Formation of primary school students’ communicative skills based on teambuilding: potential and awareness assessment

In the article the importance of communication in the infancy of mankind was emphasized for conducting joint economic activity, survival in harsh and dangerous conditions, and in the modern world — for achieving professional goals. The authors note that the society has formed a social order to the education system to develop a competitive personality possessing the basic skills and competencies of the XXI century, one of which is the ability to communicate — to socialize and to cooperate. Based on the analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature and normative documents, it was concluded that it was necessary for the implementation of social orders to pay due attention to the formation of students’ communicative skills. In pedagogical theory and practice, researchers apply a variety of methods, ways and means aimed at developing communicative skills — gaming technology, the project method, staging and theatricalization of fiction literature, situational exercises and tasks. The authors of the article consider the formation of primary school students’ communicative skills based on teambuilding — activities that contribute to improving cooperation within the student team, creating a cohesive team and increasing the student motivation. The steps of forming teams during the implementation of teambuilding in the educational primary school process were described. Within the framework of this study, a survey among primary school teachers was conducted and results about the teambuilding awareness, its opportunities in forming student communicative skills were presented.

Keywords: communication, cooperation, communicative skills, teambuilding, team, teachers, primary school students.

Introduction

Historically human is a social being who has always aspired to be part of something greater, to belong to the community. Thus, in the infancy of mankind, during the Lower and Middle Paleolithic, primitive communities were united, when the kinship emerged, they were transformed into the tribal community, and then they united in tribes establishing joint economic activities. Moreover, the very separation of a human race from the animal world occurred after they had known the work which also implies a collective form of human influence on nature. It follows that the people’s alliance into collectives contributed to the preservation of the human race as such, and communication became an objective factor that served as a successful “collectivization” of primitive people.

In the modern world, the role of communication in human life has not decreased at all, on the contrary, the new means and methods of communication created by the scientific and technological revolution, so firmly integrated into our lives, have brought civilization to a completely new level of development. And if in the distant past the people’s ability and skill to communicate helped them to survive in the literal sense of the word, today communicative skills help us “survive” in the competitive environment of the labor market. Thus, the Association for the Development and Research of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan notes that the sociability of potential employees is one of the key objects of attention for employers [1]. Therefore, the ability to properly cooperate with colleagues, perform common tasks, both conceptual (e.g., conducting joint research and information gathering) and practical (e.g., providing constructive feedback) is the essential condition for developing the individual’s professional competence [2]. All this largely predetermines the social order of society to the education system and sets a task for it — the formation of a competitive personality, which, in addition to the basic skills, also possesses the necessary competencies of the XXI century.

According to the report “A New Look at Education” of the World Economic Forum, the competencies of the XXI century are: critical thinking, creativity, ability to communicate and work in a team [3]. UNESCO notes that these competencies enhance the individual ability to use relevant knowledge (information, under-
standing, skills and value system) creatively and responsibly in given situations for decision-making and new relationships [4]. In this connection, the State compulsory primary education standard sets out the purpose of primary education — the creation of an educational space conducive to the harmonious development of the student’s personality with the basics of broad range of skills, and cooperation is one of the basic values in the primary education content [5]. It follows that it becomes necessary to form students’ communicative skills for the implementation of the social order and the State compulsory primary education standard.

There are different approaches to defining the concept of “communicative skills” and their classification in pedagogical science. Consider some of them.

A.V. Mudrik understands communicative skills as the ability to correctly build behavior taking into account the comprehension of the individual psychological characteristics [6].

In the interpretation of V.D. Shirshov, communicative skills represent a set of communicative actions, which is based on the personality’s readiness to communicate and his adequate use of communicative knowledge for the purpose of transforming the surrounding reality [7].

From the point of view of Yu.A. Kalyaeva, communicative skills are a set of informative, perceptual and interactive actions that affect the personality’s readiness for communicative interaction in a specific communicative situation [8].

According to A.V. Mudrik, communicative skills include such components as:
- ability to navigate with partners;
- ability to understand the communication situations;
- ability to cooperate in various types of activities [9].

According to I.N. Agafonova [10], all communicative skills can be conditionally divided into two groups, which are not isolated, but are characterized by interaction and interpenetration: basic ones, reflecting the substantive essence of communication and procedural ones, providing communication as a process (Fig. 1).

Pedagogical theory and practice represent a fairly diverse arsenal of tools for developing students’ communicative skills. For example, justification and widespread application have been discovered:
- gaming technologies (O.M. Arefieva, L.U. Zhdanova, T.V. Konovalova, N.S. Krupova, L.R. Kulgari-na, T.V. Savchenko, etc.);
- staging and theatricalization of fiction literature (Ye.M. Alifanova, M.G.Bakharev, V.V.Gorbenko, O.V. Dobrinina, Ye.V. Ivchenko, etc.);
- situational exercises and tasks (N.A. Amelchenkova, O.N. Istratova, T. Kudryavtseva, S.V. Lubova), etc.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>communicative skills</th>
<th>basic</th>
<th>procedural</th>
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<td>greeting, farewell, appeal; request for support, assistance, service; rendering support, assistance, service; gratitude; refusal; forgiveness.</td>
<td>ability to analyze the communicative situation from the point of view of the feelings and states of the partners, their influences; speak to others; listen to others; cooperate; manage (command); obey.</td>
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Figure 1. Classification of communicative skills according to I.N. Agafonova

Each of the presented methods finds its application to varying degrees and situations. Not diminishing the advantages of these methods and techniques, we propose to form the students’ communicative skills on the basis of teambuilding, which is a system of measures aimed at building a successful team from the usual team, in which all participants maximize their abilities and performs exactly those tasks in which they are particularly good [11].
Teambuilding as a phenomenon arose to solve the problems of workers’ labor productivity and developed within the framework of such a scientific direction as management psychology. It is based on such well-known scientific theories as the theory of human relations by E. Mayo [12], the theory of nine roles by M. Belbin [13], the typology of personality by I. Myers-Briggs and P. Briggs [14], the theory of leadership by J. Adair [15], the theory of interpersonal relationships by W. Schutz [16], etc.

American researcher and teacher W. Dyer, who published in 1977 the book “Team Building: Issues and Alternatives”, was the first to give a theoretical justification to teambuilding and specified this concept: “teambuilding is not an event, it is the process of forming an effective team” [17]. Based on this definition, team formation, like any other process, involves some general order and rules that must be followed in organizing it. Thus, according to T.P. Khokhlova [18], the team formation process is a series of consecutive steps (Fig. 2).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>setting common goals and objectives</th>
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<td>joint work planning</td>
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<td>establishing internal and external communications</td>
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<td>stimulating team achievements</td>
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<td>providing autonomy and initiative</td>
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<td>forming team culture and ideology</td>
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<td>team process monitoring</td>
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Figure 2. Steps of the team formation process by T.P. Khokhlova

We believe that the current trend towards the integration of scientific knowledge provides an opportunity to use such a tool as teambuilding not only in the field of management, but also in the primary school educational process. Thus, the implementation of teambuilding in the primary school educational process should be carried out in a certain sequence. After analyzing the research work of D.A. Zverev and V.A. Stroh [19], which describes a number of steps necessary for the effective team formation identified by many authors, we will present the following diagram of the team formation process (Fig. 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>identification</th>
<th>cohesion</th>
<th>norm-setting</th>
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<tr>
<td>joint decision-making</td>
<td>leadership</td>
<td>role differentiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>acting team as a result</td>
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Figure 3. Team formation process diagram

We will describe each of the presented steps:
- identification implies the process of association, organization of primary school students in one place and at the same time, as well as their awareness of themselves as part of this association;
- cohesion is the process of establishing strong and sufficiently stable interpersonal relationships, which also implies the emergence of joint goals;
- norm-setting involves joint activities to identify and adopt norms of communication, common values
and patterns of behavior. At this stage, the students become also aware of both the influence of the forming association on each of them and their own influence on the given association:

- role differentiation takes place on the basis of the students’ personal qualities, individual characteristics and abilities;
- leadership is an integral part of any joint activity. The display of initiative by one or more leaders is a key factor of teamwork, as it is a single focus that contributes to the team’s success in achieving common goals;
- joint decision-making, which takes into account the opinion of each team member – the final step of team formation, without which team activity becomes more difficult and there is a risk of internal conflicts.

Thus, the essence of teambuilding in the primary school educational process is the organization and systematic conduct of activities, various games and exercises aimed at forming a team, during which students will develop communicative skills, acquire vivid memories of school life and invaluable communicative experience. In addition, the result of all teambuilding activities should be a primary school students’ effective team capable of productive implementation of joint educational and extracurricular activities, as well as self-government.

In the framework of this study, we suggest that due to the relative novelty of this phenomenon in pedagogical science and the insufficient development of theoretical foundations and practical mechanisms for using the teambuilding in the primary school educational process, teachers are not sufficiently aware of the possibility of using teambuilding in the pedagogical process and its potential in the formation of students’ communicative skills. Accordingly, the object of the study is teambuilding as a tool for forming the students’ communicative skills, and the subject of the study is the teacher’s activities in organizing teambuilding in primary school.

The purpose of the study is to determine the awareness of primary school teachers about teambuilding and its possibilities in the formation of students’ communicative skills.

Tasks:
- determine the relevance of the problem of forming the students’ communicative skills for primary school teachers;
- identify the methods, techniques and technologies used by primary school teachers to develop students’ communicative skills;
- establish the effectiveness of the used methods, techniques and technologies for developing communicative students in the opinion of primary school teachers;
- determine the need of teachers to improve their professional activities in the formation of communicative skills.

The article includes abstract, keywords, introduction, methods and materials of research, results and their discussion, conclusion, where reached findings on the studied problem, as well as references.

Methods and materials of research

The study was carried out through an online survey (questionnaire) among the primary school teachers in the Karaganda region and the city of Astana, as well as statistical processing of the obtained results. The questionnaire was presented as Google Forms and included 11 closed questions.

Results and their discussion

The study was attended by 50 primary school teachers of comprehensive schools, gymnasiums and lyceums.

Let’s consider and analyze the results.

The first question of the survey was aimed at revealing the primary school teachers’ understanding of the essence of communicative skills. The obtained results (Fig. 4) show that more than half of the surveyed teachers (66 %) have a correct understanding of the essence of communicative skills and define them as the ability to cooperate in various activities. At the same time, 34 % of respondents understand the communicative skills as the ability to independently search, analyze, select, process and transmit information, which are defined as information skills that comprise information competence.
1. What is the meaning of students’ communicative skills?

- ability to independently search, analyze, select, process and transmit information
- ability to cooperate in various activities
- ability to determine the sequence and the duration of the activity stages
- ability to work with reference literature

2. Is the problem of developing students’ communicative skills relevant for you?

- yes
- no
- I find it difficult to answer

According to the results of the following question (Fig. 5), the development of students’ communicative skills is an urgent problem for 82% of respondents. At the same time, 16% of teachers who completed the survey do not consider this problem to be relevant, 2% found it difficult to answer. Thus, the obtained data show that there is a need for primary school teachers to improve existing approaches and develop new ones to the formation of these skills.

Based on the data obtained from the next question (Fig. 6), it can be concluded that more than half of the surveyed teachers (56%) prefer a group form of developing students’ communicative skills. The second preferred choice is the individual form (26%) and, in turn, the least preference is given to the paired form of developing students’ communicative skills (18%).

According to the survey, 46% of respondents use a variety of methods and techniques to form students’ communicative skills. At the same time, a significant part of the surveyed teachers, namely 44%, prefer one particular way of forming the studied skills — gaming technology. At the same time, a small part of teachers applies the project method (8%), theatricalization and staging (2%) in their work on the formation of primary school students’ communicative skills (Fig. 7).
3. What form of communicative skills development do you prefer?

- Individual: 26%
- Group: 56%
- Paired: 18%

Figure 6. Preference in choosing the forms of developing students’ communicative skills

4. What methods and techniques of developing students’ communicative skills do you apply?

- The project method: 8%
- Gaming technology: 46%
- The method of theatricalization and staging: 44%
- All of the above: 2%

Figure 7. Applied methods of developing students’ communicative skills

As a part of the survey, primary school teachers were asked to assess the effectiveness of their methods to form communicative skills using a ten-point scale (Fig. 8).

5. Assess the effectiveness of your methods of forming students’ communicative skills on a scale from 1 to 10:

- 1-2 is not effective at all: 14%
- 3-4 is not effective: 9%
- 5-6 is quite effective: 54%
- 7-8 is effective: 32%
- 9-10 is very effective: 0%

Figure 8. Effectiveness of applied methods of developing students’ communicative skills
The majority of respondents (54%) rated the effectiveness of their arsenal of methods and techniques for forming students’ communicative skills at 5-6 points, which indicates its sufficient effectiveness. 32% of teachers rated their tools at 7-8 points, 14% did it at 9-10 points which indicates the maximum effectiveness of the used methods and techniques.

The second part of the questionnaire was aimed at identifying respondents’ awareness of teambuilding. Thus, the results (Fig. 9) showed that the overwhelming number of primary school teachers who completed this survey, namely 88%, are familiar with the concept of “teambuilding”. The remaining 12% replied in the negative form.

6. Are you familiar with the concept of “teambuilding”?

![Figure 9. Primary school teachers’ awareness of the concept of “teambuilding”](image)

Despite this, only 84% of respondents were able to choose the correct definition of this concept from the presented options, another 6% chose the definition of “collective creative work”, the other 6% selected the definition of “excursion” and 4% were undecided. The obtained results may indicate that a number of teachers familiar with the concept of “teambuilding” have an incorrect understanding of its essence (Fig. 10).

7. What do you mean by teambuilding?

![Figure 10. Understanding the teambuilding essence](image)

The results of the answers to the following question showed that despite the teachers’ sufficient awareness of teambuilding as a set of active events aimed at uniting the team and developing skills to solve common problems in the team, only 48% of respondents organized it as part of their teaching activities, while the remaining 52% did not (Fig. 11).
Figure 11. Organization of teambuilding within the framework of pedagogical activities

According to the results (Fig. 12), 72% of surveyed primary school teachers believe that the organization and carrying out teambuilding have an impact on the formation of students’ communicative skills. Another 18% did not organize these events, the remaining 10% expressed their uncertainty.

Figure 12. Influence of teambuilding on developing students’ communicative skills

The results of the answers to the question about the teachers’ needs to improve their professional activities in developing the primary school students’ communicative skills (Fig. 13) show that 76% of respondents need workshops where the experience of other teachers on the formation of students’ communicative skills is broadcast. Another 20% of the surveyed teachers indicated a need for methodological materials, 2% required the presentation of their experience for comprehension and understanding their own activities, and the remaining 2% needed all of the above.

As part of the survey, the authors considered it appropriate to find out who, according to the teachers, is responsible for the nature of primary school students’ interaction with peers and adults in the communicative process (Fig. 14).

The answers showed that 72% of the teachers who passed the survey consider all the subjects of the educational process, namely parents, teachers and the state, are responsible for the nature of students’ communication. In turn, 22% of respondents are of the opinion that parents are solely responsible for the nature of communication, 6% thought those are teachers.
Based on the obtained results, the authors conclude that, in general, primary school teachers are aware of the concept of “teambuilding”, its essence and capabilities of forming and developing the primary school students’ communicative skills, however, more than half of the surveyed teachers have never organized this type of students’ activity in primary school education. The authors suggest that this may be due to a number of factors:

- insufficient theoretical validity and practical proof of the effectiveness of using teambuilding as a means of forming the students’ communicative skills;
- lack of teaching materials for primary school teachers on the organization of teambuilding in the school educational process;
- teachers’ commitment to the “proven” methods and techniques of forming primary school students’ communicative skills.

Thus, the conducted study shows the need of teachers to improve the practice of cohesion and forming team among school students that determines the prospects for further work on the development of the problem of forming students’ communicative skills on the basis of teambuilding in the primary school educational process.

Conclusions
Серия «Педагогика». 2024, 29, (2)
Формирование коммуникативных умений младших школьников на основе тимбилдинга: потенциал и оценка осведомленности

В статье подчеркнуто значение коммуникации на заре человечества для ведения совместной хозяйственно-деятельности, выживания в суровых и опасных условиях, а в современном мире — для достижения профессиональных целей. Авторы отмечают, что в обществе сформирован социальный заказ системы образования на формирование конкурентоспособной личности, владеющей базовыми навыками и компетенциями XXI века, одной из которых является умение коммуницировать — общаться и сотрудничать. На основании анализа научно-педагогической литературы и нормативных документов сделан вывод о том, что для реализации социального заказа необходимо должное внимание уделять формированию коммуникативных умений у обучающихся. В педагогической теории и практике исследователи применяют разнообразные способы, методы и средства, направленные на формирование коммуникативных умений — игровые технологии, проектный метод, инсценировки и театрализация произведений художественной литературы, ситуативные упражнения и задания. Авторы статьи рассматривают формирование коммуникативных умений младших школьников на основе тимбилдинга — мероприятий, способствующих улучшению сотрудничества внутри ученческого коллектива, созданию сплоченной команды и повышению мотивации обучающихся. Описаны этапы образования команд при реализации тимбилдинга в образовательном процессе начальной школы. В рамках данного исследования проведено анкетирование среди учителей начальных классов и представлены результаты об осведомленности о тимбилдинге, его возможностях в формировании коммуникативных умений обучающихся.

Ключевые слова: коммуникация, сотрудничество, коммуникативные умения, тимбилдинг, команда, педагоги, младшие школьники.

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