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**THE ROLE OF A TEACHER IN ENCOURAGING SECONDARY  
SCHOOL CHILDREN TO READ**

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***Abstract***

The attitude to the reading is one of the most important issues that particularly worries the general public. The lack of a reading interest is the main problem of the younger generation. This fact underlines the importance of making reading a key element in the overall development of a personality of a child at every stage of his/her life. No one and nothing but a teacher can have such a profound and systematic impact on students' intellectual and moral interests. To raise a passionate reader is possible only if you explain to him/her the technique of complex analysis because this particular activity method makes the schoolchild a co-author. However the reading interest in our country is rapidly diminishing since there are some philological and pedagogical problems: the lack of modern innovative models of professional teacher training; the philologist considers the textbook as a subject not as a learning tool; the number of pieces of fiction for study in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades exceeds manifold the capacity of the person's perception of fiction; the amount of educational material must be defined by the number of hours for the study of literature and by the number of pages of text that the pupil is able to read. These criteria of educational material selection in the course of "Literature" are underestimated.

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**Keywords:** Reading culture, teachers, pupils, Elabuga schools, methods, reader's interest.



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## **1. Introduction**

One of the greatest Russian teachers Ushinsky (1950) stated that a lot of people read but few of them are ready to read and derive pleasure from it. Another famous Russian educator Sukhomlinsky was convinced that an adolescent reader should be ready for self-education, have the ability to select books, and to discuss them with peers. In one of her recent articles Petukhova (2013) argues that it's possible to educate a literate reader only if you teach him/her the technique of complex analysis because this method turns a child into a coauthor. Various aspects of reader's perception formation are reflected in the works of Neobutova (2000), Leonidova (1998) and others.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The main thrust of modern methodological science development is the commitment to a schoolchild as a reader. The current educational discourse reveals that the selection of textbooks and other educational materials, the need for solid literacy education still represent big problems as they did decades ago. One can immediately identify a weak spot in the current literacy education: what, why and how to teach, and another point is who teaches.

## **3. Research Questions**

We were guided by the following questions:

1. Systematize the theoretical material devoted to the research;
2. Study the role of a teacher in encouraging secondary aged pupils' reading activity;
3. Summarize Elabuga school teachers' experience;
4. Define effective teaching forms and methods for the reading culture formation in the 4th-7th grades.

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

The purpose of the study is to reveal the role of a teacher and to define the methods and techniques for the intensification and stimulating reader's interest in adolescence. For this purpose we use such research methods as observation, experiment and generalization.

## **5. Research Methods**

For confirmation of the ideas the following methods of research have been used: a theoretical analysis of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and methodological literature, the study of teaching experience concerning the issue.

## **6. Findings**

In order to find out the reasons of reader's loss of interest we conducted a survey in Elabuga schools (The Republic of Tatarstan) in 2016, mainly in the 7th-8th grades, where more than four hundred

pupils were questioned, and you can read about it in our article “Adolescent Dialogue with Writers as a Means of Reading Culture Formation” (Verevkina et al., 2016). We came to a conclusion that the main factors of reading culture development are family, school, peers, Mass Media and libraries (Aizerman, 2002). It turned out that reader’s interest decreases at the age of 11, this is the time when the pupil goes from the primary school to the secondary one. Partly, the loss of reader’s interest is due to the fact that the criteria of teaching material selection for the course of “Literature” are underestimated. As a result, schoolchildren are forced to reduce excessive load by random parameters, often not taking into consideration the basis of the course. Emotional value-based comprehension of texts of fiction is replaced by their rational logical study. In order to achieve both things, when we have a lack of time and schoolchildren’s limited opportunities, a new approach to the formation of the course on a historical literary basis is necessary here. It’s vital to transform the general and monographic topics into two parallel courses: to make a course on the historical and literary basis lecture-oriented, aimed at developing knowledge about literature in the historical and cultural context. It can be school lectures with elements of independent work of pupils and with the demonstration of presentation material, reading and the analysis of particular episodes; problem-based lectures, virtual museums, where visual aids and new information technologies will be widely used. It will be obligatory to use artefacts of the present and the past, which are actively functioning in the modern culture, discussed in the media, reviving on the theatrical stage. In this course pupils should acquire knowledge about the epochs of the literature development, literary trends; about the culture of texts’ perception according to the specifics of each trend; learn about the life and work of outstanding writers. The lecture course can be accompanied by voluntary reading depending on schoolchildren’s choice, taking into account individual preferences and rate. The most important function of lectures should be recommendatory (advisory), encouraging children to take up reading of fiction, critical and philosophical literature. The knowledge of children needs to be checked from time to time during the lessons, which will be held in the form of credit tests. Higher institutions could help in the development of such a parallel, so the problem of study time would be solved.

The second course is in-depth reading and studying of the works of classical literature, which will enrich students’ experience of the aesthetic perception and comprehension of literary masterpieces. Informative and reproductive activities will not dominate here, but emotional value-based activities will. It will allow us to establish a dialogue between an adolescent and a writer, since a pupil will be able to feel an obscure text. To conduct such lessons, the teacher needs time in store, because the desire to meet the strict limits of program time at any costs adversely affects the emotional value-based comprehension of literature.

The basic state examination complicates the school course, which starts resembling the university programme: the pupil must know historical, literary and theoretical fundamentals, and must have the ability to analyse, that is extremely difficult in the conditions of modern teaching; therefore, the dialogic nature of education is being destroyed. The disregard of accessibility principle means the loss of interest in literature, and consequently, it’s impossible to form a reading culture. That is why former schoolchildren don’t read classical literature because they do not know why they need it.

It is possible to invite a pupil in the world of literature if you change the aim of literature at school: an attempt to study it incomprehensibly leads the methodology to a dead-end, it is necessary to prepare pupils for the insight into it, to form a need for serious reading (Leonidova, 1998). For solving this

problem the cooperation between school and higher institutions may be offered. The learners can attend a course on the history and theory of literature, taught by high school teachers specifically prepared for a certain age category. One shouldn't forget about the need for continuity and interdisciplinary connections, because if the same work is studied both in the lessons of literature and foreign languages as well, we will have substantial time saving. A pupil will discover and comprehend a wonderful world of the author's style. The teacher of literature and the one of foreign languages can conduct joint lessons (for example, on world literature), revealing the versatility of the word, and treating it as a kind of a specific code in comprehending the text.

An integral part of the reading culture reproduction is the work on reader's interest. It's necessary to attract the attention to positive children's literature, which enriches the reader's inner world and strengthens his spiritual state. Moreover, the mechanical compulsion to read high-class literature will be ineffectual and inappropriate. So, it's important to work with a child, when the result will be his/her genuine interest in reading. Nowadays it is becoming urgent to organize events for reading culture development, such as competitions, workshops, festivals, forums, as these are the most productive methods for children and adolescents' creative growth, which allow them to reveal and to present their potential in the process of reading culture formation.

A lot of Elabuga school teachers have begun to practise the division of the literature course since it ensures high results of the Unified State Examination (on the Russian language and literature).

Galina Sokolova is a teacher in the Elabuga secondary school number 9. When studying some work of fiction, she groups pupils: "historians" study historical events, which influenced the appearance of the work, the history of its creation; A group of "theorists" analyzes the work from the point of view of the theory of literature, determining the originality of the mode, genre, theme, problem, means of creating fictional images; "critics" give the audience the information about critical works devoted to the oeuvre of the author in question.

"Elabuga Parnassus" is a creative conference of special interest in Elabuga. One of its organizers and masterminds is a teacher of highest qualification grade, honoured teacher of the Republic of Tatarstan – Sokolova, who is an active user of modern methods and new technologies. The idea of the literary competition appeared as a result and logical continuation of the teacher's active work with children. Thus, during the creative conference "Elabuga Parnassus" a lot of ideas and methods come into practice, which are time-proved during Sokolova's life-long work at school. The main difference of this creative conference from other similar extracurricular events is its creative focus. The conference "Elabuga Parnassus" has a lot of creativity in its structure: the name refers to ancient Greek mythology. Parnassus is one of the key mountains in ancient Greece, and is seen as a symbolic place of living of poets, and in broader sense, of people of art. Thus, the name of the mountain and the name of the conference are connected with the theme of the conference, and it motivates the participants. Besides, the competition has its own hymn with musical accompaniment. An important aspect is the personal interest of children to participate in the conference. Children who constantly work on creative self-development are eager to publish their work and to speak about it. It resulted in the appearance of a separate session "Creativity without limits", in which you can present your work, that isn't included into the general list of the sessions. It can be creative works on physics, chemistry, and mathematics and so on. All the time new sessions appear, for example, such a new session as methodological work of teachers. This conference is

a catalyst for the formation and development of young people's reading interest because in order to participate and win the prize in the conference, even to write a short story, you need to get acquainted with the theory of literature, with literary works of high quality. In the preparation for the conference participants master the basics of philological analysis of texts, not with the help of dull theory, but they work with a concrete theme, idea, problems, the development of the plot, stylistic devices, artistic details, etc. Under no coercion they learn to read and analyze texts properly, that's the greatest value for their future development.

Galina Sokolova successfully uses the technology "Sakubun" (composition-fantasy), which helps to look around, to feel like a part of the world, to develop children's aesthetic feelings, associative and imaginative thinking, and to awaken imagination before reading texts of fiction. The teacher argues that children should try to write a text, and then it will be easier to understand different writers and poets.

Irene Shabalina is a first category teacher in the Elabuga secondary school number 10, she uses the method of literary character's virtual museum. The aim is to implement the "union" of computer technologies and literature, to present literature as an incarnate art of writing, and to help pupils understand the ethical-aesthetic unity of work that evokes "good feelings", to turn a computer from a dangerous toy into a true friend and an assistant. The school virtual literary museum has predecessors – museum websites. The development of WEB-technologies promises to make a virtual museum even more interesting than a real one, and most importantly – more accessible and comprehensible. After studying the works of classical literature, the teacher approves the creation of game-playing, non-game playing, and animated booktrailers. Children themselves make up the script, select video materials, use GIF animation and footage, edit – this is a qualitative promotional method for attracting to reading.

Irene Shabalina is certain that the problem of reading is relevant nowadays because there is no dialogue between children and their parents. The adolescent's living experience is too slight to comprehend complicated works of fiction, and he simply doesn't have enough time for full interaction with the parents. The teacher organizes Sunday's quests, where pupils come with their parents. They work in groups. Beforehand each group must read a short story (from 2 up to 10 pages). The groups have the common task, they think over the text, the theme, and the message, they create the images, judging from the author's suggested portraits. Adolescents and parents exchange their opinions, learn to come to an agreement. Adolescents will get to know parents' point of view concerning different phenomena. Shabalina reports that such themes as family, love, the sense of life are very interesting for these groups because at this age (13-16) the ideas of true values start being formed.

The libraries play one of the significant roles in the development of a literate reader, but today they almost don't fulfil their functions. It's connected with the increasing interest of the Internet in the life of an adolescent (the book is available at any time). However here we have the same problem: there is no dialogue between a teenager and an adult, between a schoolchild and a book. That's why the report about the issue of reading interest formation, which was made by Elisabeth Nemetz and Barbara Retschnig, arouses special interest. Elisabeth Nemetz is the project supervisor of the online platform of the Austrian Ministry for Education and Vienna State University Library Science Foundation for teachers «Bulungsmedien. tv». Barbara Retschnig is a director of scientific library and the specialist in study of literature. The fact is that the percentage of reading children decreases every year. In this respect the pupils' literary socialization is becoming urgent. They speak about the literary age of every child: at the

age of 7-8 - an active reader who wants to read everything; at the age of 11 the crisis begins in the process of reading, children's literature gets boring and the child stops reading, we notice common problems for Russia and Austria. The moderators call this period "literary transition age", so according to Nemetz and Retschnig, it is at this time when the library's work should be the most active. Media project 'Bulungsmedien.tv' is developing an online video library that contains more than 1600 films from different fields of school disciplines. They are convinced that if you make children become interested in reading and you can captivate them, then the so-called "secondary literary initiation" will begin. The task of the staff of the Vienna scientific library, teachers and parents of the child is to attract children's attention to reading, that's why in the beginning you can use comic books, fantasy and something like this.

An equally important aspect of their workshop was the project on the "prescientific" work development of senior pupils of the secondary school. To finish school and pass the final examinations pupils need to present their first result of scientific research to other pupils and to the special committee. They choose the subject of research independently, considering their hobbies and interests. The project implementation allows schoolchildren to learn the mechanisms of searching for scientific information, to distinguish qualitative information from the information of low quality, to evaluate sources concerning the subject, to analyze books and present them competently. Having formulated the topic of the research, the learner comes to the library where the support service begins working with him. The task of such a service is to select the sources concerning this theme, to help with forming the structure of the scientific work, the only thing the schoolchild must do is to use the sources correctly. Beforehand qualification upgrading courses for teachers are held in the libraries. The staff of the library tells teachers not only about new fiction but also about necessary scientific literature. At the lending library there are special data-aware USB-sticks, which are given to all who wish, and it guarantees the access to any sources. The mission of libraries is to level out the difference between literature deficit and preservation of books.

Nemetz and Retschnig informed about the events which attract the reader:

- "A Planet for Children" is an event for one-year children and their parents. The staff of the library and guests not only read books, but they also watch cartoons, sing songs, get acquainted with the culture and literature of different peoples of the world.

- Summer Reading Forum allows children to earn bonuses. A schoolchild who has read a book and has written a review, get a stamp, if he gets three stamps, he will be given a present. The more stamps the more presents.

- The project "Become a librarian!" A teacher or a pupil can try to be a librarian. "If you were a librarian..."

- Libraries produce board games, such as draughts, lotto and others with the illustrations of books or literary characters;

- The project "Night shift" is useful during the examination session when the learner must comprehend the definite amount of literature in short terms;

- Libraries make school boxes where any learner can find films, booktrailers, and successful projects.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the state of schoolchildren's reading is the result of a whole set of factors due to the following reasons: motivation reduction, school overload, lack of interest in reading, inactivity of libraries, improper work of mass media (no book propaganda). A modern teacher needs to work not only with a schoolchild but also with the parents since several generations of readers have been lost. Generalizing and systematizing the results of the research we draw the following conclusions and give recommendations:

1. It is necessary to transform the general and monographic themes in two simultaneous courses, for instance, the course on historical literary basis is transformed into a lecture which is focused on getting the knowledge of literature in historical cultural context (school lectures with the elements of pupils' individual work and with the demonstration of presentations, reading and analysis of certain parts; problem-based lectures; virtual museums).

2. The second course of insight reading and the study of classic works of literature allow enriching schoolchildren aesthetic experience.

3. The cooperation of school and university: students can attend the course on the history and theory of literature, organized by university teachers.

4. The division of the literature course contributes to top results on the BSE (basic state examination) and USE (unified state examination) and Elabuga school teachers (Sokolova, Shabalina, Chuprynina, Rodionova, Eyubova and others) confirm it.

5. The usage of the technology of virtual museum of literature and "sakubun" at the literature lessons taking into account energy and time saving.

6. It is vital to create an interactive environment between children and their parents. A teacher can organize Sunday's quests, where children come with their parents. Adolescents and parents will exchange their ideas, opinions; they will learn to come to an agreement. Adolescents will get to know parents' point of view concerning different phenomena.

7. It is important to activate library's functions: "pre academic" activity, summer reading forum, the project "Become a librarian!" and so on.

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