SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENT YOUTH: THE EXPERIENCE OF FORMATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONDITIONS OF PANDEMIC

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24115/S2446-6220217Extra-A849p.481-490

Iryna Savelchuk
Daria Bybyk
Yurii Horban
Oksana Koshelieva
Olena Karakoz

ABSTRACT
The relevance of the scientific investigation involves understanding the importance of the social competence concept in the students’ environment in terms of distance learning, which has arisen based on quarantine restrictions. The purpose of the scientific investigation is to identify the formation level of social competence of student youth in the educational environment within the conditions of pandemic in the process of distance learning. Methods of pedagogical research (remote interaction), sociological (survey in Google-forms) and statistical methods have been used to form a methodological base. It has been revealed that in the conditions of distance learning at HEI during a pandemic, social competence undergoes significant changes, considering that the results of a survey of students are significant, indicating a decrease in the level of socialization. The practical significance of the results of the scientific investigation is aimed at improving the social development of the individual, outlining the main transitions between levels of socialization in terms of quarantine restrictions and distance learning.

Keywords: Social competence. Student youth (young students). Socialization of personality. Educational environment. Higher educational institution (HEI).

COMPETÊNCIA SOCIAL DA JUVENTUDE ESTUDANTIL: A EXPERIÊNCIA DE FORMAÇÃO NO AMBIENTE EDUCACIONAL DA UNIVERIDADE NAS CONDIÇÕES DA PANDEMIA

COMPETÊNCIA SOCIAL DE JÓVENES ESTUDANTES: LA EXPERIENCIA DE FORMACIÓN EN EL ENTORNO EDUCATIVO DE LA UNIVERSIDAD EN LAS CONDICIONES DE PANDEMIA

RESUMO
A relevância da investigação científica envolve compreender a importância do conceito de competência social no ambiente aluno em termos de ensino a distância, que surgiu com base em restrições de quarentena. O objetivo da investigação científica é identificar o nível de formação da competência social da juventude estudantil no ambiente educacional dentro das condições da pandemia no processo de ensino a distância. Métodos de pesquisa pedagógica (interação remota), sociológico (levantamento em formas de Google) e métodos estatísticos têm sido utilizados para formar uma base metodológica. Revela-se que nas condições de ensino a distância no IES durante uma pandemia, a competência social sofre mudanças significativas, considerando que os resultados de uma pesquisa de alunos são significativos, indicando uma diminuição no nível de socialização. A importância prática dos resultados da investigação científica visa melhorar o afastamento social do indivíduo, delineando as principais transições entre os níveis de socialização em termos de restrições de quarentena e ensino a distância.


RESUMEN
La relevancia de la investigación científica implica comprender la importancia del concepto de competencia social en el entorno del estudiante en términos de aprendizaje a distancia, que surgió sobre la base de restricciones de cuarentena. El objetivo de la investigación científica es identificar el nivel de formación de la competencia social de los jóvenes estudiantes en el entorno educativo dentro de la ola de la pandemia en el proceso de aprendizaje a distancia. Se han utilizado métodos de investigación pedagógica (interacción remota), sociológicos (encuesta en forma de google) y métodos estadísticos para formar una base metodológica de cal. Se revela que, en las condiciones de aprendizaje a distancia en el HEI durante una pandemia, la competencia social experimenta cambios significativos, teniendo en cuenta que los resultados de una encuesta de los estudiantes son significativos, lo que indica una disminución en el nivel de socialización. La importancia práctica de los resultados de la investigación científica tiene como objetivo mejorar el distanciamiento social del individuo, esbozar con las principales transiciones entre los niveles de socialización en términos de restricciones de cuarentena y aprendizaje a distancia.

INTRODUCTION
Within the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the vector of students’ social educational orientation has shifted, forasmuch as the ability to acquire knowledge in classrooms has changed due to quarantine restrictions. The educational environment, in general, and social competence, in particular, have changed, considering that they have been forced to be transferred to a distance mode. In order to implement high-quality competitive education in new conditions, a virtual social space should be organized at the university by using the following conditions, namely:

- use of distance learning opportunities by students (video courses, online communication, tests, participation in webinars)
- use of distance international educational opportunities by students (obtaining international certificates, enrolment to free university courses from countries-providers of educational services, which will provide the opportunity to stay in their educational and social environment).

The formation of students’ social competences becomes especially relevant in the educational process of the university as a multi-level educational complex in the context of the implementation of the competence-based approach.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In the investigations of Ukrainian scientists, various approaches towards studying the concept of “social competence” have been considered, its meaning and structure have been analyzed. The concept of social competence is not the unified homogenous essence. The authors investigate the conceptual evolution of social competence, providing this concept with a modern definition and considering its significance. Sharov (2019) defines social competence as the possession and use of the ability to integrate thinking, feelings and behavior in order to achieve social goals and results that are assessed in the environment and culture; however, Shymko and Talash (2018) consider it as a qualitative characteristic of the socialization process.

Methodological approaches to the issue of developing social competence of students of classical universities have been widely defined. Along with this, the analysis of various approaches to development of social competence of students studying at classical universities by means of game technologies has been carried out (ZHUKOVA, 2018). According to the viewpoint of Savelchuk (2019), the training of social workers in the innovative educational environment of the university should contain conceptual ideas and innovative mechanisms. The author considers the process of preparation to be specially organized, purposeful, dynamic, social-pedagogical conditions of which are implemented in the joint activity of educational subjects due to the integration of innovative opportunities of the educational environment and personal potential of the specialist. At the same time, the scholar substantiates the importance of social conditions for the development of the team through games, emphasizing the importance of criteria and indicators of the formation levels of students’ social competence.

The formation of social leadership in the context of professional training of future social workers, as well as the motivational-value component and its criteria for the social competence of students of higher education institutions are an integral part of the educational space (NAZMIEV, 2019; BYBYK, 2020). According to Sydoruk, it is proposed to use conditional maps (mental maps) for the formation of students’ social competence, which allows visualizing the future result (2020).

Mukhnieva (2021) and Moiseienko (2021) consider the features of student community as a social group mixed with the use of innovative technologies in the development of social competences of students, the application of pedagogical technologies used in the activities of teachers in organizing the educational process. In order to understand the complex purpose of socialization it is necessary to rely on continuous investigations of different social groups (starting - preschool group). Findings from such studies point to initial interpersonal interactions connected with learning, forasmuch as they correlated with all aspects of adaptation. The use of modeling of structural equations shows that aspects of social competence are moderately related to social anxiety and proximity of the provider of educational services and degree-seeking students (MAGELINSKAITE-LEGKAUSKIENĖ, LEGKAUSKAS & KEPALAIȚĖ, 2018); involving specialized programs such as Preschool PATHS is also important (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) (ČURIĆ & ANDIĆ, 2021).
Thus, children from an early age can integrate and apply strategies for increasing their social emotional competence (Ahmed, Hamzah & Abdullah, 2020). The upside is that some investigations point to the existence of the concept of affective social competence, which consists of three integrated and dynamic components, namely: sending affective messages, receiving affective messages, and experiencing affect. It is this model that improves future positive communications (TANSLEY & GULLIFORD, 2018).

Some studies have identified four general approaches to the operational definition of social competence, such as: social skills, sociometric status, relationships and functional outcomes. Consequently, a model of the prism of social competence is formed with the help of these connections, based on theoretical, index and level analyzes. Similar models are important for the sociological analysis of students’ classroom activities (OGDEN & HAGEN, 2018). It should also be mentioned a positive fact that some authors turn to the study of the concept of children’s social competence. The point at issue is checking the level of expressiveness of gender-differentiated social competence among pupils of primary school age (HETMANCZYK, 2015).

A modern university should train specialists who, in addition to high special competence, have an understanding of common cultural issues (SERGEYEVA & VOSKREKASENK, 2016). The basic problem of the development of social competence in a virtual environment is associated with the absence of a recognized imitation model and a clearly defined goal, which has a quantitative description and a system of measurement scales that help identify the level of social competence of the student.

Steptsova M. (2019) proposes to use mathematical operations to calculate the parameters of the educational process and variables, defined on a quantitative and relative scale. Investigations of this kind should improve the mathematical model for personalization of the educational process depending on the level of social competence as part of the professional competence of the student (SLEPTSOVA, 2019).

Scientists, offering various (including author’s) methods of research of social competence, make a significant contribution to the development of this subject matter (DĄBROWSKA & SMARZEWSKA, 2018; SALYAKHOVA & VALEEVA, 2015). Thus, Ukrainian and foreign scholars offer different approaches to the study of social competence; however, in some works, social competence is characterized only as a qualitative concept and not as a quantitative one.

Social competence is such a broad scientific category that not all methodological approaches to the problem of its definition are defined. Moreover, some scholars believe that social competence is only a process of training and organizing the implementation of the education system. By the way, it has been noted in some works that social competence is only a representation of social leadership in terms of professional training. Therefore, it is necessary to continue research in this area and choose a specific topic for the implementation of social competence, for instance, the development of social competence in the conditions of training in student classrooms who have been forced to work under the conditions of quarantine restrictions.

**AIMS**

The purpose of the research: to identify the level of formation of social competence of student youth in the educational environment within the conditions of the pandemic. Achieving the purpose outlined involves solving the following tasks: consideration of the concept of “social competence” in pedagogy, sociology and psychology; conducting a survey for students of higher educational institutions in order to determine the effects of distance learning on the socialization of the individual and to clarify the role of social competence of student youth within the conditions of the pandemic.

**METHODS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

The following methods have been used to form the methodological base, namely:

- pedagogical (pedagogical observation, conversation, questionnaire, pedagogical experiment);
- sociological (sociological survey, method of expert evaluation, method of information analysis);
- statistical (ranking method, descriptive statistics).

The study was conducted in academic groups of different faculties of educational and qualification level “Bachelor” of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (Ukraine) in order to determine the experience of forming social competence of student youth in the educational environment. The total sample of respondents...
amounted 820 people.

The Faculty of Engineering and Pedagogy, Faculty of Informatics, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Faculty of Political Science and Law, Faculty of Physics and Mathematics were engaged in the research. Each faculty selected 41 students from 1, 2, 3, 4 courses who answered questions while studying in distance learning mode. At the university, the study was conducted according to the following criteria:

- the impact of distance learning on the socialization of the personality;
- individual positive and negative consequences of distance learning;
- expansion of educational space and educational opportunities.

In order to determine the importance of the criteria outlined, students were asked to answer three questions in a survey service in Google-forms:

1. Has the vector of your social competence decreased?
2. Rank the reasons for the social competence decline.
3. Choose 3 basic social competences.

Formation of questions of social research has been made in accordance with the conditions for the provision of educational and social competence at HEIs. It is worth noting that the responses prior the pandemic would be significantly different from the available ones.

**RESULTS**

Pedagogical observation over students’ work in a remote mode has made it possible to conclude that the student does not need to artificially construct his social role in real communication, but only to integrate organically into a ready-made circle of communication for productive performance of an adequate social role. Conversation as a form of analysis defines that the successful fulfillment of the student’s social role and the implementation of life-sustaining activities in the society will be successful only with a harmonious and effective combination of one’s own positions and interests with the positions and interests of other members of the society. Questionnaire in Google forms in the conditions of pedagogical experiment has allowed evaluating qualitative, productive, professional, public and personal life-sustaining activities, and also socially productive activities of any modern specialist and his success in professional practice. The sociological survey has made it possible to highlight the cognitive (psychological) concept in the respondents’ answers, which has been based on awareness of social networks, the standards of commutuality, etc.

The method of expert assessment has helped determine the general axiological (value-semantic) component, which for the majority of respondents is based on the value-semantic understanding of social reality mixed with the behavioral component as the ability to interact in different social situations. The method of information analysis has revealed motivational-value (social position and orientation of the student), meaningful (social knowledge), operational (social skills), communicative components in the students’ answers-comments.

By using the method of ranking and descriptive statistics, the following components have been revealed, namely: cognitive-evaluative (knowledge about yourself and others; skills and abilities of self-knowledge and cognition of other people; knowledge of positive relationships), regulatory-activity (skills of self-control; experience of developing positive relationships in personal and professional spheres) and emotional-reflexive (empathy, reflexive skills). The general statistical methodology is expounded in percentage ratio for the following components, namely: motivational-activity (readiness for the formation of social competence in activity and behavior, social skills), cognitive (social knowledge of tools, methods, programs of actions, solving social and professional issues, implementation of rules and norms of behavior), behavioral (experience of implementation of knowledge, abilities, manifestation of competence in various standard and non-standard situations), value-semantic (social value-semantic attitude to the content of competence), emotional-volitional (emotional-volitional regulation as the ability to adequately respond in situations of social and professional interaction, social attitude).

The essence of the experiment lied in determining the qualitative need for socialization of students using formal indicators of the level of interpretation of experimental research data. It should be noted that the sociological
experiment involved a significant number of students (820) from five different faculties of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. The students of 1–4 courses have answered three questions related to the concepts of decreasing the vector of social competence; the reasons for this decrease (by ranking from lower to higher); separation of three basic social competences. The results of a survey of students of 1-4 courses on decreasing the vector of social competence have been depicted in Figure 1. This decline was observed after the transition of academic groups to distance learning mode for the period of quarantine restrictions. A significant number of respondents in the comments to the answers have noted: “We want to communicate in classrooms”, “There is a need to meet”, “I feel the need for collective discussion”, etc (figure 1).

**Fig. 1.** The consolidated decreased vector of social competence of all respondents after 2 months of online classes (Author’s development)

![Graph showing the percentage of respondents who believe the vector of social competence decreased](image)

**Source:** Search data.

From among the surveyed students, 67% believe that their level of competence has decreased, 23% - observe no decrease, 10% - cannot answer the questions. The rating of the reasons for the decline in social competence of young people is illustrated in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Reasons for decline in the social competence of respondents (Author’s development)

![Graph ranking reasons for decline in social competence](image)

**Source:** Search data.

According to the summary results of the survey in the system of ranking the reasons for the decline in social competence, respondents have chosen 6 reasons for their social failure. They are as follows:
- lack of live communication - this mode of staying in virtual communication space through online learning blocks the personal visual dissemination of information by tools of oral speech and non-speech means (posture, facial expressions, gestures) in real-time mode;
- technological problem of generations - the difference in the ability to use the latest technologies between older teachers and young people;
- lack of technological support - insufficient provision of all students and teachers with computer technologies.
- inconsistency of curricula and requirements - programs are not adapted to online learning.
- loss of control over the educational services provided - lack or low level of feedback in the process of distance learning.

Covid-19 is the main reason for the decline in social competence; consequently, it ranks the first place. The loss of control over the educational services provided is on the second place; the third place is occupied by the inconsistency of curricula and requirements. The lack of technological support is on the fourth place. The next to the last mark belongs to the concept of "technological problem of generations". The last place is occupied by the lack of live communication. The students of different faculties of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University were asked to distinguish 3 basic social competences among the proposed ones (communication, ability to see the problem, responsibility, prompt response, ability to change, teamwork), which, according to the author’s viewpoint, are key to ensuring social competence (Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Consolidated sample of basic social competences of respondents (Author’s development)

![Diagram](image)

Source: Search data.

The students have put communication in the first place - 31%; the ability to see the problem occupies the second place - 23%; responsibility is in the third place - 19%. Prompt response, ability to change, teamwork have received 13%, 9%, 5%, respectively.

**DISCUSSION**

In Piskunova’s investigations (2018), the importance of sociological research is proved with the use of mathematical and statistical methods. Such studies operate with discriminant, criterion and additional validity, which are moderately related to social competence. The results of such studies remained significant even after the personality and academic intelligence were statistically controlled by social competence. The conducted study of social activity of students was based on certain criteria proposed by Piskunova (2018). A high level of social competence is correlated with the phenomenon of "self-transcendence", when there is a need for a positive transformation of the society, transmitting the best personal qualities. Therefore, the intention to form a high level of social competence of the individual in the process of socialization helps preserve the society and the stability of its structure (NOVIKOVA, 2016). In the study conducted, the respondents consider communication and prompt response to be the most positive qualities.
Some scholars have come to conclusion that it is the orientation to learning outcomes that make the greatest contribution to overall social competence. It is not so much teaching methods as an effective course and measurements of emotional learning experience help Pakistani undergraduate students increase social competence (GREEN, 2019). For this reason the proposed research is relevant, forasmuch as the duration of undergraduate training is a fundamental basis for further scientific knowledge.

Some investigations present the results of theoretical analyzes of the interrelationship between pedagogical communications and social competences of students. Initiation and dissemination of similar studies is essential for a clear conceptualization of social competences. Pedagogical comprehension and implemented communication are the basis for the development of students’ social competences, which are the highest degree of development and are related to other competences and aspects of their personality. The development of social competences is not the basic goal and the only one, because their formation clearly represents the basis for the development of other abilities, which are interconnected with the help of communication, radial and other vectors (ZUKÖRLİC, 2016). The groups of respondents studied in the present research have indirectly found the outlined dependencies when commenting on their answers in group discussions.

The experimentally obtained sociological survey data chime with the methods specified in the results of the quasi-experimental post-test non-equivalent design of sociometry (Ahmed, Hamzah & Abdullah, 2020). 207 respondents divided in two groups took part in this study. Differences in investigations are quantitatively correlated only with the number of respondents, and qualitatively – with the methods of obtaining information. The choice of such options has been made due, among other things, to Covid-19 circumstances.

The social competence of students has been widely studied in terms of the impact of a teacher’s perseverance through ADCA questionnaires (social cognitive attitudes and strategies, A BULLS form) [JUSTICIA, 2016]. Although, the results of a sociological survey of students of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University do not repeat the models of the ADCA questionnaires, however, the studies, as in these models, are presented on two linear sections. In the first linear regression analysis, relationships covering social competence and incompetence were used as dependent variables. Communication, the ability to see the problem, responsibility, prompt response, ability to change, teamwork (modulators) were independent variables. The second section shows two models that the respondents combined with three elements, namely: the first model included communication, the ability to see the problem and responsibility, and the second one included prompt response, the ability to change and teamwork.

This research has shown elements of influence on the student’s social competence, using variables and constants, however, they are not always objective and cannot be applied to each analyzed group, as other scientific papers reveal (JUSTICIA, 2016).

The structural-functional model is similar to the model in the works of some scientists (Fedoruts, 2020). It is defined by students on their own basis, and, in their opinion, it should consist of the following components, namely: target, outlining the goal and the task towards forming social competence, conceptual, which determines the social-pedagogical conditions for the formation of social competence by means of non-formal education together with the principles of their implementation; procedural, which determines the interaction of the functions of non-formal education and the structural components of social competence; semantic, covering a system of forms, methods and tools; effective, which reveals the criteria, indicators, levels of social competence of students and the result of the research process (formation of social competence of non-formal education). In further scientific investigations, it will be advisable to use the schemes proposed in the academic papers of foreign scientists. These include a model of structural equations related to social anxiety (MAGELINŠKAÎTE-LEGKAUSKIENĖ, LEGKAUSKAS & KEPALAÎTĖ, 2018), as well as the use of Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (ČURIĆ & ANDIĆ, 2021).

**CONCLUSIONS**

Understanding the most important methodological problematic aspects of students’ social competence in the process of socialization at the higher educational institution is the basis for successful mastering and acceptance of “new social roles” by students, formation of adequate positive personal characteristics. The sociological aspect of the construction of social competence requires its consideration in a social context, which determines individual success in all spheres of the society. In their responses in the Google forms system, students have commented on the value they attach to the content of social competence when it is unsuccessful, in particular:
• lack of live communication – it has been chosen because of low competence of social interaction with society, community, team, family, friends, partners;

• technological problem of generations - the impact on cooperation, tolerance, respect and acceptance of the teacher;

• lack of technological support – it has been selected due to the impact on mobility;

• inconsistency of curricula and requirements – it has been selected as an inappropriate state level of preparation and conducting classes in distance learning mode;

• loss of control over the educational services provided - it has been selected due to the inability to find adequate solutions to new learning situations.

The research conducted proves that higher education has contributed to the formation of a holistic socialization of the individual prior the pandemic. Respondents are convinced that forced restrictions have significantly reduced the systematic formation of behavioral structures that were an integral part of the educational process among students. It should also be noted that adaptive learning conditions have reoriented the means of acquiring knowledge, however, this has not been a continuation of the extracurricular process of socialization. Thus, a need arises to develop and apply a new system for the formation of social competence of young people in the context of the transition to distance learning mode, where, according to the minimum activity, there will be minimal adaptation for socialization and high-quality integration into the public virtual space.

The practical significance of the research lies in the ability to diagnose the state of formation of social competence of future professionals after the end of quarantine restrictions. To find out the qualitative results of this approach, it will be necessary to turn to a reflexive analysis of students’ performance levels in order to determine the “problem locus” specified in the content of Google forms (communication, problem-solving skills, responsibility, prompt response, ability to change, teamwork) as well as further forecasting the desired changes in achieving positive results in the formation of future professionals’ social competence in various specialties in the face of certain real restrictions. An important direction of further scientific developments is the formation of the content of curricula, which will provide for a set of techniques, procedures, methods and other tools; they should ensure the implementation of the system for improving the introduction of social competence and provide effective socialization as a component of the social competence of students.

REFERENCES


GREEN, Z. A. Emotionalized Learning Experiences: Inspiring Students in Pakistan to Reinvent Themselves to Nurture Social Competence. Journal of College Student Development, 2019, 60(3), 337-360. Available at:


MOISEENKO, V. Socio-psychological features of the status of the individual in the student group. Theory and practice of modern psychology, 2019, 2 [1], 165-169. Available at: http://ekhsuir.kspu.edu/bitstream/handle/123456789/232658789/%D0%96%D0%BE%20%E0%80%B9%D0%B5%D1%94%D0%BD%04%BA%03%BE%20%0D%92%20%D1%92__%D1%82%0B%0C%BE%20%0D%87%0B%0B%0B.pdf?sequence=1. Access: Jan. 12, 2021.


1Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Faculty of Socio-Economic Education Department of Theory and Technology of Social Work, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. E-mail: iraut@ukr.net. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6813-4548.

2Senior Lecturer Department of Theory and Technology of Social Work, Faculty of Socio-Economic Education, Department of Theory and Technology of Social Work, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. E-mail: deshe.bibykg@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9947-8503.

3PhD in Cultural Studies, Associate Professor, Scientific Library, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. E-mail: y.lgorban@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5837-4409.

4Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Film and Television, Department of Television Journalism and Acting, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. E-mail: renisenb@ukr.net. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1653-2103.

5PhD in History, Associate Professor, Faculty of Information Technology Law and Cyber Security, Department of Information Technology, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts. E-mail: karkoc@ukr.net. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7772-1530.

Received: 29 Feb. 2021