

Socio-Psychological Adaptation of First-Year University Students

Adaptación socio-psicológica de estudiantes universitarios de primer año

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ABSTRACT:

This paper covers on the issue of social and psychological adaptation of first-year university students. The levels of learning are described. The concept defining the personality is considered. The psychological, pedagogical and sociological factors that influence the adaptation of students are described. The features of adolescence are shown. The basic criteria of the student's adaptability in the university are specified. The difficulties encountered during the adaptation of students in the university are described. Three stages of stress syndrome are described. The models of adaptation of first-year students in higher education are considered, and characteristics of objective and subjective signs of students' disadaptation at the university are given. The indicators of successful, as well as indicators of low social adaptation of first-year students in higher education are described. The conditions of psychological and pedagogical support of students with the purpose of their successful social and psychological adaptation are presented.

Keywords: adaptation, social and psychological adaptation of students, adaptability, maladjustment of personality, stress.

RESUMEN:

Este trabajo cubre el tema de la adaptación social y psicológica de los estudiantes universitarios de primer año. Se describen los niveles de aprendizaje. Se considera el concepto que define la personalidad. Se describen los factores psicológicos, pedagógicos y sociológicos que influyen en la adaptación de los estudiantes. Se muestran las características de la adolescencia. Se especifican los criterios básicos de la adaptabilidad del estudiante en la Universidad. Las dificultades encontradas durante la adaptación de estudiantes en la Universidad se describen. Tres etapas del síndrome de la tensión se describen. Se consideran los modelos de adaptación de los estudiantes de primer año de educación superior, y se dan las características de los signos objetivos y subjetivos de la desadaptación de los estudiantes en la Universidad. Se describen los indicadores de éxito, así como indicadores de baja adaptación social de los estudiantes de primer año de educación superior. Se presentan las condiciones de apoyo psicológico y pedagógico de los estudiantes con el propósito de su exitosa adaptación social y psicológica.

Palabras clave: adaptación, adaptación social y

1. Introduction

Human life is a continuous adaptation to the conditions of an equally continuously changing environment, it is the development of new forms of behavior aimed at achieving certain goals; it is a diverse teaching. Learning can occur at different levels:

1. Developing reactive behavior;
2. Operant behavior;
3. Cognitive learning;
4. Conceptual behavior.

In the student age the most expressed are various forms of cognitive learning (Stolyarenko 2003).

Nowadays, the problem of socio-psychological adaptation of first-year students in higher education remains extremely topical. Its essence is defined by psychological, communicative, production, legal features of human interaction with the surrounding reality.

Scientists all over the world have studied the problem of adaptation at different times. Nowadays there is a large accumulated base of research by foreign (Freud, Rogers, Frankl, Selye, Hartman and others) and Russian scientists (Anokhin, Ananiev, Bodalev, Lagerev, Leontiev, Petrovsky and others). That is dedicated to the socio-psychological work in the adaptation of individual.

The basic criterion for the successful formation of university students and their manifestation of interest in chosen profession is blocking of internal discomfort and the opportunity of learning outside the conflict zone. Every first-year student goes through the adaptation process.

In the scientific and pedagogical literature, adaptation is a multidimensional and multifaceted concept. According to Udaltsova and Avcherchenko, adaptation should be considered as a process of adjustment of the organism (physiological adaptation) or personality (psychological adaptation) to a change in the environment. If we are talking about building new interpersonal relationships, then social and psychological adaptation is implied (Udaltsova and Avchechenko, 2001).

Adaptation is a set of psychological and physiological reactions of the organism underlying its adaptation to the present conditions and aimed at preserving the relative constancy of its internal environment in which the social interaction of the person with social groups and social environment happens.

Personality is an integral concept. Personality is characterized as a system of human relationships with the surrounding reality. In the analysis system, one can consider an infinite number of personality relations to various objects of reality, but in any particular action considered, all these relationships always remain personal (Slastenin and Kashirin 2007).

The concept defining the personality is, first of all, the attitude towards people, which means at the same time mutual relations. At this point, the subjective attitude reveals its objectivity, and the individual-psychological is socio-psychological. Human relations are selective primarily in the emotional and value-related sense. They represent a conscious psychological connection with the all-round aspects of reality, expressed in actions that are originated and formed in the processes of the individual's activity (Myasishchev 1965).

Ananiev notes that student age is a sensitive period for the development of basic sociogenic human potentialities. Higher education contributes to the development of student's personality (Ananyev 1977).

According to Lagerev, student adaptation in universities is an intense, dynamic and complex life

process, in which a person acquires the skills necessary to meet the requirements asked for in the process of training and studying in higher education institutions (Lagerev 1991).

2. Methods

Adaptation is a complex, multi-level process that involves a set of already existing knowledge and skills of students, and puts them in line with new objectives to be actualized in the new environment of a higher education institution. The learning success of first-year university students greatly depends on how they were able to adapt to internal and external conditions of life (Ivashova, Dukhina, Tarasova, Kalugina and Taranova, 2014).

In the course of adaptation, students undergo a change in the psychophysical and psychological personality properties. At this stage, a student enters a new communication environment. In the course of communication, the personality adapts to certain behavioral properties, in particular, to social requirements, control by faculty and communication with peers. In turn, communication is one of the leading factors in the personality adaptation. From there, the development of students' communicative skills begins to optimize communication with peers and teachers.

The factors that affect the adaptation of students include psychological, pedagogical and sociological.

Psychological factors include: intellect, position in the group, personal adaptive potential. Pedagogical factors include: organization of the learning environment, the level of pedagogical skill of teachers. Sociological factors include: age, social origin of the student, type of educational institution completed.

As Erickson notes, adolescence is built around identity crisis, which consists of a series of social and individual personal choices, identities and self-determination (Erikson 1993).

One of the main tasks of higher education institutions is to develop the basic algorithm for the solution of this important problem. It is necessary to solve the problem how a person just out of school can overcome the contradiction between his/her beliefs and the brand new requirements in higher education.

Thus, undisputed is the fact that the first-year students need the support of professionals with psychological knowledge. In our view, such assistance should be provided through a special psychological service of the university.

Psychosocial support in the adaptation of first-year students of the university is a process of bringing social and personality traits of students in the state of dynamic compliance with the conditions of higher school environment.

Service staff can provide the most complete information about the status of each first year student, designate his/her social and psychological problems that have arisen in the student society and in more detail provide assistance in their solution. The first work of psychological service should be based on supporting personal and professional formation of the student, in order to give him/her a more comfortable environment for acquiring knowledge in the period of adaptation.

In our opinion, in order to support first-year students in their adaptation to the higher school, it is necessary to organize work with the teachers.

Teaching staff need to implement an individual approach to training and education of first-year students to explore their particular age, to get acquainted with the psychological aspects of training activities.

An important success factor of the students' adaptation is the work with their parents. The work of psychological service must assume both individual communications with parents and interaction at parent-teacher conferences. Every parent should be aware of the psychological state of his/her children during the adaptation period of study at the university. Parents are

given recommendations to assist in difficult moments.

Thus, psychological and pedagogical support of first-year students with a view to their successful social and psychological adaptation in higher school is a complex process, which involves almost the entire student's environment, and the authors believe the problem will be solved under the following conditions:

1. Increasing learning motivation;
 2. Studying individual psychological characteristics of personality;
 3. Developing communication skills;
 4. Improving self-regulation skills in connection with emotional states;
 5. Enhancing team building.
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3. The results of the study

The greatest adaptive effect, which shows a high level of adaptation of 75%, is ensured via the application of a system of strategies aimed at active and simultaneous self-change and the change of external environment. The moderate result of 25% is conditioned by external adaptation of first-year students to the educational sphere, which does not contribute to intrapersonal changes in students, and by alternative models of their behavior.

There are two models of adaptation for first-year students:

1. Model 1 is the expectation of external and intrapersonal changes.
2. Model 2 is leaving the environment by a student. This low degree of adaptation of first-year students, due to a pronounced negative effect in adaptation, is manifested, as a rule, in their refusal to interact with the environment and immersion in their inner world.

According to Pavlenok, indicators of successful social adaptation are a high social status of the individual in the environment, his/her psychological satisfaction with this environment in general and with its most important elements. Indicators of low social adaptation, as noted by the scholar, are the transfer of the individual into another social environment, anomie and deviant behavior (Pavlenok 2008).

4. Discussion

Based on the analysis of foreign and domestic scientific research, there are three main adaptability criteria for university students: maturity of value orientations, maturity of cognitive independence, and maturity of communicative abilities.

The main difficulties encountered in the course of adaptation of higher education students that lead to decrease in performance and difficulty in communication, are:

- Motivational uncertainty in choice of future profession;
- Breakage of old stereotypes;
- Lack of moral support from the former school community;
- Underdevelopment of emotional state self-regulation skills;
- Need to care for everyday life;
- Lack of skills of rationalization and optimization of individual work.

This process pushes students to draw attention to them as successful adaptation helps them get away from negative consequences such as stress.

Hans Selye called stress the non-specific response of the body to any stimuli. Stress is the rate of the wear of human body, which accompanies any vital functions. It increases with nervous tension. Stress syndrome goes through three stages:

1. Anxiety reaction during which the body's defenses are mobilized. Its biological meaning is in

the body's aim to quickly acquire additional "emergency" energy in order to provide the maximum conditions for the rapid rescue from impending disaster.

2. Stage of stability that reflects the full adaptation to the stressor. It is important that at this stage the overall body energy usage is less than at the first stage: the body has partially adapted to live under pressure of stressing factor – as if it has tracked it. If the stressful factor proceeds heavily and permanently, the next third stage gradually develops.

3. Stage of exhaustion inevitably arises in case the stressor is strong enough and is present for a long period of time, because the "adaptation energy" – the adaptability of living matter is always finite. At this point, it results in the abrupt reduction in the body's ability to resist external influences. In fact, the basis for the possible development of disease at the clinical level has been established (Selye 1970).

It is important to note that the result of the freshmen adaptation process is the level of adaptability of an individual. There are the following forms of person's adaptability:

1. Internal adaptability, during which functional structures are restructured upon a change of living environment and life activity of young people.

2. External adaptability, during which the freshmen's identities cannot restructure staying independent.

3. Mixed adaptability in which the identity of the freshmen is restructuring to fit the environment (Slastenin and Kashirin 2007).

According to Erich Fromm, a person can adapt to undesirable social phenomena, while such an adaptation "reduces the intellectual and moral qualities of the person" (Fromm 1995).

Particular attention should be paid to personality disadaptation being a particular intrapsychic process and behavior of students, leading to increased difficulties and unpleasant experiences (Dukhina, Tarasova, Taranova, Zorina, Chudnova, 2015).

Students' disadaptation in higher school is characterized by the following features: objective, implying the change of students behavior in the social sphere, as well as the inconsistency of its social functions; subjective, related to psycho-emotional shifts.

Psychological adaptation of students is a diverse phenomenon, which serves as a mechanism for development and self-development, involves personality change, changes in mental activity, norms, values, in all societal spheres (Selye 1970).

5. Conclusion

The development of personality during the period of psychological adaptation is determined by relevant environmental conditions.

Thus, an indicator of psychological adaptation is the psychological comfort of the student's personality, which is a balance of emotions, both positive and negative. An important aspect of effective teaching of students in higher education is the development of new features of training at higher school, as well as the elimination of internal discomfort.

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