

# Difference of social competence between students of technical schools and the schools of humanities

Drahomíra OUDOVÁ\*

Institute of Communication and Education, Czech University of Agriculture in Prague

The research has been investigating social competence of students of a secondary technical and secondary pedagogical school. Social competence is the aptitude and effectiveness of one's dealing with others in social interaction and has two important aspects: the quality of social relationships and good social skills. The quality of social relationships is dependent on good social skills and good social skills increase the quality of relationships. The both aspects are in mutual dependence, the one influencing the other. Good relationships strengthen good social skills and practising social skills increase the quality of relationships. Social relationships and social skills have the following levels: individual, family, peers, community. To judge the social competence, we have chosen the method of R. Riggio "Social Skills Inventory". R. Riggio understands the social competence as a multidimensional construct that includes skills of receiving, decoding and understanding of social information together with other social skills as verbal and social expression, regulation of social behaviour and acting social roles (Riggio, 1986). His theory of Social Skills Inventory is based on the idea that social competence is a construct which covers basic communication skills. The method includes 90 self-evaluation items which are judged within six scales and the total forms the overall level of social competence. The research compares the results in particular scales and in the overall score of social competence according to various criteria: the type of school (technical, pedagogical), sex, the type of family (complete, incomplete), age and a number of brothers and sisters.

The research data can help the management of faculties and teachers to develop social competence of students. The social competence plays an important role in the interaction of students and public. Students with higher level of social competence better understand the approaches and attitudes of public towards rural areas and community and have skills of competent and efficient presentation of agriculture in the society.

Key words: social competence, social relationships, verbal and emotional expression, regulation of social behaviour, communication skills, interaction between a student and public, presentation of agriculture

## INTRODUCTION

### Social competence

Social competence is an ability to develop and maintain private and professional relationships by effective communication, team work and language skills. Social competence is extremely important in various social interactions, e.g. interaction of students of agricultural schools and public. Students with higher level of social competence better understand the approaches and attitudes of public towards rural areas and community and have skills of competent and efficient presentation of agriculture in the society.

V. Smékal (1995) distinguishes between social and professional competence.

He defines social competence as "aptitude and effectiveness of one's dealing with others in social interaction based on the respect towards human dignity and the developed culture of one's personality". He comprehends it as aptitude and mastery of an individual to deal with others in an adequate and effective way and to solve one's integration and position in a social group, conformable with the aims of a group and respect to moral principles. Mr. Smékal emphasises that everyone who is engaged in a social activity and lives with others must have social competence.

According to Mr. Smékal, social competence is a very complicated structure of skills, features, habits, needs, attitudes and personality prerequisites, which core is formed by social dexterity, effectiveness, reflection and self-reflection.

R. Riggio (1998) understands social competence as a constellation of various communication skills. He divides basic skills of social communication into the following three groups: 1. skills of receiving information – communication sensitivity, 2. skills of emitting information – communication expressivity, 3. skills of monitoring, controlling, regulation of communication. These three basic skills are enforced in two spheres: a verbal, qualified as social and a nonver-

\*Correspondence to:  
Drahomíra Oudová,  
Institute of Education and Communication Czech University  
of Agriculture in Prague, V Lazních 3, 159 00 Praha 5,  
The Czech Republic  
Tel.: +420 251 810 878, Fax: +420 251 811 364,  
email: oudova@ivp.czu.cz

bal, qualified as emotional. By combining them, Mr. Riggio has conceptualised six social skills: Emotional Expressivity, Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Control, Social Expressivity, Social Sensitivity and Social Control.

R. Riggio conception is realised in a 90 self-evaluation-item method SSI – Social Skills Inventory (Riggio, 1989) and we have used it in our research and it is described down below.

## RESEARCH

Between September 2005 and January 2006 we were running a survey inquiring into social competence of adolescents. The research compares the results in particular scales and in the overall score of social competence according to various criteria: the type of school (technical, pedagogical), sex, the type of family (complete, incomplete), age and a number of brothers and sisters.

## METHODS

To judge the social competence, we have chosen the method of R. Riggio “Social Skills Inventory”. R. Riggio understands the social competence as a multidimensional construct that includes skills of receiving, decoding and understanding of social information together with other social skills such as verbal and social expression, regulation of social behaviour and acting social roles (Riggio, 1986). His theory of Social Skills Inventory is based on the idea that social competence is a construct which covers basic communication skills. The method includes 90 self-evaluation items which are judged within six scales and the total forms the overall level of social competence. Because the method is rather unknown in our country, down below we describe the individual scales:

### Emotional Expressivity (EE)

The scale of emotional expressivity judges the skills of non-verbal communication of an individual, mainly emitting emotional messages, but it also includes non-verbal expression of attitudes, dominance and the ability to clearly express an emotional state. People with high level of emotional expressivity are able to awaken emotions of others and inspire others to express their emotions.

A representative statement: I can change a boring group of people into a lively one.

### Emotional Sensitivity (ES)

The scale of emotional sensitivity measures skills of receiving and decoding non-verbal communication of others. People emotionally sensitive are able to clearly interpret the subtle emotional keys of others. People with high level of emotional sensitivity can be influenced by emotions of others; they empathetically live through emotional states of others.

A representative statement: When watching sad films, I sometimes cry.

### Emotional Control (EC)

The scale of emotional control measures the ability to control and manage emotional and non-verbal expressions. Emotional control includes the ability to hide one’s emotions. People with high level of emotional control have a tendency to control their expressions and emotions.

A representative statement: I can easily change my expressions, to look happy and sad on the instant.

### Social Expressivity (SE)

The scale of social expressivity measures skills of verbal expression and the ability to integrate others into social communication. High score in this scale signifies verbal fluency and an ability to start and lead a conversation with anybody.

A representative statement: When telling a story, I use a lot of gestures which help me to express the main point.

### Social Sensitivity (SS)

Social sensitivity implies the ability to interpret verbal communication of others. It also includes an individual sensitivity to understanding of norms which regulate social behaviour. People socially sensitive are aware of social norms and they avoid any possible inadequacy of their behaviour and actions. Extremely high score in this scale together with medium or low score in Social Expressivity and Social Control might indicate inhibition of attendance in social interaction.

A representative statement: I think that I take other people comments too personally.

### Social Control (SC)

The scale of social control includes the skills of playing social roles and a social presentation of oneself. People with well-developed skills of social control are generally well appreciated, are tactful and they feel comfortably in various social situations. Social control is also important in leading the course and content of communication in social interactions.

A representative statement: Generally, I am good at conducting a discussion.

### The research sample

Students of two different types of secondary schools have been chosen to take part in the survey: a school of technical specialisation – a Higher professional school and a Secondary technical school in Litomyšl and a school of pedagogical specialisation – a Higher pedagogical school and a Secondary pedagogical school in Litomyšl.

The questionnaire has been answered by 296 students between the ages of 15 to 20. We have summoned basic information of the following aspects: sex, family, type of school, number of brothers and sisters and academic performance (the latest marks in Czech language and mathematics).

Altogether, there have been 177 female (59.8%) and 119 male (40.2%) participants who have taken part in the research, 190 (60.8%) of them have been students of technical schools and 116 (39.2%) of pedagogical schools.

There have been 257 (86.8%) students who live in a complete family and 39 (13.2%) whose parents are divorced.

There have been 13 (4.4%) students who are the only child, 170 (57.4%) students with a brother or a sister, 77 (26%) students with two brothers or sisters, 25 (8.4%) with three brothers or sisters, 9 (3%) students with four brothers or sisters and 2 students (0.7%) have had five brothers or sisters.

## RESULTS

The subject of the analysis has been the relationship between particular scales of social competence and the relationship between the total score of social competence.

The criteria have been the following:

- Sex
- Age
- Family (complete, incomplete)
- Type of school: technical and pedagogical

The results are presented and commented in the tables.

The median (ideal) of all scales = 38. The median (ideal) of the whole method SSI = 225.5.

To judge the average of individual scales of SSI and the overall scale of SSI by girls and boys, we have used t-test of independent choice.

The results in the scale of Emotional Sensitivity (ES), Social Sensitivity (SS) and Social Expressivity (SE) and the overall score of SSI are all very high above the median.

The scale of Emotional Sensitivity (ES) measures the capability of receiving and decoding non-verbal communication, the aptitude of empathetic living through emotional states of others, of decoding and interpreting the subtle emotional keys of others, their opinions and attitudes. In our sample, this aptitude is significantly higher by girls.

The scale of Social Sensitivity (SS) measures the sensitivity to verbal communication of others, the ability to inter-

**Table 1: Averages of individual scales of SSI by boys and girls**

The whole group n=296	EE	ES	EC	SE	SS	SC	SSI
M	36.42	43.19	39.39	43.59	47.38	38.40	248.28
SD	4.68	7.45	5.97	7.55	6.98	5.06	26.34
Median	36	42,5	39	42	46	38	246
Minimum	25	25	15	29	30	25	179
Maximum	49	65	59	66	66	55	328
Boys n =119							
M	36.64	39.86	38.61	41.41	45.15	38.69	240.55
SD	4.27	6.35	6.41	6.50	6.63	4.92	23.76
Median	37	39	38	41	45	39	242
Girls n=177							
M	36.27	45.44	39.91	45.05	48.87	38.21	253.47
SD	4.94	7.32	5.61	7.86	6.83	5.06	26.78
Median	36	45	40	44	47	38	251
t-test B:D		6.78** B<G		3.82** B<G	4.64** B<G		4.26** B<G

In the whole group of adolescents (age 15 to 20) under the median there is the scale of Emotional Expressivity (EE) which represents the ability to emit emotional information, to express non-verbally emotional states and attitudes, and to encourage others to express their feelings. Surprisingly, the results in this scale are lower by girls and they correspond with the results in the scale of Emotional Control which are on the contrary higher by girls.

pret it and an individual sensitivity to understanding of rules and norms and is statistically significantly higher by girls.

The scale of Social Expressivity (SE) measures the ability of verbal expressions, incorporating the others into social discourse and initiating a conversation. In our sample this ability is again significantly higher by girls.

Altogether, the overall score of SSI is clearly higher by girls than by boys.

**Table 2: Averages of individual scale of SSI according to the age**

Age	EE	ES	EC	SE	SS	SC	SSI
15 M	36.90	45.90	43.94	46.58	50.90	41.52	262.84
n=31 SD	5.17	7.84	6.72	8.98	8.15	5.92	30.04
16 M	36.92	43.33	39.65	43.77	48.36	39.26	252.48
n=66 SD	4.81	8.01	7.66	9.28	7.33	4.94	29.49
17 M	35.96	41.01	38.51	42.96	46.90	37.04	242.49
n=67 SD	4.79	7.73	4.91	7.05	6.92	4.22	25.53
18 M	36.48	43.86	37.80	42.23	45.80	37.54	244.53
n=80 SD	4.79	7.47	6.39	7.05	7.09	6.43	25.04
19 M	36.27	43.40	39.14	44.42	47.15	37.73	247.94
n=48 SD	3.97	5.41	4.42	6.46	4.82	4.53	19.14
20 M	33.00	40.50	42.00	38.50	46.00	42.00	242.00
n=4 SD	2.31	2.89	1.15	1.70	1.15	5.77	4.62
t - test age 15:19			3.83*		2.58*	3.21*	2.46*

To judge the averages of individual scales of SSI and the overall score of SSI according to the age, we have used the t-test of independent choice. We have compared the age groups of 15-year-old and 19-year-old students because there were only four students who have reached the age of 20.

The results have shown that Emotional Expressivity, Emotional Sensitivity and Social Expressivity do not change according to the age. On the other hand, Emotional Control, Social Sensitivity, Social Control and the overall score of SSI decrease as people get older. It seems that by gaining experience in interpersonal contacts, adolescents lose in emotional and social control and they are also less sensitive in interpersonal contacts and they are already composed. At the age of 15 the overall score of SSI is high above the average, by higher age it is on decrease.

Other criteria we have chosen to judge the individual scales of SSI and the overall score of SSI are: complete and incomplete family, the type of school (pedagogical and technical). By all criteria, we have used the t-test of independent choice.

**Table 3: Averages of individual scale of SSI according to the type of a family**

Family	EE	ES	EC	SE	SS	SC	SSI
Compleat n=257							
M	36.43	42.87	39.34	43.54	47.41	38.43	248.26
SD	4.78	7.25	6.31	7.80	6.68	5.51	25.54
Incomplet n=39							
M	36.33	45.31	38.92	43.15	47.13	37.60	248.41
SD	4.05	8.47	6.55	8.37	8.81	4.10	31.53
t-test Compleat: Incomplet							

\*p<0.05; \*\* p< 0.01

Comparing the averages of individual scales of social competence and the overall level of social competence, we have not found out any statistically important dependence between a complete and an incomplete family and a degree of social competence.

**Table 4: Averages of individual scale of SSI according to the type of a school**

Technical school n=180	EE	ES	EC	SE	SS	SC	SSI
M	36.24	41.04	38.33	41.77	46.28	38.28	242.70
SD	4.50	6.97	6.75	7.25	6.84	5.74	25.08
Pedagogical school n=116							
M	36.71	46.53	40.77	46.17	49.08	38.37	256.93
SD	4.96	6.96	5.32	8.06	6.89	4.98	26.01
t- test pedagogical: technical		6.63**	3.29**	4.88**	3.43**		4.70**

\*p<0.05; \*\*p< 0.01

In the surveyed group, there has not been any statistically important difference in the scales of Emotional Expressivity

and Social Control between the students of technical and pedagogical schools. In the scales of Emotional Sensitivity, Emotional Control, Social Expressivity, Social Sensitivity and in the overall score of SSI, the results are significantly higher by the students of pedagogical schools. On the basis of this fact, we can assume that the students of pedagogical schools have higher social competence compared to the students of technical schools. It is also possible that the study at pedagogical schools develops social competence far more. We also assume that students with higher level of social competence often choose schools of humanities. Another factor, however quite important, which could have influenced the results is the sex of respondents. In our group, there were only 2 boys out of 116 students of the pedagogical school.

## CONCLUSION

The results of our survey have shown that the students of secondary technical schools have lower level of social competence, compared to the students of schools of humanities. The biggest difference is in the capability of receiving and decoding non-verbal communication of other people, in the aptitude of empathetic living through emotional states of others, in decoding and interpreting the subtle emotional keys of others, their opinions and attitudes (Emotional Sensitivity). There is also big difference in the ability of verbal expressions, incorporating the others into social discourse and initiating a conversation (Social Expressivity). The results might be used by management of faculties and their teachers when preparing study programmes and courses which would develop social competence. Social skills are extremely important in the communication with public and the presentation of agriculture in the society.

## REFERENCES

1. Canto - Sperber M., Dupuy J.P. Competencies for the Good Life and the Good Society. In D.S.Rychen, L.H.Salganik (Ed.) A Conceptual Clarifikation. Defining and Selecting Key Competencies. Göttingen: Hogrefe & Huber Publisher 2001.
2. Goleman, D. Emoční inteligence. Praha: Columbus 1997.
3. Goleman, D. Práce s emoční inteligencí. Praha: Columbus 1999.
4. Goody, J. Competencies and Education: Contextual Diversity In D.S.Rychen, L.H.Salganik (Ed.) A Conceptual Clarifikation. Defining and Selecting Key Competencies. Göttingen: Hogrefe & Huber Publisher 2001.
5. Riggio, R.E. Social Skills Inventory. Manual, research edition. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press 1989.
6. Smekal, V. Sociální kompetence (sociálně psychologická způsobilost) a její rozvíjení. Psychologické texty, Filozofická fakulta MU Brno: 1995, číslo 5.
7. Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání 2003. Překlad Key Competencies. A developing concept in general compulsory education. EURYDICE 2002.
8. Weinert F., E. Concept of Competence. In D.S.Rychen, L.H.Salganik (Ed.) A Conceptual Clarifikation. Defining and Selecting Key Competencies. Göttingen: Hogrefe & Huber Publisher 2001.