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**THE FORMATION OF THE ADOLESCENT READING  
EXPERIENCE IN RUSSIA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

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*Abstract*

The degree of the reader's experience formation of the Russian teenagers is regarded in the paper. Moreover, the article is devoted to the identification of the main problems connected with the decrease of the reading level in the teenage period, and the attempts to solve the defined problem in modern conditions of the adolescent students' development are also revealed in the article. The relevance of this issue has not received sufficient attention in pedagogics, so this problem needs to be thoroughly researched. It is revealed that the level of the reader's experience depends on how much the teenager reads. It is necessary to state that the motivation decrease in the process of reading leads to a problem of reader's experience formation of the teenagers. In this regard an attempt to solve a problem of reader's experience formation of the adolescents through interest increase to a reading process has been made in the paper. The scientific works of the leading scientists in the field of teenage reading and also works concerning reader's experience have been investigated in the article. As for the practical material the data of the Russian educational institutions has been regarded in the process of research. The following research methods have been applied: a method of the generalization, literature reviews. Further we are going to define the most effective methods that will help to involve the teenagers into the reading process, so that it can lead to the reader's experience formation.

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**Keywords:** An adolescent, a problem of the adolescent reading, reading, reading experience, reading experience formation.



## 1. Introduction

In terms of the rapid development of information and communication technologies, there is a significant decrease of the regular reading population, even taking into consideration that the reading is defined as a means of communication, as a process “when the key words are defined” (Adler, 2012, p. 8).

The number of the reading population in Russia is constantly declining as it is stated in the memorandum to the Federal National Programme accepted in 2007. This is obvious due to the results of the latest PISA-2009 research. The Russian students took only 41-43 places according to the results that show their reading experience formation (Tsukerman, 2010).

The teenager’s attitude to a book has been changed and therefore their reading interest has been decreased at times of the informatisation. This is a real problem because it leads to the absence of the reading literacy. ‘When the electronic means of communication appeared, the new epoch started...The means of communication and information are constantly changing therefore the way of thinking, behavior and socialization forms are also changing’.

Some modern and actual approaches to the problem of the adolescents’ attitude to the process of reading are presented in the works of the leading scientists (Stefanovskaya, 2009; Chudinova, Golubeva, & Mikhailova, 2004). The scientists have devoted their research works to the study of an adolescent reader: of his interests and preferences being a reader, of his attitude to a book and its influence on an obvious reader.

We consider “experience” as a set of sensory perceptions that a person gets in the course of interaction with the world and that makes a source and a basis of his world knowledge (Monolingual Russian dictionary, 2003), as knowledge, skills or abilities that are almost acquired; receiving a reflection in consciousness of laws of this world and social practice as a result of active practical interaction with the world (Psychological Dictionary and a dictionary of the psychological terms, n.d.), as something passive, inert, the cornerstone of reproductive intellectual activity. But it is also “fixed, operative and potential forms of experience” (Kholodnaya, 2002, p. 63).

The degree of the reader's experience formation is defined by the ability of the reader to apply the knowledge acquired from the text in everyday life, to rely, first of all, on the vital experience and on the one gained in the process of reading.

The formation of the reader's experience is a long and a difficult process taking its origin in the childhood when a person faces the book and starts reading it. Such experience helps to express a personal opinion on what has been read, to learn to understand everything around and to communicate with people.

## 2. Problem Statement

The decrease of the main indicators of the adolescent’s interest towards the process of reading is caused by the adolescent features. The formation of the reading experience is directly connected with the motivation to the process of reading. The absence of the adolescent’s desire to read is resulted in impossibility of their reading experience formation. The absence of the reading experience leads to the problems that teenagers have to cope with: the difficulty of expressing their thoughts and ideas while solving the tasks they are aimed at, the impossibility of imagining the possible ways out.

Teenagers spend their time doing different things (audiovisual and electronic forms of spending free time replace the real communication). Family and school are not in the core of importance anymore, they don't motivate adolescent's development and they also don't develop the adolescent's reading culture. Peers and "street life" take the first place in the process of the worldview search that is typical for the adolescents at this period.

The problems concerning the adolescents' reading are increasing and they require a number of measures. As it has been stated above the teenager's motivation to the reading process is decreasing each year; it concerns not only the classical children literature but also the modern one. Thus, the question of the adolescent reading experience formation still remains essential.

### **3. Research Questions**

To make a complete investigation on the problem given in this paper it is important to answer the following research points:

- to study and analyze the state of the problem of research in the literature;
- to identify the nature and the peculiarities of the problem concerning the adolescent motivation decrease of the reading nowadays;
- to put forward the ways and methods of increasing an adolescent motivation to the process of reading and consequently their reading experience formation.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research paper is to study the problem of the reading experience formation of the Russian adolescents. Besides, we are also interested in identifying the main ways and means of increasing the adolescent motivation to the process of reading as the formation of the adolescent reading experience, to our mind, is closely related with teenagers' desire to read.

### **5. Research Methods**

In the course of our investigation the following research methods have been applied: a method of the generalization, literature reviews.

### **6. Findings**

In the course of this research there has been an attempt to investigate the problem presented in the given paper.

#### **6.1. The state of the Russian adolescent reading experience formation**

It is known that the adolescent period is characterized by instability and certain changes that occur during this period in a child's life. The teenager is interested in what is popular or well-known among the peers.

Reader's development is a kind of transitional stage in the life of every adolescent, similar to the physiological stage that is necessary to overcome and to enter a new phase of development. 'Transitivity', in the scope of the reading level, is characterized by low indicators (Vedenyapina & Stelmah, 2007).

Adolescents regard the process of reading as a boring pastime during this period; it drops out of the range of their interests, intensity, so that their motivation for reading is steadily decreasing and consequently there is no reading experience formation. As a rule, such activities as extracurricular clubs and peer communication come forward at this stage.

Chudinova et al. (2004), the chief science worker of the Russian State Children Library, the candidate of the pedagogical sciences and sociologist, notices that younger generation reads only for certain aims due to prevailing circumstances that force them to do it. On the one hand, adolescents take their books to find useful information for studying, on the other hand, they are fond of reading for fun, i.e. it is so called 'light reading' (Chudinova et al., 2004). Teenagers are willingly interested in plots of comics, illustrated magazines, books that contain easier, simpler and shorter texts.

However, adolescent reading portrait gradually expands: the teenager tries to put him in the characters' place, to find the answers to the questions that have arisen while reading. All these factors point to the increase of the adolescent reader activity which is formed in the process of reading the works of various genres. This development takes place only due to the mutual work of the teachers, the parents, the psychologists.

## **6.2. Possible ways to increase the adolescent motivation to the process of reading**

The current difficult situation in our country concerning the constant decrease of the adolescent motivation in reading requires various ways and methods of its solution. The Russian Minister of Education, Olga Vasilyeva, suggests a way out: parents should start reading books to their children, and should not give gadgets to the kids without thinking. This is not easy, but gradually we need to restore the best that distinguished the Soviet educational system (as cited in Suzdaltsev, 2018). She illustrated her point with the following information: in 1986 Russia had the highest figures in reading experience among all adolescents in the world, and today our country takes only 36th place (Suzdaltsev, 2018).

The relevant, problematic materials and new actual questions and ideas that are connected with the characteristic features of the teenage period are in the centre of the adolescents' life. The authors of the works make the reader an inquisitive researcher who should plunge into the plot of the story to solve the problems presented. Every time when the adolescent finds the answer to the questions touched upon in the book by the author, he becomes closer and closer to the process of reading. He realizes that these answers work in real life, so he values the reading process more and more. The communication between the adolescent and the book assumes the following nature: motivation to read - reading - comprehension - self-expression - reflection.

Thus, in order to engage the adolescent in the constant process of reading, it is necessary to create favourable conditions such as organizing the "reading space" (the material for obligatory, and also for additional reading and self-reading), so that the teenager will be always ready for new discoveries while reading the books, so that he will be always interested in reading and will never lose this feeling. The following effective forms and methods of the work with a feature text, that involve the adolescent in the

process of reading, can be the following: questions or tasks, discussions, book presentations, various written works.

In Russia in most cases the librarians, the teachers who organize work with the audience are involved in solving the adolescent reading problems.

### **6.3. Project activity as one of the effective means of enhancing the adolescent reading process**

Various projects aimed at motivating teenagers to read books are widely created at Russian schools. For example, the project “Family Reading” is especially popular in MBEI ‘Lenin SGES’ in Perm region. The essence of the project is that parents and children read the same book offered by the teacher, and then they discuss its plot at the parents’ meeting: they express opinions, answer the questions and discuss the book. In addition, each student in the class has his own ‘achievement tree’. Every year it becomes bigger and bigger. At the end of the school year the most active readers are pointed out and awarded.

Besides this project, there are some others: “Knizhkina hospital”, “Transfer good to another”, “Book-lovers’ club”, “Book menu for the book banquet”, “Reader’s diary” which are no less popular at this school. Many pupils from different forms enjoy taking part in them.

Within the project “From a small writer to a great reader” in MBEI SGES s. Chekhov, in Sakhalin region, in Kholmisky district, the pupils write essays, put down the notes in the school newspaper about different competitions. In 2009-2010 they wrote many works about veterans on the following topics: ‘War through the children’s eyes’, ‘Grandchildren about grandfathers as heroes’, ‘How to prevent a war?’, ‘What world do you want to live in?’, ‘Your contribution to the preservation of peace and tranquillity on Earth’, etc.

The project “Successful reading” which is implemented by the Foundation for Support of Education in St. Petersburg is an effective way to draw pupils’ attention to reading nowadays. Its aim is to engage children, teenagers and youth into reading through the formation of a modern image of reading. From the authors’ point of view, a new reader is impressed by the requirements and the possibilities of an open reading.

In KRSEBI ‘Vyatskaya Humanitarian High School with profound study of English’ there is the information map of the projects ‘The reading person is the active person’, ‘A book of the students’ creativity’.

The reader’s project ‘A week of literacy and reading: From the Day of Knowledge to the International Day of Literacy’ is held at many Russian schools in September, 1st - 8th. This event helps students to become familiar with reading as a prestigious occupation that leads to the modern world of knowledge. For example, this project is held at the beginning of the school year as a result of the summer campaign «We spent the summer with the book» in MAEI ‘High School №10’ in Perm.

In the PEI ‘Lyceum ‘Nadezhda’ a project ‘A week of literacy and reading’ takes place annually. Students discuss books they have read in summer. In addition, the spelling dictations are held for parents in the form of a blitz survey. An interesting point in the learning process is the so-called ‘supporting reading hours’ when teenagers attend the library and spend an hour there, plunging into the process of reading the books. The aim of this project is to develop a habit of spending time with a book.

‘Kniguru’ is the only literary award in the world, where the winner is pointed out by the readers themselves. This is the largest competition of the adolescent literature in Russia. The right book, selected according to the age and the interest may compete with the computer games, the social networks, new photos in «Instagram».

*We hold the award «Kniguru» so that our adolescent literature won't die out. Everyone understands that we are in a very acute competitive situation, when adolescent literature is discriminated from all sides. Probably, it is not necessary to explain that this is not a very correct reasoning. For a person who after ten years starts to realise what he will read, it is important to find the books about himself, his family, a modern situation. It is important for him to find a book that will explain something, that will be helpful. If he does not find this book, so he will not read it. The statistics shows that in most cases people stop reading, not because they are lazy or because they have a lot of temptations such as the Internet, the games, TV shows and other things, but because they have not found the right book. (Kosheleva, 2017, p. 8)*

Many Russian educational institutions were awarded the status of «A school where the literacy thrives». This is an international project, which aims at creating a model of «ideal» school acceptable in any European country. The project appeared in 1998 in London as a part of a new paradigm of European education, based on the documents of UNESCO, the European Parliament, PISA and PIRLS.

PEI ‘Lyceum ‘Nadezhda’ (Moscow), Volgograd regional branch on the basis of the school ‘Pokolenie’ that realizes the project ‘New generation chooses the reading!’ are among such institutions. The core of the project is the uniting force of the reading process, interactive forms of work with the book; Krasnodar regional branch ‘Alternativa’ realizes a multi-module project ‘The reading and the literacy in the educational system’; Novorossiysk regional branch realizes a multi-module project ‘The distance interaction’; Tambov regional branch (on the basis of the Tambov State University named after G. R. Derzhavin) has the following main projects: the Centre for Professional Reading Development ‘Lecturer +’, ‘The School of Self-Education Reading’. The aim of the projects is the formation and the development of the reading experience of the teachers and the students, and the stimulation of their self-realization.

The key peculiarity of the schools with a high level of literacy is the organization of the educational process based on reading. The effective textual strategies that are developed and dissipated by the Russian Reading Association (RRA) are widely adopted through the project “A School with a high literacy level”. This non-commercial social organization is a part of the International Reading Association (IRA) that gives the opportunities of being aware of every project that is directly connected with the reading not only in Europe, but also in the whole world.

‘To bring up a reading person’ is the main point of RRA. Following this principle, the association promotes academic and functional literacy in an active way; it influences the state policy in the sphere of reading and literacy. Various projects lead to the cultural and educational level increase. To motivate the modern society to read regularly is a common aim that is possible to achieve thanks to the RRA, teachers, librarians, psychologists, journalists, and even simple reading lovers.

Smetannikova (2017), a candidate of Psychology Sciences, a professor, an initiator of the Russian Reading Association's creation and a president of the RRA determines the conditions to form and to develop a literate reader: 1) the creation of a friendly environment for the reading literacy development, 2) the improvement of the quality of education particularly including the work aimed at the relevant skills development, 3) the reader's participation in the common activity connected with the reading and the writing.

Thanks to the numerous projects held at the Russian schools the process of the adolescents' involvement into the reading process is becoming easier: the students unwillingly become the participants because they are really motivated.

The experience of our colleagues from the Republic of Kazakhstan seems rather interesting. The project 'Kazakhstan children's reading map' is one of the ways of raising the level of the adolescent reading experience. This project allows choosing the books for reading; it helps to open a world of literature (Kazakhstan children's reading map in the aspect of the functional students literacy formation, 2013).

Besides all these projects stated above the educational institutions often hold the reading conferences that are devoted to the various topics, literary meetings, literary heroes' tournaments, various clubs, contests and competitions, researches and projects. Teenagers often visit libraries, theatrical performances and museums. After school they can play educational games. The teenagers take part in the essay competitions, they have meetings with the writers, poets, fine art experts and it greatly broadens their knowledge and motivates them to participate next time. The reading diaries are quite popular, the adolescents make notes of what they have read and this encourages them to read thoughtfully (Inozemceva, 2018).

We also offer several solutions to the problem stated above. To our mind the driving force for the teenagers to read is the example of the parents: if parents read books, the teenagers also start reading, following their parents' example. It is important for parents to increase the number of books in their home libraries that leads to the creation of the educational climate in the family. Such projects as "Our family book" or "We read at home together!" have been introduced in the process of education; it seems to us they can be regarded as necessary elements to motivate teenagers to read more.

We regard one more way how to solve this problem: it is important to define the process of reading as a fashionable and a prestigious phenomenon for teenagers, it should be noted that it is more interesting and informative to communicate with a person who is educated and well-read. In our opinion, it is possible to organize regular meetings for teenagers with potential employers as an after-school activity. As a result of these meetings teenagers can understand that only a person with a broad outlook will interest the employer and will get a highly paid job as he will be ready to solve any problem due to his reader's experience.

## **7. Conclusion**

So, we have come to the conclusion that the situation in Russia concerning the adolescent reading experience formation is a real problem: the teenagers are not interested in reading books, that's why they have difficulties in expressing themselves, in solving different kinds of problems. It is closely connected

with the absence of reading experience that they can rely on while trying to find a way out of any life situation.

Numerous efforts to solve this problem are being taken throughout Russia. Different projects on the basis of the Russian schools give positive results. In order to make the adolescents realize the necessity of the process of reading and to speak of the constant process of their reading experience formation it is important to increase and support the motivation for the reading process, to raise and develop the reading culture, to take into consideration age peculiarities, to help in the choice of the book.

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