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## The Work of the School Psychologist with Underachieving Children

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### Abstract

In the mid XX century teachers left most underachieving students in the second year. Now problem becomes hidden. The compulsory education led to passing underachieving students from class to class. Research Questions: Modeling of the school psychologist working with underachieving children. Difficulties and failure causes diagnosis and the student personality development according to individual program developed by psychologist and teachers in conjunction. Purpose of the Study: Development of the system of school psychologist work with children with a hidden underachieving, revealing the causes and designing development programs. Research Methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization, modeling, observations, conversations with teachers and headmasters, registration, scaling. Diagnostic tools: diagnostic technique of self-esteem by Dembo-Rubinstein (modification of A.M. Prihozhan), the test "Express diagnostics of level of self-esteem" (Fetiskin N. P. etc.), questionnaire for identifying school motivation by N. G.Luskanova. Findings: The study involved 109 Almaty 5th classes pupils. 30.2% of students have a hidden failure. From self-assessment diagnostics by Dembo-Rubinstein 5th classes underachieving pupils estimate their learning abilities low and do not seek to improve their performance, have low level of aspirations. Students focus on satisfaction of not properly cognitive, educational but communicative and emotional needs in the school. Conclusions. System of school psychologist work with children with hidden failure, diagnostic and training developing program for underachieving students were developed. They are aimed at raising students' learning motivation and aspiration level. The children could look at themselves from the other side, analyze their own personality characteristics and individual features. Consulting with headmasters and subject teachers of underachieving children was performed.

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## 1. Introduction

In the mid of the twentieth century teachers left in the second year, the majority of underachieving school children. However, at the end of XX - beginning of XXI century the situation has changed. The problem of poor schoolboys becomes latent or hidden. The requirement for compulsory education at school, compulsory secondary education in Kazakhstan has led to a situation where the teachers transform poorly performing pupils from class to class. The mentioned problem is relevant in the light of improving the quality of student learning, student participation in national and international systems of quality assessment. For example, the Intermediate State Control (ISC), the Unified National Testing (UNT) in Kazakhstan as well as in international systems PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS and others.

The purpose of the article is to elaborate the working system of a school psychologist with children who has hidden academic progress, to establish the causes and development of development programs.

**Research methods.** Theoretical methods: analysis, synthesis, synthesis, generalization, modeling. Empirical: observation, conversation, testing; registration, scaling. Diagnostic method of self-esteem Dembo Rubnishteyn (modification A.M. Prihozhan); diagnostic test results on the "Express diagnostics of self-esteem" (Fetiskin N.P, Kozlov V.V., Manuilov G.M.); questionnaire to determine school motivation by N.G Luskanova. Study Base: Schools of Almaty.

## 2. Concept definition

### 2.1. Definition

Psychologists and educators - P.P. Blonsky (2006), N.P. Lokalova (2007), I.V. Dubrovina (1991), V.S. Tsetlin (1977), V. Okon (1969), M.N. Danilov, Y.K. Babanskii gave special attention to the problem of school failure . Many interesting and progressive ideas are inherent in the works of these authors. These studies were aimed at changing the system of education, so that children have the opportunity to meet their interests and desires in everyday school life. In Kazakhstan, A.K. Ersarina (2001), K.R. Argenbayeva, N. Almetov, A.A Arynova and others are engaged in the study of school failure.

Analyzing the research on school failure, we can talk about the complexity of this problem. We consider the concept and types of school failure, causes, develop a system of work of the school psychologist with underachieving children, ground the concepts of the program of correctional and development activity with the underachieving kids at school in the given the article.

Here you can see the comparative table about "failure" definition of several authors (Table 1).

Table 1. Definition of "failure" concept.

The concept	Author, source
Underachievement - a <i>situation</i> in which the <i>behavior</i> and <i>learning outcomes do not meet</i> the educational and didactic requirements of the school	P.P .Blonsky (2006). Psychology of junior student: Selected psychological works / ed. A.I. Lipkin, T.D. Martsinkovskaya. - Moscow: Moscow psycho-social institution; Voronezh: NPO "MODEK". P. 616-620..
Underachievement - <i>fails requirements</i> of student educational achievements of the school program.	N.P. Lokalova (2007). <i>How to help underachieving student</i> . Psychodiagnostic tables: causes and correction of difficulties in training of younger schoolboys the Russian language, reading and math. Moscow. 327 p.
Underachievement – mismatch of students training for the mandatory requirements of the school in the assimilation of knowledge, skills and attitudes, the formation of creative activity experience and educational cognitive relations.	I.V. Dubrovina (1991). Workbook school psychologist / Ed. I.V. Dubrovina. Moscow, Prosveshenie. 275 p.
Underachievement - mismatch of students training for the requirements of educational content, fixed at the expiration of a significant segment of the learning process - learning topics, the end of the quarter, six months, a year”.	V.S .Tsetlin (1977). Underachievement of pupils and its prevention. Moscow.
Underachievement - mismatch to <i>minimum requirements</i> and are convinced that the concept of "failure" in many	A.A. Budarny and U.D .Rosenthal (2004)   from the article Zabramnaya S., Yu .Kostenkova Underachievement

respects depends on the established rules of transfer of students to the next grade.	as it is. <i>The school psychologist</i> . #45. P.27-30.
Underachievement is a violation of interaction between students, teachers and external forces	Okoń W. (1969). <i>Podstawy wykształcenia ogólnego</i> . Nasza Księgarnia. Warszawa.
Underachievement – more low compared to provided curriculum level of achievement by students the education content.	Bim-Bad, B.M. (2002). <i>Teaching Encyclopedic Dictionary</i> . <i>Great Russian encyclopedia</i> . Moscow

A comparative analysis of the definitions show the difference in the definitions of concepts. It is defined as (1) the "situation" in which there is a "mismatch ...", as (2) itself, "the discrepancy between the successes / results and demanding", (3) the "low level of assimilation of education content." We are impressed by the concept of V.S. Tsetlin, "underachievement" - a mismatch of training requirements of students of educational content, fixed at the expiration of a significant segment of the learning process - learning topics, the end of the quarter, six months, a year."

P.P. Blonsky understands underachievement as the situation in which the behavior and learning outcomes do not meet the educational and didactic requirements of the school. Underachievement reflected in the fact that the student has poor reading skills, numeracy, slightly owns the intellectual skills of analysis, synthesis, and others (Zubin L.M., 1998).

According to the theory, underachieving children are at risk of becoming "pedagogical neglect" or "difficult children". That is, they may have socializing problems. Systematic underachievement leads to pedagogical neglect, which is understood as a set of negative personality traits, contradicting the requirements of the school and society. This phenomenon is highly undesirable and dangerous to the moral, social, economic position (Gorkina A.P., 1999). Pedagogically neglected children often drop out of school, replenish risk group. In underachieving students appear abnormal behavior.

In the modern theory and practice the concept of "pedagogically neglected" are often used as a synonym for "difficult" children. The concept of "educational neglect" characterizes the history of education of the child, and "difficult" – is about the results of such education. According to Zubin, "Educational neglected" sooner or later becomes "difficult" (Zyubin L.M., 1998).

Psychologist B.S. Bodenko proposed entire periodization of views on the problem of the backlog in training students. Five periods have been allocated of the knowledge development in the field of overcoming school failure (Bodenko B.N., 1998) (Figure 1).

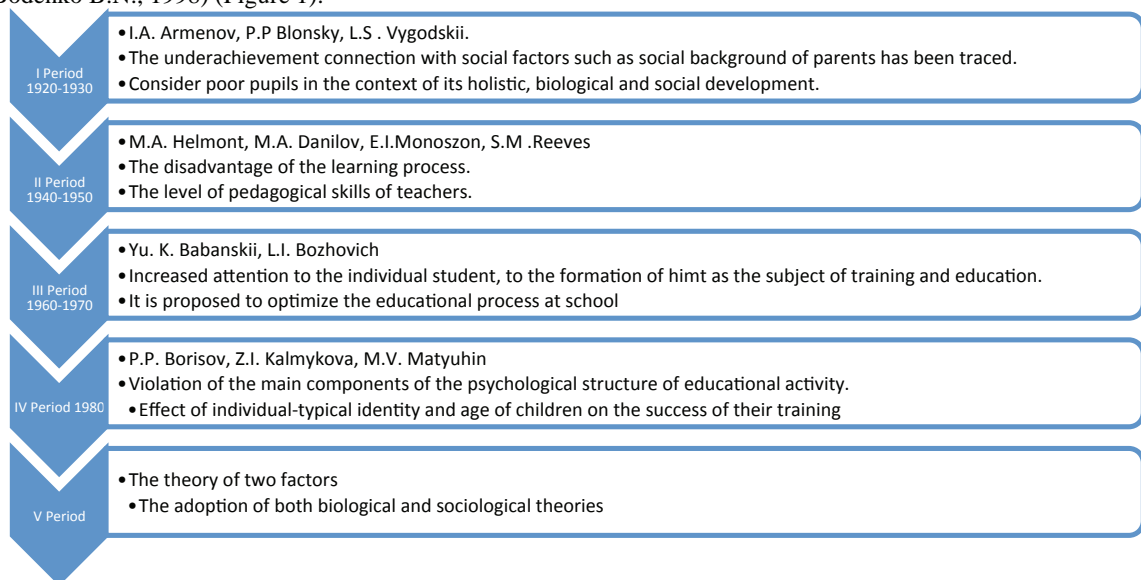


Fig. 1. The periodization of views on the problem of the backlog in school training, offered by B.. Bodenko (1998).

The fifth period is about approach combination: biological and social. Representatives of biologizing theory believe that the main cause of underachievement are congenital factors that can not be changed by teaching. According to social genetic approach, underachievement is a consequence of the unfavorable environment (S.L. Rubinstein, 1999).

In the XXI century student underachievement is treated as a biological and psychological, social theories.

## 2.2. Types of school failure

As is known, Kazakhstan has a 5 point system of marks. Moreover, teachers mainly use the mark from "two" to "fives".

A.A. Budarny distinguishes two types of school failure - absolute and relative. Absolute underachievement, according to the author, expressed by marks "2" and "1" and corresponds to the minimum requirements of the school curriculum. The relative lack of academic failure is characterized by cognitive load of those students that would exceed the mandatory requirements of the school curriculum and the possibilities of individual students (Budarny A.A. , 2005).

Polish researcher V.S. Tsetlin analyzing literature on the problem of school failure, focuses on the fact that, along with a fixed academic progress there exists hidden underachievement, school failure, which can be expressed not only in the gaps of knowledge, but also in relation of students to teaching (Tsetlin V.S. 1997).

N.P. Lokalova distinguishes two types of school failure: the total backlog and backlog in study of individual subjects (Lokalova N.P., 2007).

We mean by "latent failure" situation that the teacher calls "the three write, two in mind." That is when the teacher deliberately overstates current, quarter, final grade of a student to "satisfactory" eventually transfer the student to the next grade. Moreover, such "latent failure" student can have in one or several subjects.

## 2.3. Causes of school pupils failure: theoretical analysis

Various authors have identified different causes of low achievement.

The main reasons for poor progress should be attributed to lack of preparation for school, that can be expressed in the absence of the adequacy of the motives for learning. The result, according to the theory of activity of A. Leontieva are difficulties of the transition of the child from one master to another type of activity. Social and educational neglect, weakness somatic, emotional, and personality disorders lead to underachievement . It is important promptly identify the causes of failure and eliminate them. If in the lower grades the child does not develop the skills and the desire to learn, every year learning difficulties will grow like a snowball.

Scientists suggest the following reasons for the classification of underachieving pupils M.M. Bezrukikh notes that the school failure is also educational, and medical, and psychological and social problem. There is a view that is necessary to identify the causes of underachievement through comprehensive examination. It is necessary to add an anthropometric (body type) and psycho-physiological (properties of the nervous system) examination to the psychological examination (Bezrukikh M.M, 1995).

Various authors grouped the causes of underachievement. For example, A.M. Helmont, set the task to relate the reasons for poor progress with its categories. He highlighted the causes of underachievement by three categories: deep and total backlog (I category), a partial but relatively stable underachievement (II category), episodic underachievement (III category) (Helmont A.M., 1998).

The reasons of the I categories : low prior training of a student; adverse circumstances of various kinds (physical defects, illness, poor living conditions, the remoteness of the place of residence of the school, the lack of parental care); disadvantages of a student upbringing (laziness, lack of discipline), his weak mental development. For Grade II listed: a defect in the previous school (lack of proper succession); lack of student interest to the subject, the weak will to overcome difficulties.

For Category III identified: deficiencies of teaching, the fragility of knowledge, poor monitoring; Low lesson attendance, inattention in class, doing irregular homework (Helmont A.M., 1998).

Yu.K. Babanskii and V.S. Tsetlin distinguish two groups of causes of school failure: external and internal. The external reasons, first of all, are social reasons as well as teaching.

Pedagogical reasons:

- a) Inadequate educational process.
- b) the shortcomings of teaching and educational influences;
- c) organizational and pedagogical weaknesses (organization of educational process at school, material resources);
- d) deficiencies of curricula, programs, manuals, as well as the shortcomings of extracurricular influences, including family (Tsetlin V.S. 1977).

Social causes of school failure: reduction of the value of education in society; the instability of the existing educational system (permanent education reform); the negative influence of the family, the street. Internal factors include health defects caused by the sharp deterioration in the level of material well-being of the family and others.

Borisov P.P. considers three groups of reasons for underperformance:

- I. General pedagogical reasons (didactic and educational).
- II. Psycho physiological factors (disturbance of the normal physical, physiological and intellectual development of children).
- III. Social, economic and social reasons (weak material-technical base of the school, the low level of pre-school education of children without elaboration of language education issues, domestic living conditions of the students, the cultural level of the parents, family relationships, lack of teachers) (Borisov, P.P., 1980).

Modern psychologists and sociologists determine new cognitive and linguistic reasons: the unity and the distinction of the cognitive language and cognitive schemes for the development of pupils; mismatching language code from the teacher and students (Bernshtein B., 2012) and others.

Understanding the reasons for poor progress of pupils will help in the development of the program of work with pupils, correction and development of students.

### **3. Results. Systems of the school psychologist work.**

The main activities of the school psychologist are: prevention, diagnosis, counseling, correction, psychological education. The system of work of the school psychologist with underachieving children was modeled. The purpose of the system - to promote students and teachers in the process of dealing with underachievement.

The objectives of the teacher-psychologist with underachieving children are:

- Work of the teacher to identify underachievement of children (work with the class teacher, working with academic journals, visiting classes);
- Observe underachieving children, establish the causes of poor progress of children;
- Drawing up a program of work with underachieving children;
- Realization of the program.

To solve the problems, we have developed a corrective-development program, which includes the following activities: 1. Psycho-pedagogical diagnosis of underachieving pupil;

2. Psycho-pedagogical counseling (students, teachers, parents);
3. Correction and developing work with underachieving children;
4. Psycho-pedagogical education of teachers and parents to motivate underachieving children;
5. Psycho-pedagogical preventive measures.

Stages of activity are: (1) Working with documentation (registration logs, identifying underachieving children). (2) Diagnostics of underachieving students and identify the causes. (3) Counseling underachieving children. (4) Training sessions.

### **4. Experimental pedagogical work on the program of work of the school psychologist with underachieving children. Discussion**

Objectives of development work to improve the educational achievement of underachieving students:

1. Identify the students, characterized by school failure;

2. Conduct a psychological-pedagogical diagnostics of underachieving students to determine their level of claims in the educational process;
3. To work out and appropate a methodology for correctional and developmental work of educational psychologist with underachieving children;
4. Determine and analyze the effectiveness of conducting correctional and developmental work.

The practical part of the study was conducted in two stages.

At the first stage – statement of an experienced stage: the diagnostic tools of the development of pedagogical research have been determined; underachieving students have been identified, psycho-pedagogical diagnostics of underachieving children have been conducted. At the second stage program development and educational work have been elaborated and tested. Then a re-diagnosis of children characterized by school failure was conducted; diagnostic data were analyzed, systematized, interpreted.

The following diagnostic tools were selected:

1. Diagnostic method of Dembo Rubnishteyn self- esteem (modified by A.M. Prihozhan);
2. Diagnostic test results on the "Express diagnostics of self-esteem" (Fetiskin N.P., Kozlov V.V., Manuilov G.M);
3. Questionnaire for determining the school motivation by N.G.Luskanova.

Psycho-pedagogical work was conducted in 5th grade at schools in Almaty. The average age of the students was 10-11 years.

*4.1 At the initial stage* of diagnosis class journals were studied and registration of students quarter marks was conducted in core academic subjects: the kazakh language, kazakh literature, russian language, russian literature, mathematics, foreign language. Next, we interviewed headmasters about the quality of the performance of children of these classes. On the basis of these data revealed the number of underachieving in two classes. The study involved 109 students of 5th grade of Almaty schools.

By recording and analyzing the marks of 5th grade, supported by a conversation with the teacher, it was found that 30.2% of fifth grade students of three schools in Almaty have a hidden underachievement. Note that they are students with hidden academic progress. In reality they have a satisfactory evaluation. Next diagnostic and experimental work was held with 33 fifth-graders.

According to Dembo-Rubinstein diagnostic self esteem, poor pupils of 5th grade rate low enough their ability in learning and do not aspire to a significant improvement in their performance (may not consider themselves to be able to do), and also have a low level of claims. A negative level of mismatch between the level of claims and self-esteem of the individual wasn't fixed. It may occur if the level of self-confidence is higher than the level of the claims. According to another method of rapid diagnosis of the level of self-esteem: 16.6% of students have a high level of self-esteem, 34% - the average, 50.4% - low. In underachieving children, in fact, marked focus on meeting the communicative and emotional needs of the school and not the actual cognitive, learning while being at school.

#### *4.2 Second stage*

When implementing remedial developmental direction of the program with underachieving fifth graders training sessions were organized in which children were able to look at themselves on the other hand, to analyze their own personality and individual characteristics.

Trainings "My Mega abilities ", "I am the best!" "Calm, just calm!" were developed and conducted. As part of the training the students had the opportunity to publicly report on their positive and negative characteristics, and get no response censure and rebuke and praise and constructive counterarguments about the most significant, positive qualities of the other members of the group. The participants of the training were engaged in watching the animated film, revealing the contents of this correctional and development program, which was held after the panel discussion. At the end of each session reflection was conducted and feedback received (the ratio of children to conducted classes, its practical use: what students liked in the training, what they didn't like in the class). School psychologist analyzed, systematized and summarized the information received earlier, in order to bring this information to head teachers of underachieving pupils, with whom was organized psychological and pedagogical counseling and training.

- It included:
1. Explanation to class teachers diagnostic results for each poor pupils;
  2. Distinguish difficulties in teaching each poor pupils;
  3. Distinguish causes of these difficulties in teaching from the perspective of educational psychologist;
  4. Discuss ways to improve the effectiveness of training on each underachieving child;

##### 5. Recommendations on the pedagogical work to improve the effectiveness of teaching.

At this stage of the program, class teachers are actively involved in the work, understanding the relevance of the problem of school failure. They were interested in the opinion and the mediatory role of the educational psychologist, expressed a positive attitude towards this form of work, as well as actively involved in the discussion of the causes of school difficulties and ways of correction of school failure in relation to each student.

Class teachers have noted that received enough knowledgeable regarding the objective, environmental factors of each student school failure (unfavorable financial situation of the family, a certain social status of the family; health-related reasons, non-constructive style of bringing up in the family; the discrepancy requirements of school and family, adverse psychological climate in family, conflict environment, etc.). But at the same time, they often do not focus on subjective factors (the inner world of the child, his emotions, feelings, moods and states).

That is, the teachers admitted their tendency to separation of the objective and subjective factors, considering the first group as an independent, not connected with the phenomena of the inner world of the child. In the course of psycho-pedagogical consultations there was an attempt to create a link in the professional identity of the teacher concerning the interaction and interpenetration of objective and subjective factors. Dominances in work with underachieving children were identified: correctional-developing work with students, conducting individual work, as well as consulting and educational activities with parents of underachieving (correcting direction) and successfully enrolled children (prevention of school failure). This professional cooperation and mediation of school educational psychologist with teachers, in our view, intended to optimize the correctional-developing work with underachieving children.

Repeat diagnostic studies on the method of Dembo-Rubinstein diagnostic self-esteem, test "Express diagnostics of self-esteem", a questionnaire to determine the school motivation by N.G. Luskanova among underachieving pupils slightly, but changed for the better.

In particular, the frequency of manifestation of high level of motivation of learning has increased by 12.34%, which is almost half; the frequency of positive level to schools increased by 8.33%, the frequency of low school motivation has decreased by 16.67%

## 5. Conclusion

It is natural that there have been no serious, significant positive changes in the structure of motivation of the person, in connection with the short time in which correctional-developing work was conducted and 6 hours of training for students. Further work is necessary on the diagnosis of the impact of social factors, as well as the development of the school environment, the creation of conditions for self-realization of large pupils at school. It is worth to note the fact that the level of aspirations of many students has undergone major positive changes, which undoubtedly means recognizing students their capabilities and abilities as much higher. Perhaps this can be considered as the potential for further psychological and pedagogical work with underachieving children to improve their school motivation.

A system of work of the school psychologist with children with hidden academic progress has been elaborated. Training and developing diagnostic program for underachieving students have been developed. It aims to increase learning motivation, the level of claims schoolchildren. Children were able to look at themselves on the other hand, to analyze their own personality and individual characteristics. A consultation with the class teacher of underachieving children and subject teachers was held.

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