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**DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE TO SUPPORT
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

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Abstract

This work is an attempt to analyze the results of introducing the course “Communication in the system of people with disabilities support” in the Masters’ training system. It tries to assess key performance indicators of the curriculum and to determine the subjective background for successful learning of communication skills with disabled people by students. The research involved 24 students of Southern Federal University. To study the focus group students’ notions of the pilot training course, the author has analyzed the key performance indicators of its assimilation by means of a modified questionnaire KPI of Kirkpatrick-Phillips. The group assessment view of difficulties in communication with a disabled peer partner has showed the students’ understanding themselves as a source of communication problems, especially the “relationship – treatment” type. Students possess the formed abilities to identify, verbalize and regulate the nonverbal behavior at personality-dyad-group levels. The author used the obtained results as a material for searching the group and individual development of students’ communicative competences, and for making up the plan effective work in this field. The use of a “delayed feedback” pattern gives a realistic assessment of the curriculum content and its practical significance by students and allows determining the directions of communicative competence improvement.

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1. Introduction

One of the main aspects in training specialists of helping professions is the problem of the communicative process, forms, means and background of success purposeful organization in relation to various spheres of social interaction, including pedagogical communication. The modern interpretation of communication departs from its definition as a process of information transfer to the semantic context of social interaction in VUCA-world realities (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity). Communicative competence has become a transparent over-professional skill (soft skills), ensuring the specialist's readiness for productive activity (Bukharina, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

Communicative competence of defectologists includes sociolinguistic, translation, social and special psychological, correctional and developmental aspects of the work. Within the constructivist paradigm it is regarded as the ability and willingness as the bearers of particular social and cultural experience, "neurotypical", to manage the communication process with individuals with disabilities. In the structure of communicative competence there are following forms: (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Strugielska & Piątkowska, 2017; Hismanoglu, 2011): grammatical; sociolinguistic (correspondence of forms, means of communication to the situation of communication); strategic/compensating (overcoming of communicative difficulties in the conditions of difficult communication with the use of various strategies, means, including non-verbal); discursive (integrity, connectedness of statements). In this regard, the effective construction of communication with persons with disabilities is associated not only with the instrumental skills of communication (dactyl, sign language, Braille alphabet, Lorm alphabet and others), the level of language skills, but also with the cultural experience of building relationships, including in the virtual environment of the Internet.

The basis of effective organization of the communication process includes a number of actions: goal-setting, development of a strategic and tactical plan, resource analysis and forecasting. The leading role in this process is given to a teacher. It causes the request for specialists who have a clear understanding of the communication process technology and the specifics of its practice in difficult conditions of interaction with disabled people (Smith, 1994). In other words, there is a need for additional professional education and expansion of basic professional competencies for teachers working with disabled students.

Socio-psychological and pedagogical knowledge provides the communicative competence formation in students of higher education institutions who are engaged in the support of disabled people. Despite the theoretical and applied importance, communicative training is mainly a set of applied techniques directed to work with a certain group of disorders, especially with autism spectrum disorders, hearing, vision, complicated disorders, etc. (Gràcia, Benitez, Vega, & Domeniconi, 2015).

Communicative disorders, especially the disorders of social component, are widespread in childhood and have a prognostic value in relation to behavioral adaptation in educational institutions, especially of learners with disabilities (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, & Pascoe, 2007; Heyl & Hintermair, 2015; Hintermair & Korneffel, 2013). Therefore, a methodological paper (Soto, Muller, Hunt, & Goetz,

2001) emphasizes the importance of mastering special communication programs stressing the possibilities of alternative communication and information-communication tools when solving educational and socio-cultural problems.

Due to the development of inclusive education (since September 1, 2016, Federal educational standards have been introduced throughout Russia), there is an increasing need for the experts who can interact with various types of disabled people, who know the means of communication with them and are able to organize the educational process considering the peculiarities of such students. However, at present, even in special schools, the number of defectologists with required competencies does not exceed 25-30% of all teachers, and this figure is even less in general educational institutions.

To support a disabled child teachers are supposed to develop communication skills, to demonstrate the knowledge of a communication process forms and means (verbal and non-verbal), and to control the specifics of a leading defect (Soto, Muller, Hunt, & Goetz, 2001; Williams, Stemach, Wolfe, & Stanger, 1995). The development of a child with the psychophysical defect naturally causes a chain of qualitative transformations in his/her psyche, affecting various mental processes, properties, social and psychological formations. The concerns of perception and processing of information and verbal mediation are common to all kinds of disordered development. This fact is directly reflected in the communication process (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, & Pascoe, 2007; Heyl & Hintermair, 2015; Hintermair & Korneffel, 2013; Williams, Stemach, Wolfe, & Stanger, 1995). These aspects are regarded in the system of requirements for the training of special (defectological) education experts.

3. Research Questions

Starting a research study, we have made a hypothesis about a subjective background for students' successful development of communication skills with disabled people, their ability to interact with disabled people and the necessity of individual training based on the results of students' diagnostics. The second question concerned the practical work with a questionnaire for the focus group – an assessment tool of the training program “Communication in the system of people with disabilities support”, the key performance indicators of training by means of Kirkpatrick-Phillips' model (KPI) (as cited in Skuratovskaya & Klimova, 2018).

Diagnostic tests were carried out frontally, time was not limited. The reliability of the results was provided by the methods of mathematical statistics of software SPSS.21 (Mann-Whitney's U-criterion, the correlation analysis), as well as by high-quality data interpretation.

The research involved 24 second-year full-time Masters' students of special (defectological) education majoring in “Support of people with disabilities” (04.03.04) of the Academy of Psychology and Pedagogy, Southern Federal University.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this work is to analyze the results of the project-oriented course “Communication in the system of people with disabilities support” at the Master's level, to determine the subjective

background for successful development of communication skills with disabled people, to assess the key performance indicators of the curriculum.

5. Research Methods

The diagnostic study included the following directions:

- assessment of subjective backgrounds of communicative competence, the students' level of its formation;
- analysis of the experimental group participants' dynamics of communicative competencies after studying the educational program;
- studying a course listeners' ideas about the contents of the pilot training course, the analysis of its application in a distance learning mode.

Labunskaya's (1999) modified techniques were applied to assess the level of abilities to adequate understanding of non-verbal behavior and to create communication with disabled people. The assessment of subjective backgrounds for the development of students' communicative competence was carried out using the following techniques: a questionnaire "The need for goal achievements" by Orlov; "The empathy level testing" by Boyko; "Emotional intelligence" by Ushakov and Lyusina (2004); a test to measure a person's self-actualization level by Shostrom, Rukavishnikova, Chirkova (as cited in Rean, 2006).

To study the focus group students' notions of the pilot training course the key performance indicators (KPI) of its assimilation have been analyzed by means of a modified questionnaire KPI of Kirkpatrick-Phillips's level model on the parameters: reactions to learning, acquired knowledge/skills, regular application of acquired knowledge in practice, behavior change and the extent of the planned results achievement (as cited in Skuratovskaya & Klimova, 2018). The summary/delayed response sheets, case studies, questionnaires and analysis of final projects were used as the control and measurement materials for work with the focus group (as cited in Skuratovskaya & Klimova, 2018).

The questionnaire consists of 3 survey forms.

1. Entering questionnaire of the student/teacher's self-analysis of the competence formation level in the field of communication organization to support disabled children according to ABC method:

- development of communicative competence level understanding;
- an increasing level of reflection, directed to awareness and description of competencies necessary for students;
- determination of competence formation directions in this area through understanding how to do better, determination of personal development.

2. Feedback questionnaire on the results of the training course, review test.

3. Questionnaire of work with focus group right after the training course "Communication in the system of people with disabilities support", a week after its completion and three months later.

The forming part of the experiment is aimed at the development of students' communicative competence, including the use of special means of communication in the educational and correctional work with students who have difficulties in speech communication, which promote successful

development of an adapted basic educational program and socialization of people with disabilities. Mainly, the following blocks were considered:

Module 1. Theory and practice of people with disabilities support in the system of general and vocational education. History and modern support models for students with disabilities of different ages in the system of general and vocational education.

Module 2. Conceptual fundamentals of communication with disabled people. Basic theories of communication, structure, mechanisms of the communicative process management in education. Problems of information encoding/decoding in normal and limited conditions. Determinants and barriers of communication with disabled people: age, modal-specific and situational variables.

Module 3. Verbal communication with disabled people. Modal-specific peculiarities. Problems of “meaning loss” and “verbal indirection”. Alternative solutions in communication with disabled people.

Module 4. Socio-humanitarian technologies of non-verbal communication with disabled people. Models of information processing in dactyl and sign speech, alternative and additional forms of communication (AAC) with disabled people. Organizational mechanisms of communicative interaction in the context of a complete training program and support of a person with special needs.

Module 5. Information media resources accompanied by participants of the educational process. Opportunities of modern information technologies and models of information support in the organization of disabled students support, involving inclusive education (Skuratovskaya & Klimova, 2018).

Educational technologies along with traditional forms of problem-based learning for higher education included methods of cognitive structural and dynamic visualization and interactive learning model. In particular, they were binary training, simulation technologies, elements of gamification with the modeling of life situations and practical case studies, including native speakers of sign language, teachers of special educational institutions of I, II type. Another form of work is based on the project tasks in the form of cognitive infographics: from classical methods of visual structuring – traditional diagrams and graphs (Ishikawa’s diagram, Venn’s diagram, mind-map, etc.) – to “strategic” maps (roadmaps), spidergrams (spiders), causal chains and video infographics. Interactive technologies of collaborative problem solving (“carousel”, “aquarium”, etc.) and flipped learning, as well as project-based learning methods were also actively used.

In conclusion, the coherence of the students’ communicative competence development, subjective backgrounds for the development of communicative skills in the interpretation of non-verbal behavior were considered. The results of the students’ assessment of key performance indicators of the training program were considered as well.

6. Findings

Diagnostics of communicative competence included two parts: the assessment of communicative interaction with a difficult partner, as well as people with disabilities, the communicative skills development; and abilities to an adequate understanding of nonverbal behaviour.

The procedure of communicative interaction diagnostics contained the tasks of assessing a peer as a difficult partner and the respondent’s self-assessment as a partner in communication. Then a peer with disabilities acted as an incentive for a partner of difficult communication according to the similar pattern.

The results of the group profile assessment of difficulties in communicating with a disabled peer partner showed that the number of statements in a total group profile on the scale “difficult partner with disabilities” is twice less compared to the number of problems (10:21). In the students’ opinion, they are the source of these problems.

Common difficulties relate to the “treatment – relationship” parameter ($\bar{x}=9.32\pm 2.3$): suspicion, dislike, authority, arrogance, increased demand towards others and the communication partner. A still pose, a partner’s face and loud speech are among the expressive-speech parameters, distinguished by students. The specific difficulties in communicating with disabled peers are the problem of communicating with a group of people at the same time.

The results of the respondents’ self-analysis as a partner of difficult communication with disabled peers have shown the following data:

- Expressive-speech difficulties are associated with a motionless face, inability to maintain eye contact, systematic movement during the communication process, long speech pauses, quiet speech, problems of correlating the facial expressions to words ($\bar{x}=9.49\pm 1.9$).
- The “treatment – relationship” parameter includes the similar display of suspicion, dislike, arrogance, over-demand, indifference and fear as described above ($\bar{x}=8.48\pm 2.2$).
- Difficulties of social and perceptual interaction are associated with the inability to put oneself in the place of another person. There are specific problems to the sample of peers with disabilities such as the correlation of people’s actions with their personal features, the desire to make conclusions about a person according to his/her appearance, the inability to read the other person’s feelings and intentions, the lack of insight, the inability to demonstrate an understanding of another person’s features ($\bar{x}=9.49\pm 1.9$).

Comparative evaluation of the techniques results has shown accurate differences in the perception of the communicative process with an intact peer and a peer with disabilities on the scales “I am like a partner. Expressive-speech characteristics” ($U = .002$, with $p < 0.01$) and “I am like a partner. Social-perceptual characteristics” ($U = .054$, with $p < 0.01$).

Labunskaya’s (1999) diagnostics technique of the abilities level to adequate understanding of nonverbal behavior development solved the problems of identification, verbalization and regulation of nonverbal behaviour at the levels of personality-dyad-group. The results obtained in the sample correspond mainly to the average and above the average level of nonverbal behavior interpretation.

The greatest difficulty was caused by the task on verbalization of the condition according to the complex of nonverbal characteristics “pose, gestures, facial expressions” ($\bar{x}=9.4\pm 1.5$) and the task on connecting verbal and nonverbal behaviour ($\bar{x}=1.5\pm 5.5$). Interestingly, in the block of tasks for the regulation of relations in the dyad, the cases on the resolution of the situation to the emotionally negative direction caused difficulties ($\bar{x}=11.5\pm 3.7$). The group has successfully solved the tasks for determining the status / specifics of relationships in a dyad (group), imitation coding / decoding of nonverbal various conditions ($\bar{x}=22.2 \pm 3.3$ and $\bar{x}=22.05 \pm 2.8$).

Differentiation of the tasks according to the content of the stimulus material showed accurate difficulties in performing the tasks for determining a partner’s emotional condition of his/her gender according to the parameters “Nonverbal interaction. Connection of nonverbal behavior elements “pose-to-

face" ($U=0.054$, with $p<0.05$), "Regulation of relations in the emotionally positive direction" ($U = .010$, with $p<0.05$) and "Communication of verbal and nonverbal behaviour" ($U = .000$, with $p <0.05$).

The summarized diagnostic results show a principally high level of students-defectologists' communicative competence development: 25% high, 16.6% above average and 58.3% average. They are able to evaluate the expressive-speech, social-perceptual features of communication with disabled partners, including nonverbal characteristics, to identify and predict the problems of relationship-treatment transference, the organization of interaction with them.

The next stage of research is related to the search for dependencies between the level of communicative competence development in work with disabled people and subjective backgrounds. In particular this stage is connected with the need for achievement, empathy, emotional intelligence and personal orientations.

The entering diagnostics of the communication process organization skills by the students and the subjective backgrounds of its success have shown the following results.

The average level of need for achieving goals is typical for respondents ($\bar{X}=12.3\pm 1.2$). They are generally satisfied with their success, pragmatic in achieving goals, workable, conservative, with a realistic level of claims (without any perfectionist display).

The level of empathy development corresponds to the average level ($\bar{X}=23.5\pm 3.3$), which indicates a moderate emotional responsiveness, spontaneous, situational interest in the problems and experiences of another person. The leading ways of empathy in the sample are "emotional adjustment" ($\bar{X}=5.3\pm 0.7$), "personal attitudes" ($\bar{X}=4.0\pm 0.2$) and "confident atmosphere" ($\bar{X}=4.1\pm 0.4$).

The summarized diagnostic results of emotional intelligence show average and high values on the basic scales of the questionnaire. However, interpersonal intelligence in the sample is higher than intrapersonal ($\bar{X}=53.6\pm 5.4$ and $\bar{X}=53.3\pm 3.8$). They are able to reduce the intensity of other people's destructive emotions and manage their emotions, and control destructive emotions ($\bar{X}=28.0\pm 3.1$ and $\bar{X}=18.8\pm 4.9$). The respondents have the skills of meaningful or intuitive adjustment to the emotional state of other people ($\bar{X}=25.5\pm 6.5$). They are able to recognize, identify their emotions, understand the causes, and they are capable of verbal description ($\bar{X}=22.6\pm 6.8$). According to the method, the respondents' control of the external display of their emotions corresponds to the average level ($\bar{X}=14.5\pm 4.4$).

Diagnostics of students' personal orientations has shown a domination of mainly average levels of personal development. The respondents are focused on the present, where the past influences the present, and future goals are connected with activities in the present ($\bar{X}=39.6\pm 12.7$). They often committed rigidly to social pressure and social expectations to which they are conformal ($\bar{X}=46.5 \pm 7.9$).

The respondents accept themselves ($\bar{X}=50.0\pm 9.1$), they are confident of their own significance, provided that there are objective reasons for this ($\bar{X}=53.1\pm 8.9$). They are typical of limited feelings in behaviour ($\bar{X}=45.9\pm 8.3$), responsiveness to the feelings and needs of other people ($\bar{X}=48.3\pm 8.9$),

They are able to accept aggressiveness in interpersonal relationships, although some respondents protect themselves, deny the presence of such feelings and avoid expressing them ($\bar{X}=45.9\pm 9.7$). They are mainly able to develop relationships with people without being charged over the requirements of

expectations and obligations. However, some respondents are focused on superficial contacts ($\bar{x}=47.4\pm 13.5$).

Analyzing the situation, the respondents find it difficult to perceive entirely the picture, to accept the antagonistic dichotomy of life; it is difficult to connect consciously the contradictory life phenomena ($\bar{x}=42.7\pm 2.1$), although to some extent they hold constructive views on human nature ($\bar{x}=46.6\pm 9.8$)

Some students respond to a changing situation without rigid adherence to principles. They are able to use correct judgments when applying general principles. Others are conservative and dogmatic ($\bar{x}=48.5\pm 8.1$).

The search for subjective determinants of the communicative competence development from the field of disabled people support has shown the correlation links of the level of communicative competence development with other diagnostic indicators:

- with the scales of social intelligence evaluation - “understanding of other people’s emotions” ($r=0.442^{**}$), “managing other people’s emotions” ($r=0.332^{**}$), “managing one’s emotions” ($r=0.433^{**}$), “control of expression” ($r=0.341^{**}$), “understanding of one’s emotions” ($r=-0.554^{**}$), “interpersonal emotional intelligence” ($r=-0.686^{**}$), “understanding of emotions” ($r=-0.444^{**}$), “control of emotions” ($r=-0.451^{**}$), “integral indicator of general emotional intelligence” ($r=0.845^{**}$);
- with personal characteristics - “relationship of support (I)” ($r=0.415^{**}$), “relationship of time (Tc)” ($r=0.482^{**}$), “self-acceptance (Sa)” ($r=0.367^{*}$), “ability to intimate contacts (C)” ($r=-0.642^{**}$), “synergy (integrity) (Sy)” ($r=-0.414^{*}$).

Besides there are internal correlations between:

- the scale of “need for achievements” and characteristics of social intelligence “understanding of other people’s emotions” ($r=0.349^{*}$), “managing other people’s emotions” ($r=0.390^{*}$), “interpersonal emotional intelligence” ($r=0.474^{*}$), “managing emotions” ($r=0.381^{*}$), “integral indicator of general emotional intelligence” ($r=0.397^{*}$);
- the scale of “integral indicator of general emotional intelligence” and “existentiality (flexibility of behavior) (Ex)” ($r=0.522^{*}$).

KPI analysis of students’ ideas about the content of the course “Communication in the system of people with disabilities support” was built in three stages: incoming self-assessment of the level of development of communicative competencies, awareness and identification of directions of their development; feedback on the results of the training course; delayed sections of focus groups a week and three months after its completion.

The generalized results of the incoming survey showed that 60% of respondents had been faced with this problem as passive observers (70%) and as teachers-organizers (20%). They are interested in communication skills with a particular child, depending on the type of violation; however, they believe that this skill is unspecialized. Respondents have experience in volunteer work (60%), correctional and developing work (50%), and maternal activities with children with disabilities (10%). Respondents relate to the main areas of training on this issue: consultations with specialists (70%), work with literature (60%), educational resources on the Internet (40%), participation in support groups, clubs for parents of “special children” (20%), social networks (20%).

90% of the students faced with situations of failure in the communication with children with disabilities, which is connected with the disadvantages of owning a specific technology of communication with specific variants of disturbed development (80%), lack of experience (80%), lack of knowledge of methods for organizing communicative interaction (60%), problems with the system vision of work in support of “special children” (40%) and psychological unpreparedness (40%).

All students plan to develop sign, alternative communication skills at levels ranging from basic situational communication (60%) to professional support (50%), including work as an interpreter or teaching of alternative/additional communication skills children with disabilities (10%).

Semantic differential of perception of the situation “organization of communication with people with disabilities” showed the predominance of affective characteristics of perception of relations ($\bar{X}=4.62\pm 0.76$), which reflects an optimistic vision, the predominance of positive emotions and feelings in the structure of experiences, however, some respondents are more realistic and more critical in assessing the situation of interactions with people with disabilities. Semantic content, saturation of experiences in the sample of students ($\bar{X}=4.46\pm 0.35$) shows its predominantly positive character, and correlate with a sense of inner freedom, the lack of external factors that can block the satisfaction of urgent needs, motivational potential, a sense of space for self-realization in this area of communication.

The dynamic characteristics of the perception of relations with people with disabilities (activity) are presented at the average level ($\bar{X}=4.1\pm 0.75$), however, the standard deviation indicator reflects the heterogeneity of results, the presence of respondents with severe asthenic reactions to emotional stress, passivity, contemplation, inertia and a feeling of lack of strength and energy.

Comprehension of the relationships with people with disabilities in the perception of students is relatively clear, the relationship is ordered, predictable, structured and controlled (3.92 ± 0.58). The structure of representation is logical, motivations of participants are clear, emotional reactions are explainable, etc. The sense of interconnection between events and at the same time the completeness of each of them correlates with the rational and analytical position of respondents, consistency of motives, as well as the perception of the world as a relatively stable and safe.

The factor of perceptibility ($\bar{X}=3.88\pm 0.87$) of representations reflects intellectual and emotional involvement of respondents in the system of relations with people with disabilities, involvement in current events, feelings of being an active participant in the communication process.

Subjective assessment of readiness for the organization of communication in the system of support of children with disabilities in the educational process is mainly at the average level ($\bar{X}=4.8\pm 2.1$). Educators' communication skills with children with disabilities from the point of view of respondents will optimize the educational process (100%), get support from parents (30%) and education authorities (30%). 8% of respondents independently improved their skills in this field of teaching and they plan to use this knowledge in their work.

The results of the incoming survey of students, performance of diagnostic techniques by them, description of cases of problem situations in the organization of communication with people with disabilities were considered as a material for analysis, search for group and individual areas of development of communicative competencies, building a plan of developing work in this area.

At the end of the educational course “Communication in the system of support of people with disabilities” students were offered a feedback questionnaire, a review test and case studies to solve the problems of communicative interaction.

The feedback questionnaire concerned the issues of compliance with the objectives of the program and the goals of their professional development, the effectiveness of training methods, training conditions, and the most interesting areas of training in this program. According to 83% of students, they have achieved 100% of their learning goals, and all students plan to apply their skills in practice. 95% of students suggest that they have gained new knowledge in the field of communication with children with disabilities during the educational course ($\bar{x}=8.9\pm 0.4$) and they can successfully apply it in their professional activities ($\bar{x}=9.5\pm 0.2$). 100% of respondents believe that the competencies presented in this educational course are constantly necessary and the content of the course will contribute to their successful work with children with disabilities. The percentage of respondents planning to directly use new knowledge and skills in their work corresponded to 100%. 83% of students noted that they were able to apply the knowledge/skills offered in the educational course during the week, and they used such individual topics as dactyl and sign language immediately after the classroom sessions.

Students noted that their expectations were met (100%) and they have decided how to apply new knowledge/skills in the workplace (100%), they have the necessary resources for it (100%). The level of their skills in communication with people with disabilities has increased significantly (100%). From their point of view, it is associated with the completion of the educational course “Communication in the system of support for people with disabilities”. Particularly, the level of knowledge/skills has increased in the following areas: “vision of the system of work on the support of “special children” (56%); “knowledge of methods of organization of communicative interaction” (46%); “level of introduction of specific communication technologies” (62%); “general skills of gesture/alternative communication” (85%); “use of specific tools of gesture/alternative communication” (92%); “psychological readiness to organization of communication with children with disabilities” (100%).

Delayed KPI assessment of focus group was used as a tool for its effectiveness and work on the content of the curriculum “Communication in the system of support of persons with disabilities” at the following levels: response to training, acquired knowledge and skills, systematic application of acquired knowledge in practice, behavior change, the degree of achievement of the intended results (Skuratovskaya & Klimova, 2018). The focus group included a sample of 7 students trained in this course and directly working with children with disabilities.

Three samples of the focus group feedback (immediately, a week and three months after the training course) showed the following results (Kendall’s concordance coefficient is 63.2 – 76.7, with a significance level of $p<0.05$).

The overall impression of the course “Communication in the support system for people with disabilities” remained at a high level ($\bar{x}=8.9\pm 0.7$). In assessing the content of the course, students consider that the most valuable topics related to the conceptual basis of communication with people with disabilities and socio-humanitarian technologies of dactyl, gesture and alternative communication. The module “Information media resources accompanied by participants of the educational process” from the point of view of respondents requires amendments in the field of information competence for use in their

professional activities. Assessments on the relevance of the programme objectives, content, learning conditions and material availability have increased to 100%, which may be explained by the delay in the evaluation and orientation of students to subjective impressions. On the other hand, the optimistic forecast of the course impact on the professional success was replaced by more realistic views on the role of teaching communicative competence skills in the educational environment and the need for constant practice, improving their skills in this area, including in the form of distance courses. Answering the question “What exactly do you consider the result of training in this course in your behavior at work?”, students note the possibility of a systematic vision of the communicative process and the willingness to apply their skills in practice. In the long term, students expect to improve the skills of effective organization and management of the communication process with different categories of people with disabilities.

7. Conclusion

Experimental work has shown that mainly above average and high level of communicative competence development is characteristic for future defectologists. They assess their skills realistically, they are able to identify, verbalize and regulate behaviour at the personality-dyad-group levels, and they consciously predict the process of communication with disabled people.

The level of communicative competence development is predictably connected with the development of emotional intelligence. However, the connections with personal characteristics of a self-actualizing personality allow us to identify areas of self-development for students oriented to support people with disabilities.

Using the key learning performance indicators (KPI) as a tool for evaluating, according to the program “Communication in the system of people with disabilities support”, has allowed a sensible approach to solving the tasks of professional self-development, including the direction of assessment and design of a student’s individual vocational training path.

Working out the model of “delayed assessment of learning effectiveness” with the help of focus groups provides a realistic assessment of the training content of the academic discipline, the demand for knowledge in practice and material for improving students’ training in communication management with disabled people.

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