

Students' Adaptation in the Social and Cultural Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

Modern scientific literature views issues on adaptation based on various aspects: biological, medical, pedagogical, sociological, cybernetic, interdisciplinary, etc. The given article is devoted to the analysis of the problem of adaptation as social and psychological phenomenon including peculiarities of its functioning in the conditions of social and cultural acceleration (dynamics). The analysis of empirical data on the results of research of adaptation processes of students of the chosen higher educational institution has been given here combined with comparative analysis of adaptability of foreign and local students of the first year of academic study.

KEYWORDS

adaptation, identification, self-identification, social dynamics, resistance, the level of adaptability

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1. Introduction

Modern stage of the development of human society gains new shapes and becomes more complicated. Its complication is characterized by the increase in the significance of self-organization and nonlinearity of social changes. Openness, virtualization of social reality, unlimited and uncontrollable technologization of vital processes, exponential growth of migration flows, etc. generate risks and threats which the mankind has not faced until recently.

Recently philosophers, scientists of various branches of knowledge and the directions of science discuss a problem of the future for the mankind with a big concern including an opportunity and ability of the certain individual to adapt to

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the unpredictable future. The most famous modern scientific fantast futurologist Stanislaw Lem claimed that the fast change of vital conditions caused by acceleration had to be one of the factors destroying the importance of customs and norms in the modern world: "Any technology, practically speaking, just proceeds natural, congenital aspiration of all living things to dominate over environment or, at least, to submit to it in the fight for existence ...", but unlike the natural processes balanced in time according to S. Lem, the avalanche speed of technological progress acts as the real threat for entropy and loss of a homeostasis – balance of forces of the person and machines, the speed of changes and identity of constancy (Lem, 1996). It is possible to assume that the accelerated obsolescence of experience under the influence of achievements of technical progress will cause many problems connected with social and psychological adaptation and identification of the person with new experience.

Another researcher of the present O. McWard also speaks about a problem of the accelerated obsolescence of experience or about "tachogenic extremeity to the world" with a big alarm: " it is called 'tachogenic' because it is a result of the increasing speed (from Greek tachos - speed) of the changes undergone by modern reality ..." (McWard, 2003). Eschatological moods (fear of the future) actualize a problem of a rescue from the future. Saving the status quo and the guarantee in some protection against the approaching dangers – whether it will concern environmental disasters, economic crises, emergence of new unemployment, etc. – they are urgent needs of the modern person. "... everybody has a feeling of becoming worse ..." (Groys, 2014).

The transformations connected with constantly increasing speed of the changes advancing natural opportunities of their comprehension and interiorization demand not only a scientific reflection to this problem, but also development of mechanisms of adaptation to them. E. Toffler who is the one of the first people to set such an objective stated: "In order to survive and prevent what we all call 'future shock', the individual has to become infinitely adapted and knowing than ever earlier. He has to look for absolutely new ways to drop an anchor because all old roots – religion, nation, community, family or profession – are already unsteady under a storm impact of force of acceleration" (Toffler, 2002).

Having emphasized the significance of modern adaptation within a framework of philosophic matter, it is necessary to focus attention on the students' adaptation as a specific form of human adaptation in global measures.

Modern researchers claim the significance of social adaptation of students studying abroad (Forbush and Foucault-Welles, 2016; Glass , Gómez, Urzua, 2014).

2. Methodology

When As it has been stated above, the scientific reflection of the problem of adaptation of the person to the changes having the avalanche character is very urgent and demands identification of level of its study. First of all, the scientific reflection of this problem has to have a macro-research character. Thus, the processes happening at the microlevel (whether it can be a small social group, the organization or the individual), substantially depend on the dynamics of social processes at the macrolevel. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider



the changes happening at the microlevel since the norms, rules, values, individual experience are born and cultivated in concrete social community.

These facts predetermine adaptability / non-adaptability of the individual, his/her reaction to the social dynamics. Therefore, the objective set by E. Toffler – to teach the person to adapt to the changing conditions – has never been so serious and urgent as now.

This article is devoted to the issue of social and psychological adaptation of the studentship as a social and professional group which undergoes the influence of social and cultural dynamics.

From theoretical positions adaptation as a scientific category was considered in the works of the Russian and foreign authors who presented semantic, structural analysis of this concept including its functions. Various theoretical aspects of the problem of social adaptation of the personality were considered by E. Toffler, U. Thomas, F. Znanetsky, G. Selye, X. Hartman,

L. Phillips, J. Piaget, etc.

Empirical level of the research of social adaptation was formed and developed under the influence of works of the famous sociologists F. Znanetsky, U. Thomas, P. Shtompke.

The phenomenon of social and psychological adaptation of the personality was studied by the Russian scientists and is presented in the works of researchers Yu.A. Aleksandrovsky,

D.A. Andreyeva, S.D. Artyomov, A.A. Bogdanov, A.A. Zhuravlev, B.F. Lomov, A.N. Rosenberg, etc. Problems of classification of social adaptation of the personality were deeply investigated in the works of A.A. Nalchadzhyan. He presented the main types and kinds of social adaptation of the personality. The theoretical model of social adaptation of the personality within the systemic and activity based approaches is offered by M.V. Romm. Procedural aspects of social adaptation of the personality are presented in the works of F.Z. Meerson, L.D. Stolyarenko, etc. Various scientists - F.B. Berezin, O I. Zotova, L.V. Korel, I.K. Kryazheva, V.A. Labunskaya, T.A. Nemchin deeply investigated factors and criteria of efficiency of the process of social adaptation of the personality.

Philosophical and methodological aspects of social adaptation of groups are presented in researches of V.Yu. Vereshchagin, I.D. Kalaykov, P.I. Tsaregorodtsev and other scientists. Social and psychological aspects of adaptation has become an object of research of such psychologists as A.A. Bodalev, G.A. Ball, L.P. Grimak, A.N. Leontyev, S.L. Rubenstein, etc. Pedagogical aspects of adaptation have been considered in the works of N.N. Berezovina, O.L. Berak, V.V. Davydova, N.F. Talyzina and many other researchers.

Thus, it should be noted that social and psychological adaptation of the personality as a scientific category has not been deprived of attention by scientists. However, despite numerous theoretical and empirical researches, this problem remains relevant and demands further research. Consequently, unlike biological, social and psychological aspect adaptation is substantially accompanied by the processes of identification of the individual, his/her

comprehension and interiorization of rapid social and other changes which it faces.

The object of the given research is studentship as a general category. The choice of such an object is determined by the following factors: first, as it has been already stated above, this social group reacts more dynamically to changes of social norms, requirements, etc. Therefore, there is a need of development of adequate mechanisms of assimilation, interiorization of norms of the social environment in which adaptation process proceeds. Secondly, the studentship is considered to be a provider by means of which outdated social experience is crucially comprehended and dynamically updated. Therefore, process of socialization has to contain a certain status quo of preservation of the positive experience which was earlier preserved by the mankind and the approaching technical revolution which would reject such an experience. Important circumstance of the choice of this group as an object of research was determined by the following: the number of contacts between representatives of various cultures constantly increases in the modern conditions of globalization. These contacts cover wide spheres of social life — from contacts at the domestic level to political, economic, cultural and logical, professional, etc.

The most numerous social subjects of contacts and exchanges from the point of view of educational and professional activity are the students. The flow of the Russian students who are trained in foreign higher education institutions as well as the foreign students who are trained in the Russian higher education institutions has been increased. The increasing interest in foreign students has caused various researches devoted to a problem of social adaptation both in Russia and other countries.

Empirical base of our research is presented by

F.A. Vadutova, L.I. Kabanova, G.I. Shkatova entitled “Assessment and forecasting of adaptation of foreign students to training conditions in the Russian higher educational institutions” (2010), L.T. Mazitova “Social adaptation of foreign students on the example of higher educational institutions of Bashkortostan” (2002), A.P. Kormilitsina “Management of process of adaptation of foreign students in new economic conditions” (1996), V.N. Petrova of “Peculiarities of adaptation of foreign students” (2009), T.R. Rakhimova “Peculiarities of training of foreign students in the Russian higher educational institutions and the direction of their development” (2011), I.A. Savchenko “The foreign student in Russia: conditions and barriers of integration” (2010), G.E. Shevelyov, L.I. Kabanova, E.V. Mikhilchenko “Informational system for assessment of adaptation of foreign students” (2012), etc.

It must be stated that problems of adaptation of the Russian and foreign students is legally presented at least in two regulatory documents: “Strategy of 2020” and in the State Program of the Russian Federation “Development of education for the period of 2013 – 2020”.

Basic Terminology

In our research we consider adaptation in the context of socialization of the personality, process, active and creative adaptation of students to conditions of the social environment, in particular to conditions of training and upbringing in the educational institution. We will note that the concept of adaptation and, in



particular, social and professional adaptation in scientific literature has no accurate, unambiguous interpretation.

In our research under adaptation of the student it is necessary to understand the process of bringing key parameters of his social and personal characteristics into compliance of the condition of dynamic balance with new conditions of the internal aspect of the environment of HEI (Higher Educational Institution) as an external factor in relation to the student. Concerning adaptation we mean not only functioning, interrelation of the personality with a wide range of external circumstances, but also development of the student, his self-development. It is obvious that adaptation has to be considered from two aspects: adaptation of the personality to new external environment and adaptation as formation of his/her new qualities on this basis.

For understanding of intrinsic characteristics of the process of adaptation we have identified the following functions: individual and psychological, social, professional and didactic. These functions of the process of adaptation are determined by its structure.

The analysis of scientific literature, identification of the factors having the direct impact on adaptation processes and our experience on a problem of adaptation of students to educational and creative activity have allowed defining the following general structure of the process of adaptation to training in higher educational institution:

- individual and psychological component within which we consider the difficulties at the first stages of entry into new conditions of higher educational institution, their communicative potential and presence of creative potential;
- social component is connected with the readiness of students for social activity, formation of value-based orientations including connections with social and demographic characteristics as the objective factors influencing adaptation process;
- cognitive component is determined by the level of formation of educational and cognitive skills of students and understanding of the need in their further development as bases of educational activity, the analysis of school difficulties and their influences on success of training in higher educational institution;
- professional component characterizing motives and circumstances of the choice by entrants of higher educational institutions and specialty, existence of clear comprehension of training conditions in higher educational institution, the analysis of the first observations and impressions gained at the lessons.

Empirical observations, regular studies of the first-year students show that not all of the students of the first year of training can quickly, successfully and independently join the educational environment of higher educational institution and, therefore, cope with new aspects, get rid of negative perception of reality and feel internal motivation for professional growth.

The contradiction between the need in creation of adequate conditions for adaptation of students and tendencies of low level of adaptability of students revealed by the previous researches to function in the new environment actualizes this research the purpose of which is study, identification of the factors influencing adaptation processes of the first-year students and the directions of work providing successful adaptation of students to educational and creative activity.

Levels of adaptability

The following indicators have been chosen for this research: conscious and independent decision making concerning entering any higher educational institution and motives of students to build and develop professional career according to the profession to get, specialties; ideas of students on norms and rules of the institute and their interiorization; academic success on subjects and disciplines; active participation in creative life of the institute and work in students' scientific society.

In accordance with these indicators we have identified three levels of adaptability:

1. High degree of adaptability of students which is characterized by conscious and independent decision making concerning entering any higher educational institution and motives of students to build and develop professional career according to the profession, specialties to get; successful entry into the social environment of professional teacher training institute (acceptance of norms, requirements which were developed in higher educational institution and educational groups), academic success on subjects and initial stage of study in higher educational institution, active participation in creative life and work in scientific student's organization;

2. The medium level of adaptability of students which is characterized by insufficiently clear ideas concerning norms and requirements of higher educational institution, absence of accurate professional preferences, academic success on subjects, insufficiently active participation in creative life, vague motives on participation in research activity, difficulties in acquisition of general educating values;

3. Low level of adaptability of students is characterized by unconscious choice of higher educational institution and specialty, poorly developed general educating abilities, weak readiness at school, rejection of norms and values of the educational environment, indifferent attitude to creative and professional development and self-development.

Conclusion

The 2011 report of the United Nations on the state of volunteerism in the world underlines that volunteering is an important instrument for the development of society: it is an instrument of social policy, it is a means of "fighting poverty by increasing social, human, natural, physical and political potential," a means of overcoming social exclusion, and a means of cohesion of local communities through the creation of mutual trust.

Thus, we can conclude that volunteering is of particular importance in the social sphere. Mostly volunteering is characterized as an activity. However, the key emphasis is either on the characteristics of these activities, on its contents, forms and methods, or on the objectives and results. Scientists note that the presence of such qualities as altruism, empathy, diligence, charity, benevolence and humane treatment of people are not only important for volunteering, but they are also formed during its process.

Social and psychological readiness for volunteer activities is a complex, integral new formation providing unity and coherence levels of the personality and forms of subjective experience to successfully complete this activity (G.I. Efremova, A.A. Shagurova, I.A. Bochkovskaya, 2015).

3. Base for the empirical research



During the last ten years (2006 - 2016) within the framework of monitoring activity of Professional Pedagogical Institute of Chelyabinsk State Pedagogical University (further PPI of CSPU) we have been organizing the long term study of adaptation processes of first-year students (B.A.) for the purpose of information support for the quality management of education. One of the important problems of quality management of professional education is creation of conditions for adaptation to educational and creative activity of the entrants of the the university. Research is conducted amongst first-year students of full-time department in all directions of training (continuous type of selection, coverage is 100 per cent). In the period of 2015 – 2016 academic year 11 foreign students from the People's Republic of China have entered the University for the First Course who are also included in the research selection. Success of their training will depend substantially on the conditions created in higher educational institution in the course of their adaptation.

4. Research hypothesis and stages of the research

This research is based on the fact that in the development of the identity of a future specialist (whether foreign or local students) a special role is played by the initial stage of training in higher educational institution. Its complexity consists in reorganization of all system of value-based and informative aspects of the personality of the student, development of new ways of cognitive activity and formation of certain types and forms of interpersonal communications and relations. The main characteristic of this stage is the process of adaptation of students to the conditions of the HEI.

Adaptation to new conditions of training is a continuous dynamic multiple-factor process causing not only an integration of the personality of the student into new educational and educational system, new system of requirements and control, society (social environment), new collective, new conditions of activity, but also his personal, professional development and self-realization.

Point of bifurcation of the process of adaptation of the student is change of the surrounding environment which is characterized by both structural and functional components. “Yesterday's” school pupils face the unusual conditions of the organization of teaching and educational process, new forms and methods of educational activity, new subjects differing from school both organizationally and methodically. Therefore, students of the first year of training in higher educational institution, have to accustom to a new role in a rather short period of time. As for foreign students, development of a new role by them will be complicated by the number of factors of cross-cultural character to be considered in the course of adaptation.

Effective adaptation of first-year students defines motivation, orientation and nature of educational activity in many respects at the following years to study including psychological comfort, moral satisfaction and training in higher educational institution. Their fast and successful adaptation to the life of educational institution is a guarantee of success of mastering a profession by them that is the aim of their entering the educational institution.

Acceleration of processes of adaptation of first-year students to new way of life and activity, research of the difficulties arising in educational activity at the initial stage of training including identification of psychological and pedagogical

conditions of optimization of this process are considered to be extremely important objectives of our research.

5. Methods of the research

The following methods have been used in our research: a questionnaire survey of the first-year Russian students of higher educational institution and their teachers, and also the standardized interview conducted among foreign students. The technology of carrying out the research is presented below:

1. The tools (the questionnaire, the form for the interview) have been elaborated on the basis of research methodology (the goal, objectives, object, subject, system analysis of object of research (hypothetical model), hypotheses, interpretation of concepts, etc.). The questionnaire and the form for the interview are based on the cluster approach. Each cluster contains system of the questions allowing checking hypotheses, revealing the tendencies characterizing research indicators, and also the factors influencing adaptation processes and adaptability of students.

2. Interviewing of foreign students has been carried out with the use of system of questions coinciding with the questions of the questionnaire for local students. It allowed us carrying out comparative analysis of adaptation processes of local and foreign students to some extent. It is necessary to notice that interviewing has less formalized character, we managed to study influence of factors of cross-cultural character on adaptation of foreign students.

6. Results of the research

Following the above logics, we will characterize some generalized results of the empirical research conducted in PPI CSPU among the students - bachelors of the first course in 2015 – 2016 academic year.

According to the stated above levels of adaptability the respondents were distributed as follows (in percentage):

- High degree of adaptability was demonstrated by 40% (from the general sample) of Russians. They are characterized by: steady understanding and independence in making decision on the choice of specialty and entering the higher educational institution; steady motives to build and develop professional career according to the profession, specialties to get; successful entry into the social environment of higher educational institution (acceptance of norms, values based on the requirements developed in higher educational institution and educational group); academic success at school and at the initial stage of the study in higher educational institution, active participation in creative life and work of scientific student's organization; stability of motives for development of individual abilities and interests, and, in general, steady social position. Stability of a living position and an optimistic view on the future characterized free judgments of respondents when answering open questions of the questionnaire.

(Examples of judgments of respondents: "I think that the mankind will be reasonable and won't allow a situation of self-destruction", "Everyone must take care of self-preservation and preservation of surrounding reality", "The attempts



made by our government on fight against extremism and the prevention of other modern threats help me to look forward with optimism”. Data and other judgments of respondents demonstrate that global events and changes concern them, however, their feeling of optimism is based on common sense of all people including of their own. Therefore, they have expressed steady desire to self-development and participation in socially significant actions of creative character when giving answers to questions of the questionnaire.

As for the foreign students (the People's Republic of China - PRC) who entered research sample, only 1 of 11 students has a high degree of adaptability. However, in comparison with the Russian students his mindset is more praxiological that proves the high level of adaptability of this respondent which is characterized by steady motivation of receiving the Russian education (in his opinion, this education is prestigious in China), steady motivation to build professional career according to the chosen specialty (such opportunity in China is available), steady motivation to improve the knowledge of Russian, adoption of rules, norms, requirements of higher educational institution. The factors connected with the influence of world global processes to a lesser extent exert impact on adaptation of this respondent, though he considers cooperation of Russia and China in the field of education as the important condition allowing the Chinese students including him successfully adapting to educational and creative activity of the Russian higher educational institution.

- Also 40% of Russian students and 3 persons out of 11 Chinese students have a medium degree of adaptability. This set of respondents is characterized by insufficiently clear ideas of norms and requirements of higher educational institution, absence of accurate professional preferences, academic success on subjects, insufficiently active participation in creative life vague motives of participation in research activity, difficulties in acquisition of general education values. The comparative analysis of the descriptors characterizing this level of adaptability of students of Russian and Chinese students allows stating some differences, for example, difficulties in acquisition of training material. The Russian students have difficulty in study that is more connected with complexity of training material, new terminology, increased requirements to the level of acquisition of training material compared to the school. Chinese students along with the aforesaid difficulties, have another problem as knowledge of Russian, though one of the dominating factors influencing the choice of the Russian education by the Chinese students was their desire to learn advanced Russian.

Another example concerns the following: motives of participation in research activity being weak, but demonstrated by all Russian students having the same level of adaptability. Whereas, among the Chinese students only one of three students has this level of adaptability. This student shows the desire to perform research works within scientific organization of students.

- About 20% of Russian students and 7 out of 11 (63.6%) Chinese students have conditionally low level of adaptability. This category of respondents are characterized by such descriptors as the unconscious choice of higher educational institution and specialty, poorly developed general educational abilities, weak readiness for the HEI gained at school (Chinese students are characterized by the descriptors connected with another contents of education, mastered educational programs), rejection of norms and values of the

educational environment, indifferent relation to both creative, professional development and self-development.

The percentage ratio of this set of respondents being not in favor of the Chinese students allows stating the fact that adaptation to the social environment of HEI of the most of the Chinese students takes place with certain difficulties. The following factors which are negatively influencing adaptability of the Chinese students can be: weak knowledge of Russian, incomplete understanding of conditions of training and requirements to study in the Russian higher educational institutions, the wrong choice of specialty, communicative problems, complexity of lecture material, individual and personal qualities (insufficiently developed cognitive abilities, the locus of self-check is lowered).

7. Discussions and challenges

In general, significant differences of the process of adaptation between the Russian and Chinese first-year students of PPI CSPU and factors influencing them have not been noticed. However, adaptation and integration of the Chinese students is more connected with the need in short terms interiorization of traditions and norms of the Russian and regional culture, mastering and improving knowledge of Russian.

In general, it is possible to state the following:

- The problem of adaptation of the person in modern conditions of social and cultural dynamics demands a scientific reflection at all levels (macro - and micro levels, theoretical and empirical).
- Research of adaptation processes of studentship as social and professional stratum is dictated by its features and abilities to quickly react to social changes in the world. The students are the most numerous social subjects of contacts and exchanges in the globalized world from the point of view of educational and professional activity.
- As a result of research the factors having impact on adaptation processes of students of the first year of higher educational institution have been identified. They include: 1) factors of subjective character (age, level of basic education and readiness for entering a higher educational institution, motives of choice of profession and specialty, the relation to the chosen profession, experience of entry into new collective, level of development of intelligence, orientation of the personality (mindset, interests, requirements, motivation, moral qualities, value-based orientations), cognitive abilities, creative potential); 2) objective factors (the size of the group, standard system of the group, requirement of higher educational institution, existence of the institute of coaching (tutoring), professionalism of teachers, ethical standards, existence of conditions for creative development, mode (combination of study, rest, sport and physical culture), social status and material welfare of a family, education of parents).

8. Conclusion

Having analyzed the status quo of the issue connected with the adaptation processes we came to various conclusions. We have identified the number of factors having a favorable influence on adaptation of first-year students and their integration into educational space of higher educational institution: uniformity of value-based orientations and needs of students as conditions of



formation of personal professionally important qualities of future bachelors and a social and psychological basis of “subject to subject” relations; need of respondents in self-realization, readiness for extracurricular and creative life, desire to actively participate in activities for various directions; positive impressions about the organization and participation in adaptation meetings (one of the traditions of higher educational institution is the organization of outdoor adaptation meetings of students of the first year students before the beginning of academic year) and the first classroom lessons.

- In the conditions of the cross-cultural relations in the world educational space Russia plays an important role. For this purpose it is necessary to spread the Russian language in the donor countries connected with labor and educational migrants, in particular, in the Eurasian region. Our research proves that in the process of adaptation and integration of foreign students into educational space of higher educational institution the knowledge of Russian is considered to be a dominating factor providing success of adaptation.

- Our supposition stating that the fast change of vital conditions caused by acceleration of social processes in the conditions of the scientific and technological revolutions destroying the importance of customs and norms in the modern world will have a considerable impact on the process of adaptation of students was partially confirmed.

This research has identified only one of the possible issues connected with the process of adaptation of both foreign and local students in the conditions of social and cultural dynamics and cannot be purely restricted to the major and single linguistic barriers to occur in the stated above process.

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