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The Specifics of the Socialisation Process of the Children in the Family and Out-of-Family Care Institutions

Cechy charakterystyczne procesu socjalizacji dzieci
przebywających w instytucjach opieki pozarodzinnej

Streszczenie

Proces socjalizacji jest postrzegany jako jeden z najbardziej stabilnych i fundamentalnych składników rozwoju osobowości. Jest blisko związany z wychowaniem i uznawany za jedną z najstarszych form zorganizowanej społecznej aktywności. Najbardziej pierwotnym środowiskiem, którego doświadcza dziecko, są relacje rodzinne. Wszystko, co obserwuje dziecko w rodzinie, jest znaczące. Oznacza to także relacje rodziców, ich złe nawyki czy możliwe nałogi, style rodzicielskie oraz zaspokajanie potrzeb dziecka. Wszystkie czynniki wspomniane powyżej mają wpływ na kształtowanie się moralności dziecka, jego osobowość i kształtuje jego postawy wobec siebie i innych. Od wczesnego dzieciństwa, bezpośrednio i pośrednio, dzieci zaczynają naśladować zachowanie, które widzą u rodziców i ludzi wokół, w końcu reprodukują dominujące wartości kulturowe oraz wzory zachowania, to jest: swoją socjalizację. Istota ludzka ma wymiar biologiczny oraz społeczny. Przy wybieraniu celów, treści, form i metod dowolnego działania pedagogicznego, ważne jest, aby rozważyć osobę jako jednostkę o wyjątkowych cechach, które zostały ukształtowane zgodnie z czynnikami społecznymi otaczającymi ją. Socjalizacja jest ważnym składnikiem życia każdego człowieka. Od pierwszego do ostatniego dnia socjalizacja determinuje wszystkie procesy, komunikację oraz adaptację społeczną.

Niniejszy artykuł analizuje wpływ opieki pozarodzinnej na zdolność dziecka do socjalizacji.

Analiza ta oparta jest na literaturze teoretycznej. Ważne jest zrozumienie, dlaczego dzieci, które dorastają w warunkach opieki pozarodzinnej, mają skłonność do wykazywania różnych zaburzeń.

Po pierwsze: ponieważ pomaga to rozpoznać problem. Po drugie: ponieważ umożliwia to wyjaśnienie w teorii przyczyn trudności społecznych. I w końcu pomaga znaleźć najlepszy możliwy sposób wsparcia określonego dziecka oraz zachęcenie go do przejęcia właściwych modeli zachowania.

Słowa kluczowe: proces socjalizacji, opieka pozarodzinna, kurator, wpływ otoczenia.

Abstract

Socialisation is perceived as the process of developing the most basic and characteristic personality traits. This process walks hand in hand with the socially organised action of upbringing. The first environment forming of a person's experience is his family and relationships with the family members. Everything the child sees in his family is of great value to him, including the relationships between parents, their bad habits or addictions, the style of upbringing, attitudes towards work, social events, and needs of the child. All of this affects the development of the child's morality, shaping his character, and creating his attitude towards himself and others. During childhood, children, directly or indirectly, emulate the actions and expressions of their parents and other people. By imitating they learn the behavioural and value models that dominate in the surrounding environment – they socialise.

The process of socialisation is an integral component of a human lifetime. It dictates all the communicative processes and social adaptation throughout the entire lifetime.

This article analyses the institutional environment impact of out-of-family care on the children's socialisation process. It is imperative to understand the frequent problems of development of the personality of children that have grown up or are growing up in an out-of-family care institution in order to support these children in their struggles to adopt the models of positive communication and behaviour by identifying and theoretically explaining the causes for the failures in socialisation.

Keywords: socialisation process, out-of-family care, trustee, environmental impact, children.

Introduction

The environment in which the child grows up dictates his behaviour and the development of specific personality traits. Thus, the family has a crucial role in the child's development; it shapes the preconditions of his social, moral, and personal development. Emotional identification in the presence of parents dictates the conditions for the social experience assimilation of the child, i.e., acqui-

sition of the value and behavioural models and the creation of the “I” concept. Namely, the person becomes who he is due to the influences of the adults who are important to him. However, there are cases when being in his biological family damages his development. These are the cases where the parents do not carry out their roles accordingly – care and love is being replaced by violent behaviour and the child’s rights are not complied with, thus inhibiting the normal development of the child. In such cases, the child receives out-of-family care – care for orphans and children deprived of parental care in Latvia are provided by a guardian, in a foster family, or in an out-of-family institution¹. The Civil Law of the Republic of Latvia indicates that care means providing for (sustenance, clothing, home, health care), taking care of, educating, and upbringing². In this article, an analysis of the institutional environment in the context of the socialisation process is carried out. The institutions of children’s out-of-family care provide the orphans, the children deprived of parental care, and the children with special needs with day and night care, home, social rehabilitation, as well as supporting the reuniting of families or the acquisition of a new family³.

Socialisation process

Socialisation is the process of acquiring behavioural models, social norms and values that are necessary for a person to successfully perform as a functioning member of the society. In this process, a human being acquires confidence and the socially recognised behaviours necessary to perform as a functioning member of the society⁴. The origins of the concept of *socialisation* can be found in Latin – *socialis* (*social*) that means the simultaneous process and result of the individual inheritance, adaptation, and transfer of the accumulated cultural and historical experience of mankind (knowledge, skills, standards, values, behaviour, etc.) in the specific conditions of the place the person belongs to⁵.

B. Vikmane describes socialisation as a gradual movement towards the true nature of a human being: to be a person useful to society and to achieve the goals important to him by performing as an individual, discovering talents, realising one's uniqueness and self-esteem. The inheritance and acquisition of social

¹ *Protection of the Rights of the Child Law*. Rīga: The Latvian Saeima, 1998. [reference 21.11.11.], available on the Internet: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=49096>

² *Civil Law.*, The Latvian Saeima, Rīga 1937, available on the Internet: <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=90223> [reference 21.11.11].

³ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 291 “Requirements for Social Service Providers”, 03.06.2003.

⁴ L. Braše, *Ģimenes loma skolēnu socializācijā [The aim of the family of the socialisation process]*, RaKa, Rīga 2010.

⁵ B. Vikmane, *Socializācija ģimenē [Socialisation in the family]*, LiePA, Liepāja 2009.

skills are not possible without fellows – people who help moving forward more successfully and enjoyably or, on the contrary, insensitive, negligent and disrespectful people who make this path more difficult, complicated and unsuccessful⁶. It means that, since the early childhood, there should be someone who can guide him in society, someone who can help to understand the requirements of society, and help the child to find his place in it.

The traditional socialisation mechanism works as an unconscious, non-critical perception and acquisition of social norms, behavioural standards, opinions, etc. that are characteristic to family, neighbours, friends, etc., but are not always supported in the society. A. Rean calls it a specific subculture where the mechanism operates. He further indicates that the person actively reflects the shared social experience in his opinions, behaviours, and actions⁷. Out-of-family care institutions have a “culture” that differs from that of families. The statistical data in Russia show that one in three children which have been placed in out-of-family care becomes a homeless person after the state care stops, and one in five has been convicted. Furthermore, one in ten commits suicide⁸. Such research has not been carried out in Latvia, therefore it is impossible to describe the precise situation. It is only possible to consider Latvia’s post-Soviet experience and come to a conclusion that the situation may be similar to that in Russia.

The institutional environment has a negative effect on a person’s ability to create and sustain long-term relationships, therefore the person has serious difficulties with the integration into society, besides which the child's economic, political, and social future is limited.

L. Korneva has studied the differences in the child’s and orphan’s self-perception components (self-perception, self-control, self-esteem). She concludes that these characteristics are shaped to hinder an adequate socialisation process under the influence of the institutional environment⁹.

The socialisation aimed towards adaptation – acceptance of social values, attitudes, standards, knowledge, positions, behavioural models, etc. is typification of the child’s individual personality traits by adapting to the requirements of a family or society. Typification and adaptation can be perceived as limiting factors, but the real freedom of personality can be found in successful interiorisation of social values, attitudes, standards, knowledge, positions, behavioural models, etc. – a well-rounded and harmonious development of the personality that is greatly affected by a socialisation agent for active leading of action and

⁶ B. Vikmane, *Socializācija ģimenē...*, op. cit.

⁷ A.A. Rean, *Psihologiā razvitiā ličnosti: srednij vozrast, starenie, smert' polnyj kurs*, [*Psychology of personality development: the average age, aging, and death: the full course*], Prajm-Evroznak, Moskva AST; Sankt-Petersburg 2007.

⁸ J. Williamson, A. Greenberg, *Families, not orphanages*, Batter Care Network 2010.

⁹ L.V. Korneva, *Osobennosti samoopredeleniā podrostkov – učašihšā special'nyh škol zakrytogo tipa. Disseertciā v psihologičeskikh naukah* [*Features of teenagers's self – pupils of the special closed-type schools. Dissertation in the psychological sciences*], Moskva 1999.

cooperation. Because of that, socialisation is a complicated mechanism and the process is affected by various conditions. On the one hand, it is a socially controllable and manageable process; on the other hand, it is subjected to spontaneous, unpredicted interactions or adverse factors¹⁰.

In his studies, M. Budovski uses the concept of *socialisation* as a process teaching a person to effectively adapt to the social environment. He stresses the fact that socialisation skills are not accumulated mechanically. In his opinion, it happens by cumulating the new cognition and old skills; both are combined and a new quality value arises. M. Budovski explains that each of the new qualities are tested in a person's everyday life. The criteria for use are the emotional satisfaction and the positive results of managing the situation. The positive experience strengthens, becomes rational, automatic and acquires a controlled reaction consciousness¹¹. The child observes and evaluates the behaviour of other people during his everyday life. This behaviour can be seen as attractive, respectable, and worthy of emulation. In this case, the child adapts his facial expression, manners, manner of speech, posture, and other characteristics to those he has observed, thus identifying himself to those people.

The processes of socialisation and upbringing are closely connected and interact constantly¹². Socialisation is quite similar to the concept of upbringing, but the upbringing by teachers and parents is only one type of socialisation. Socialisation is also education, the learning of social standards, concepts and values, the strengthening of confidence, the creation of self-control skills, etc. i.e. self-education. B. Vikmane, in her analysis, stresses the importance of self-activity aspect in the socialisation process¹³. Since early childhood, the child's psyche is subjected to endless relationships with many people, things, and phenomena that intertwine and create a sort of "chaos". J. Orlov explains it as learning in the social process: it can be external (clearly noticeable) and latent (obscured, externally invisible)¹⁴. The latent learning is more likely to emerge in the future in an inadequate action or attitude of a person or a group causing outrage in the people around. A person can deeply, emotionally and non-critically subjectively observe and learn the delinquent behavioural standards, values, and convictions that dominate in his family, neighbours, friends, etc. Only the inner dialogue of the person as a reflection on what is observed serves as the mechanism that "filters" everything heard and seen, keeping only the acceptable¹⁵.

¹⁰ A.A. Rean, *Psihologiā razvitiā ličnosti...*, op. cit.

¹¹ M. Budovskis, *Personības un sociālās vides rezonanse: Psihodiagnostika [Resonance of the personality and social environment: psychodiagnostics]*, Zinātne, Rīga 1986.

¹² A.A. Rean, *Psihologiā razvitiā ličnosti...*, op. cit.

¹³ B. Vikmane, *Socializācija ģimenē...*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Ū.M. Orlov, *Naučenie. Stanovlenie čeloveka [Learning. The formation of the man]*, Moskva 2006.

¹⁵ B. Vikmane, *Socializācija ģimenē...*, op. cit.

The meaning of attachment relationships in the socialisation process

The main difference between family environment and institutional environment is the inability of institutional environment to provide the child with close, emotional long-term attachment relationships with at least one adult.

An important role in the process of socialisation is played by attachment, which can be characterised as a relatively lasting emotional connection with a specific person who is considered and perceived as irreplaceable in the case of separation. A person with whom an emotional relationship is built reduces the anxiety and distress of the child. The child perceives this person as being able to handle a specific situation because of being stronger and smarter. An emotionally close relationship with a trustee promotes the creation of self-esteem as well as the belief that other people are helpful and responsive, which, in turn, forms a favourable base for mutual relationships with others. Attachment relationships stimulate the desire in the child to explore and thus stimulates cognitive development. Building trust and facilitating one's efficiency improves the abilities of the child and therefore their learning skills. Favourable and flexible attachment relationships that ensure a corresponding upbringing of a child promote the development of his or her personality, thus helping to overcome potentially unfavourable circumstances arising in the process of development¹⁶. Trusting yourself and others favours the development of empathic abilities – decentralisation, accepting the opinions of others, understanding self-motivation and the motivations of others¹⁷. The feeling of security creates mental comfort and satisfaction, which is expressed as harmonised mental processes and the absence of anxiety or conflicts; it also provokes curiosity and motivates a person to explore things¹⁸. D. Winnicott links the feeling of security with the creation of autonomy. The feeling of security facilitates courage and the self-realisation of the child and the feeling of freedom. This develops a lasting and positive self-esteem that promotes their personal development. However, the separation or lack of family that the child experiences being away from his family weakens the child's ability to trust himself and others. This creates alarm and feelings of depression¹⁹.

J. Bowlby puts the stress not only on believing in one's own strength that is created through attachment relationships but also expectation or the progress of

¹⁶ Dž. Boulbi, *Privázannocť* [Attachment], Gardariki, Mockva 2003, p. 447.

¹⁷ M.D.S. Ainsworth, *Some considerations regarding theory and assesment relevant to attachments beyond infancy*, [in:] M.T. Greenberg, D. Cicchetti, E.M. Cummings (eds.), *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research and intervention*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1993, pp. 463–488; Dž. Boulbi, *Privázannocť...*, op. cit.

¹⁸ M.D.S. Ainsworth, *Some considerations regarding theory...*, op. cit.

¹⁹ D.W. Winnicott, *The family and individual development: (1st publ.1965)*, Routledge, London, New York 2006; Dž. Boulbi, *Privázannocť...*, op. cit.

expectations from the world around. He concludes that people who, in their search for support, have experienced close relationships with emotionally sympathetic people succeed in finding the support. These expectations have been deeply internalised and accumulate a world view that presents an almost unconscious confidence and trust in other people. But those who have not experienced care and support while growing up do not trust in the people around. They perceive the world as unpredictable and unclear. This comes down to the problem of finding the right response for the specific situation. Avoidance and fighting dominate not only in responses to threatening situations but to other situations as well. One more aspect for those who grow up with mixed expectations is their inability to acquire appropriate experience and attitudes towards the world around them²⁰. J. Bowlby indicates that, if the child loses his trustee or does not have one (e. g., in out-of-family institutional care), the child regresses in his development²¹.

The development of mutual relationships requires trust in others in the respective situation and experience and knowledge that help to decide who to trust. In this way, a person can change his role depending on the specific situation. J. Bowlby also indicates the importance of a safe haven. It helps to provide continuous support if necessary because exaggerated independence hinders the creation of favourable mutual relationships²². J. Bowlby stresses the importance of a safe haven at every age and it is the basis for creating an emotionally stable personality. A person must have the feeling that he can receive physical and emotional support, and comfort in a case of distress²³.

The difficulties of the children in out-of-family care

Successful socialisation is closely connected with the state of a person. The environment in the child's family and his attitude towards it are imperative in the process of developing his feelings. The perception of himself as a part of the family dictates the reactions of the child and becomes the basis for the future relationships. G. Chomentauskas compares it with scenarios that help to understand how people will act and interpret the feelings of other people in relation to the child. These scenarios are very stable and people often retain them in their perception throughout their whole lifetime. Life experience can shape various internal positions. These positions reflect the child's perception of people's atti-

²⁰ J. Bowlby, *Separation: anxiety and anger. Attachment and loss: Volume 2*, Random House, England 2010.

²¹ Idem, *A secure base: Parent – child attachment nad healthy human development*, BacisBooks, USA 2008.

²² Idem, *The making and breaking of affectional bonds*, Routledge, New York, London 2005.

²³ Idem, *A secure base...*, op. cit.

tude towards him and his own perception of himself. There are at least four different positions: 1) I am needed and loved and I love you too; 2) I am needed and loved, but you exist because of me; 3) I am not loved, but I would really like to approach you; 4) I am neither needed nor loved, leave me alone²⁴. So-called social orphans are children whose parents are alive, but have refused to take care of them or the Orphan's Court has taken away their rights to the child. For these children the last two positions are the most characteristic. If the child has reached his conscious age, he tries to find the answer to the question "Why?" after being placed in an out-of-family institution. Depending on his previous experience and personality traits, the child finds one of the two answers: he can perceive the separation from his family as a punishment for being bad. In this case, he loses his self-respect and is continually feeling guilt that deeply influences his personality. The other case involves the child coming to the conclusion that the parents are the ones to blame. The child discredits the family and denies all previous positive experiences connected with it. The inner state of such a child is aggression, anger (firstly, his angry at himself for craving for his family), and resentment that creates a subjective breach between him and his family.

To come to a conclusion that you are not loved and are worthless means the feeling of deep disappointment. The child feels that he has been deceived and abandoned. These thoughts evoke protests, depression, and insecurity. The child locks out the entire world by understanding that "they (adults) all are the same, they can replace you at any time"; he loses trust not only in parents but also in all adults. The socialisation process cannot be successfully carried out if a person is suspicious and cannot trust anyone.

The lack of emotional warmth creates a negative and aggressive attitude towards others. V. Banya underlines the aggression manifestations that are characteristic to the children who have been growing up in an out-of-family care institution. The children have a very distinct need for a contact with adults and a lack of emotional intimacy. The teaching staff often changes, many children are frequently transferred between groups and even between orphanages. At the same time, it is possible to observe a heightened dependence on adults which can evoke aggression in these relationships. Aggression in combination with the lack of initiative creates a specific attitude – a tendency to wait and require the solution for their own problems. These specifics together with adults hinder the children's normal development of feelings of self-acceptance, self-value, and self-confidence, as well as the understanding of the value of other people and the development of emotional attachment²⁵. The aggressive attitude spreads towards brothers and sisters too. Orphans often have a very weak emotional link with

²⁴ G.T. Chomentauskas, *Sem 'â glazami rebenka* [*Life through the eyes of a child*], "Pedagogika", Moskva 1989.

²⁵ V. Batņa, *Rosinot bērna iekšējo pasauli* [*Stimulating the inner world of the child*], RaKa, Rīga 2007, 263. lpp.

their biological brothers and sisters and they have difficulties in forming constructive and emotionally adequate relationships with them. These relationships are often short-term and formal; the lack of interest in the lives of brothers and sisters is present. The aggression manifests itself in the teenager's attempts to develop a conflict as a response to the actions of others around him. The intellectual development, emotional state, and the perception of his own personality depend on person's ability to use opportunities, function in society, and make contacts with others²⁶.

The environment in which the child grows up has various effects on his emotional feelings and personality development. The child is not a passive object of external influences. The specific personality traits are formed through the interaction between the child and environment – in the process of the child's actions. Some of the most important things for the child's development are his place within a group, the functions he carries out, his actions, how strongly he approves of and values the opinion of others²⁷, however, it is clear that an immature person (e.g., a child) has difficulties with evaluating all the environmental elements and acting in the framework of an adult's personality traits.

In 2012, there were 8,152 children in out-of-home care in Latvia. The largest number of children deprived of parental care (5,051) were under guardianship. 1,155 children have received care in foster families. Nevertheless, there are still a large number of children that do not have the possibility to have a foster family that could take care of them for at least a short period of time. At the end of 2012, there were 544 children in Latvian social care centres (children under the age of two, children under the age of four with physical and mental development disorders, and disabled children under the age of 18 with severe mental development disorders), whereas 1,402 children (from 2 to 18) were in municipal social care centres²⁸.

Conclusions

The socialisation process is a condition and mechanism of the development of the personality. Every child needs the emotional involvement of an adult. The child waits for the involvement of his parents in solving his problems; he needs their support, understanding, and love. The shaping of one's social attitude is closely connected with the position of adults that, by their actions or their lack of actions, serve as an example and form the child's attitude system. The adults

²⁶ A. Šteinberga, *Višpārīgā un personības psiholoģija [General and personality psychology]*, RTU, Rīga 2006.

²⁷ А.Л. Колومинский, Е.А. Пан'ко, С.А. Игумиов, *Психическое развитие детей в норме и патологии, [Mental development of children in norm and pathology]*, „Питер”, Москва 2004, p. 480.

²⁸ The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2013.

play a very important role in the development of the child's personality and socialisation process. The life in a family provides an interpersonal relationship experience. The child observes the parent's attitude towards him and draws the conclusions of such things as whether he is loved and is worthy. Experience is the basis for attitude development. If the needs of the child have not been met, he feels a negative experience and develops it into a negative attitude. The negative attitude lowers motivation, which is a powerful driving force, thus obstructing development and lowering the effectiveness of an action.

Every important change in one's life can trigger a crisis. A crisis is a problem that requires a lot of time to be dealt with. If a person wants to overcome a crisis and put himself in order for the next stage of life, he needs a loving attitude, support, and helpful and professional specialists. New circumstances create new conditions; however, these changes will cause many difficulties that the person will have to overcome. When put in an out-of-family care institution, the child experiences a psychological impact that will resonate throughout his entire future life. In order to lessen the negative effect of the impact and help the child to socialise, a pedagogical and psychological support is required.

Growing up in an out-of-family care institution resonates in the child's life. He receives inferior and crippled relationship experiences, thus there is a possibility that his socialisation process will be unsuccessful, he will be unable to adjust to the requirements of a society, and realise his potential, create a family, take care for his own children. Non-governmental organisations could be perceived as an exception because the environment there is closer to the one in a real family, and these organisations provide family care, love, and an individual approach that substitutes for the mother (or both parents). This means that it is possible to create an out-of-family care that is quite similar to a real family in order to facilitate the comprehensive development of the child; the previous experience of NGOs supports this claim.

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