COMPETITIVENESS AS A PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT: FROM THEORETICAL SUBSTANTIATION TO PUPILS' OPINION AND EVALUATION

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Abstract

Introduction. The new paradigms (*ecological, synergetic*) in pedagogy enable to study both aspects: a *society* and an *individual* as a self–developing, self–organizing and self–evaluating system that functions and develops, learns to lives, plans and forecasts; constructs and gathers its own experience; that is able to choose and to be responsible for the consequences of its own actions under the conditions of modern rapidly changing environment. Thus *competitiveness* becomes one of the basic categories not only in economy, but also in pedagogy. It is important to study and understand the new meaning of this concept that significantly differs from the old paradigm of competitiveness and stereotypes of human thinking. Therefore the *objective of this article* is: to *present the results of the experimental research, where authors analyze and evaluate pupils' opinions, positions towards the indications of the competitiveness.*

Research methods: 1) data acquisition methods: projective composition with assignment, content analysis of the composition, survey; 2) survey data processing methods: determination and comparing of average ranges, *Kendall's Concordance Test, Kendall's Correlation Test,* and *Spearman's Range Correlation Test*, using SPSS software.

Results and Conclusions. At present there is no unity regarding the substantiation of competitiveness, however, we can find three approaches to the substantiation of competitiveness: 1) structural approach, where there are several structural elements emphasized; 2) biometrical approach where there are indicated and evaluated characteristic features of personality's competitiveness; 3) functional approach where there are types and spheres of competitiveness manifestation analyzed. There is the *combined approach* as well, where we can use two or all three above mentioned approaches. It is important to study the younger generation's understanding about competitiveness, as well as to promote its development. The sum of the average index of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by both pupils of urban and rural secondary schools shows that 11 most significant indicators of competitiveness according to respondents' point of view are: persistence; readiness for risk; ability to work and respect towards work; clear aims for life/future; communicative skills; ability to be the leader; no fear to make a mistake; creativity; skills to convince others and to defend one's own point of view; cooperation skills; readiness to overcome difficulties, including physical and mental endurance. Having processed mathematically the data obtained as a result of the experiment, we concluded: 1) *there isn't concordance/unity* in the evaluation provided by the pupils of urban schools regarding the significance of competitiveness indications; 2) *there isn't concordance/unity* in the evaluation provided by the pupils of rural schools as well; in both cases we diagnosed disparities. In next stage of research we conclude that *there is a correlation between* two selections of indications: the sums of the average ranges of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by pupils of *urban* and *rural* schools. It means that there are no differences between urban and rural respondents' views regarding the significance of competitiveness indications which characterize competitive person/personality, because, in spite of the specificity of cultural environment of urban and rural schools and peculiarities of individual thinking, on the whole there exists a uniform subculture of generations, including *youth subculture*, with common basic values, norms of behavior etc.

Key words: changeable environment; competitive personality; indications of competitiveness, pupils' opinion and evaluation.

Introduction

The dynamics of socially economic activities and their growth is becoming the problem of global scale. Many processes make us question the possibilities of sustainable development and aims of activity.

The new paradigms (*ecological, synergetic*) in pedagogy enable to study both aspects: a *society* and an *individual* as a self–developing, self–organizing and self–evaluating system that functions and developes, learns to live, plans and forecasts; constructs and gathers its own experience; that is able to choose and to be responsible for the consequences of its own actions under the conditions of modern rapidly changing environment. The ecological and synergetic approaches enable to draw a conclusion that nowadays every human must learn to live and change in the interaction with the changeable *environment.*

The ongoing globalisation and integration processes increasingly influencing different social processes, including the situation in the labour market, have raised up the topicality of the necessity in education to develop competitiveness of the society in general, as well as of every individual. Thus *competitiveness* becomes one of the basic categories not only in economy, but also in pedagogy. It is important to study and understand the new meaning of this concept that significantly differs from the old paradigm of competitiveness and stereotypes of human thinking. Therefore the *objective of this article* is: to *present the results of the experimental research, where authors analyze and evaluate pupils' opinions, positions towards the indications of the personality competitiveness.*

Research methods

Within the period of time from 2006 till 2008 we carried out the *research with the aim*: to study the opinions of the students/pupils from comprehensive secondary schools of Latvia regarding the competitive personality and indications (indicators) of competitiveness. The respondents were from the schools, which participate in the project *"Be a Leader!".* This project is carried out at the scale of Latvia.

Research methods: 1) data acquisition methods: projective composition with assignment, content analysis of the composition, survey; 2) survey data processing methods: determination and comparing of average ranges, *Kendall's Concordance Test, Kendall's Correlation Test,* and *Spearman's Range Correlation Test*, using SPSS software.

Experimental research consisted of two stages: 1) the *first stage:* on the basis of students' (pupils') views regarding the competitive personality, the young people had to characterize in their compositions the competitive personality, emphasizing at least 10 qualities/indicators of

competitiveness; when performing the projective content analysis of compositions, there were found out the qualities of competitiveness, which were indicated by at least 50% of respondents; on the basis of obtained results there were the questionnaires developed for the second stage of research, 2) the *second stage:* there was the survey performed, where the respondents had to classify the qualities of competitiveness, provided by the questionnaire, according to their significance; the aggregation of obtained data and their processing using mathematical methods; the analysis and evaluation of results.

In the first stage of the research there were invited to take part *30 base schools* of the project "Be a Leader!", which have gathered experience within this project already for several years. In the first stage of the research *498 respondents* participated: 1) 338 respondents from 20 rural secondary schools; 2) 160 respondents from 9 urban schools. This proportion of the number of pupils from rural and urban schools largely characterizes also all the selection sample of project participants, because the basic aim of the project was to involve in the project as many pupils from rural schools as possible to ensure their competitiveness regarding the choice of their career, their professional self-determination, within the process of professional formation and development.

At the second stage of research on the basis of voluntary and mutual agreement we selected 10 comprehensive secondary schools from the base of the first stage of research: 5 rural and 5 urban schools. The selection criteria were as follows. In order to carry out the comparative research and to obtain the data as objective and valid as possible, the base schools: 1) equally represented rural areas and cities schools in terms of the quantity of schools; 2) represented all four regions of Latvia: Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme and Zemgale, as well as the capital of Latvia – Riga City and the District of Riga; 3) had at least 2 years of experience regarding participation in the project "Be a Leader!" by taking part in different activities within this project; 4) had to represent the same regions and districts (the schools-participants of the project "Be a Leader!" are from all over Latvia and represent its all 26 districts). In the second stage of the research *203 respondents* participated in the survey: 1) 111 pupils from urban comprehensive secondary schools and 92 pupils from rural secondary schools; the number of pupils from urban schools was a little bit higher than the number of pupils from rural schools because the forms in the urban schools are larger in quantity than in rural schools; 2) 149 respondents were females, and 54 – males; 3) 111 respondents were in form 10, 62 respondents – in form 11 and 30 – in form 12.

Results and discussion

There were 26 indications of competitiveness determined and aggregated as a result of the content analysis of the projective compositions on the first stage of research. They were the following:

▪ clear aims for life/future;	▪ communicative skills;
▪ ability to work and respect towards work;	▪ skill of independent studies;
▪ creativity;	▪ skill to use various information sources;
▪ readiness for risk;	▪ skill to apply one's own knowledge in extraordinary situations;
▪ independence when making decisions;	▪ skill to change one's own thinking, attitudes, activities depending on obtained information, situation and external circumstances/conditions;
▪ orientation towards the progress and self-confidence;	▪ skills to convince others and to defend one's own point of view;
▪ no fear to make a mistake;	▪ skill to fascinate and inspire others;
▪ cooperation skills;	▪ ability to be the leader;
▪ persistence;	▪ desire to continue non-stop/constant self-development;
▪ self-criticism and self-evaluation skills;	▪ ability to adapt to the unknown/unfamiliar environment;
▪ self-organization of one's own time;	▪ desire for self-perfection in various spheres;
▪ readiness to overcome difficulties, including physical and mental endurance;	▪ desire to achieve high results;
▪ stress endurance;	▪ need for the others' positive assessment.

After analysing and evaluating the obtained data we pointed out the approaches in the competitive personality's characterization provided by pupils, which supplement each other:

- *biometrical approach:* emphasizing of personality's various qualities/characteristics;
- *functional approach*, when competitiveness is showed in action, including planning and managing of one's own activities, as well as in the interaction with the surrounding environment, including communication with others people etc.

We can draw a conclusion that the indications of competitiveness, pointed out by pupils, form a three-components structure of competitiveness, which consists of: 1) personality direction component; 2) component of competences; 3) component of personality's flexibility.

The results of our theoretical research testify that there are some various conceptual approaches for the substantiation of competitiveness concept in pedagogy science:

1) the *biometrical approach* (Андреев, 1998; Ионина 2003; Потемкина, 2004 etc.);

2) the *functional approach* (Muchinsky, 2003; Зеер, 2006; Кирсанов, 2000; Климов, 1996; Митина, 2003 etc.);

3) the *structural approach* (Андреев, 2006; Митина, 2003; Шаповалов, 2005; Широбоков, 2000 etc. etc.). The structural approach is the *combined approach*.

On the basis of these results, we worked out a questionnaire for the second stage of research, where respondents classified the given indications of competitiveness according their significance (from the most significant -1 up to the least significant - 26).

The data of respondents' questionnaires were aggregated and processed in order we could compare the point of view expressed by pupils from urban and rural schools. There were calculated the average ranges of competitiveness indications in the selection groups of rural pupils and urban pupils. At the initial stage of data processing we determined, whether there is compatibility/unity of evaluation separately between the respondents in the group of urban schools and the group of rural schools. We determined the coefficient of concordance by means of Kendall's Test.

When processing the data of the significance of competitiveness indications, evaluated by the respondents from *urban schools*, we obtained the following results: p-value=0.934 > α =0.05; and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance W=0.008, therefore we can *conclude* that there isn't concordance/unity in the evaluations provided by the pupils of *urban schools* regarding the significance of competitiveness indications; there is disparity.

When processing the data of the significance of competitiveness indications, evaluated by the respondents from *rural schools*, we obtained the following results: p-value=0.977 > α=0.05, and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance W = 0.004, therefore we can *conclude* that there isn't concordance/unity in the evaluations provided by the pupils of *rural schools* regarding the significance of competitiveness indications; there is disparity.

The next task of data processing was to compare the sum of the average ranges of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by the pupils of urban and rural secondary schools in their respective selection groups. The results of Kendall's Correlation Test and Spearman's Range Correlation Test show that *there is a correlation* between two selections of indications: the sums of the average ranges of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by pupils of urban and rural schools, because Kendall's Correlation Coefficient is the following: W=0.785; but Spearman's Range Correlation Coefficient: r_s=0.919. It means that there is correlation between the opinions expressed by the pupils from urban and rural schools regarding the personality's competitiveness in total, including significance of competitiveness indications which characterize competitive person/personality. This can be explained on the basis of

ecological approach in pedagogy. In spite of the specificity of cultural environment of urban and rural schools, there are subcultures of generations, including *youth subculture*. It means that the youth is united by common values, attitudes, opinion, norms of behavior etc.

The sum of the average ranges of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by both pupils of urban and rural schools shows that 11 most significant indicators of competitiveness according to respondents' point of view are: 1) persistence; 2) readiness for risk; 3) ability to work and respect towards work; 4) clear aims for life/future; 5) communicative skills; 6) ability to be the leader; 7) no fear to make a mistake; 8) creativity; 9) skills to convince others and to defend one's own point of view; 10) cooperation skills; 11) readiness to overcome difficulties, including physical and mental endurance.

Conclusions

1. It is important to study the younger generation's understanding about competitiveness, as well as to promote its development. The results of the average index of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by both pupils of urban and rural secondary schools shows that 11 most significant indicators of competitiveness according to respondents' point of view are: persistence; readiness for risk; ability to work and respect towards work; clear aims for life/future; communicative skills; ability to be the leader; no fear to make a mistake; creativity; skills to convince others and to defend one's own point of view; cooperation skills; readiness to overcome difficulties, including physical and mental endurance.

2. There are three approaches for substantiation of personality competitiveness in the pupils' opinion and evaluation: 1) *biometrical approach*; 2) *functional approach* and *structural approach*. Our theoretical research testifies that there is the *combined approach* as well.

3. Having processed mathematically the data obtained as a result of the experiment, we concluded: 1) *there isn't concordance/unity* in the evaluation provided by the pupils of urban schools regarding the significance of competitiveness indications; 2) *there isn't concordance/unity* in the evaluation provided by the pupils of rural schools as well; in both cases we diagnosed disparities.

4. There is a *correlation between* two selections of indications: the sums of the average ranges of competitiveness indications according to the evaluation provided by pupils of *urban* and *rural* schools. It means that there are no differences between urban and rural respondents' views regarding the significance of competitiveness indications which characterize

competitive person/personality, because, in spite of the specificity of cultural environment of urban and rural schools and peculiarities of individual thinking, on the whole there exists a uniform subculture of generations, including *youth subculture*, with common basic values, norms of behavior etc.

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