency, etc.

The formation level of moral qualities in junior schoolchildren allows dividing them in several groups. The enough level (10%) is characterized by a more precise amount of knowledge about moral qualities; the skill to give a content description of qualities; the ability to give real examples corresponding to one or another quality; the ability to use knowledge in real life; the presence of personal opinion; the comprehension of moral feelings; the developed empathy. The acceptable level (33%) is characterized by a certain amount of knowledge about moral qualities; the ability to give life examples; fuzzy personal opinion; underdeveloped moral qualities; situational behaviour; the medium level of empathy. Junior schoolchildren with unstable level (34%) have unsystematic superficial knowledge about moral qualities; unconscious behaviour; fuzzy value judgments; negative behaviour; unstable empathy. The group of schoolchildren with negative level (23%) is the smallest one. It is characterized by fuzzy unsystematic knowledge of general human values; the absence of personal value judgments; unstable moral feelings; stable negative behaviour; low empathy.

So, the diagnostics of formation level of moral qualities among junior schoolchildren showed that pupils in the control and experimental group have prevailing indications of the second-level of moral and volitional qualities: a child displays low independence; he cannot always control his activity and moral position. The most expressive qualities of the formed morality among schoolchildren are the attitude to society, people and manual labour. An attention should be paid to the development of children’s attitude to labour and team.

The forming stage of the experiment was performed in the experimental group. At this stage, again there were a number of manual training classes where the authors used Kalmyk traditions and oral folk arts (proverbs, sayings, tales and their analysis), and also problem questions [8].

Manual training classes in the 3rd form on subject ‘Paper materials’ are the activating block for the formation of moral qualities in junior schoolchildren. The goals are achieved by the following educational forms: a talk, reading tales, an excursion, practical tasks, making handicrafts.

The formation of moral qualities in junior schoolchildren during manual training classes promotes:

1. Revealing the essence of personal moral qualities with the help of talks on the following topics: ‘What does it mean to be careful and diligent?’; ‘Learn to do everything yourself’; ‘My native land’.
2. The establishment of friendly relationships in children’s group; the acquaintance with such qualities as justice and benevolence.

3. The formation of children's moral qualities during the acquaintance with folklore.
4. Friendship and concordance in team work.

The peculiarity of this lesson is that the love for the native land and the respect for traditions are formed in pupils on the basis of learned material.

The kernel of oral folk arts or the main idea of tales is in a moral lesson and moral guidelines put in children's souls. These guidelines include such moral qualities as kindness, cheerfulness, responsibility, boldness, strong will, honesty and consideration. The works of oral folk arts do not contain directions but hidden precepts which will form these person's moral qualities in time.

Hence: moral education is possible through all kinds of oral folk arts because their content is determined by morality and allows bring actions of heroes in correlation with moral standards.

Manual training lessons based on local history, geography and culture also are of educational value. They have ample possibilities for the unity of a child with native environment, the upbringing of a careful attitude to it.

Information about the nature of mother land should be introduced into manual training classes in primary school. It may be done during an introductory conversation when a teacher asks children to recollect the names of familiar trees and flowers which surround them in life. For example, schoolchildren are asked to make an appliqué depicting steppes. The main meaning of the task is to make a colourful decorative picture – to compile a composition and find an interesting colour score. Pupils can use the beauty and harmony of natural forms could be seen in steppe to create an expressive image. Teacher helps them to see these forms, to notice, to feel deeply their special beauty and expression and to understand what means can be used to intensify all this and to transform real observations into an individual image.

Meeting with the world of native environment develops children's understanding of surrounding world, makes them look attentively at various phenomena and protect the integrity of perception while creating an image of nature (the uniqueness, beauty and harmony of natural forms).

Team work gives children a lot of joy by its coordination and clear arrangement. Schoolchildren display the readiness to help each other and the interest in the result of collaboration. They train such skills as the ability to plan their work with a glance at the overall objective and to distribute operations. Group work forms friendly and benevolent relationships, mutual aid, collaboration, brotherhood and comradeship.

The goal of the control experiment is to ascertain how the system of lessons based on Kalmyk traditions influences the efficiency of moral education in primary school which can increase during the program. At this stage, the authors again used the method of M. Rokeach.

The control stage of the experiment showed that there are more children with the enough level of knowledge about ethno-cultural traditions in the experimental group. Qualitative changes in children's activity are characterized by the following: the increase in knowledge about morality; changed number of

life examples corresponding to one or another quality; the increasing subtlety of analysis; the sensibility of moral feelings; the ability to use folk traditions in life; the presence of personal judgments.

The repeated application of Shilova's method revealed changed indications in moral education of junior schoolchildren. Let us check the achieved results of the diagnostics. First of all, we will analyze the changes in moral experience of children from the 3rd form A. Like it was at the first stage of the experiment, the children were divided into three groups – with a low, medium and high level of moral experience. However, their quantitative composition changed.

In the experimental 3rd form B, the number of pupils with low level of moral experience makes up 16% of the sample, with medium level – 57% and with high level – 27%.

The comparison with the first stage revealed that the group of pupils with low level decreased by 27%; with medium level increased by 7%; with high level increased by 20%. A more detailed comparison allowed tracing the change of the number of pupils in groups with different level between the first and the second stages of the experiment. In general, 44% of tested children changed their position and got into groups with a high level of moral experience. This fact shows that the moral experience of pupils from the 3rd form B achieved a high level of development.

A small part of tested children had certain qualities of moral experience. The main thing is that children argued their answers and improved their focus on the content of a moral standard. Besides, they improved their skills in accentuating a moral problem in situations of moral choice. The perception of actions became discussable not only towards another person but also towards oneself.

In control class (3A), there were not detected any qualitative or quantitative changes (in comparison with the results of the first stage). This makes it possible to conclude that the increase of moral experience in the experimental 3rd class B is a result of a purposeful educational activity.

The conducted research revealed changes in the formation level of children's moral ideas.

The research showed that the moral qualities of junior schoolchildren are very diverse. Elements that prevail in pupils' moral consciousness are determined by certain conditions and teacher's advice and demands. Primary schoolchildren mostly treat adults with confidence. They began to actively and freely sort out in various life situations, but their judgments for actions are often situational. While researching the moral education of children, one should consider their age-specific and psycho-social peculiarities.

3. Conclusions

The results of the research showed that children's moral breeding corresponds to the age peculiarities of junior schoolchildren. Many of pupils

have notions about such ethic categories as benevolence and responsibility. They realized in total their positive or negative orientation, but they were not always able to give a clear formulation many of them. Hence, there appeared a necessity to further work aimed at improving the notions of junior schoolchildren about moral categories. However, junior schoolchildren are in “an unstable phase of moral breeding” (according to A.V. Zosimovsky [9]). A purposeful work is necessary to eliminate the gap between their moral qualities and everyday behaviour. Besides, a systematic pedagogical support is needed.

The degree of moral breeding of junior schoolchildren during education means different kinds of relations they establish with other people, the nature of these relations revealed in actions and behaviour: does a child give his experience to others with readiness or not; does he act freely and sincerely or for show and window dressing.

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