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**CONTEMPORARY FAMILY IN SOCIOCULTURAL
ENVIRONMENT**

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Abstract

The author's methodological positions are based on a broad generalization of advanced scientific viewpoints and original research approaches that enable the analysis of family problems in modern sociocultural context. In order to avoid bringing discredit upon the erstwhile socially significant, consolidating ideas of a family through the denial of its social prospects, the author reveals the common achievements in the development of parent-child and family-school relationships in European countries paying special attention to the trends shaping the future of society. The paper takes into consideration the positive influence of globalization on family and parenting; points out the economic, technological, cultural, axiological benefits gained by a family from modern policies regarding family, reproduction and intergenerational ties; investigates new social phenomena that exert a positive influence on the development of parent-child relationships; reveals the ways family and school interact in the context of globalization. The analysis was carried out with respect to the dichotomy of scholarization and familiarization processes, as well as of formality and informality of education. The author also substantiates the need for the modernization of the content and technologies of teacher training to improve parent-child and parent-school relationships which should be embodied in modern concepts of continuing education and development of teacher professional culture. A quality transformation of education process, meeting the need for an active partnership between family and school, the promotion of parent involvement is discussed in the discourse of parental competency. This concept is proposed as the leading factor of successful interaction between family and school.

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1. Introduction

In modern society, where changes in social life occur at a rapid pace, a new generation of children come into the world in an absolutely different cultural environment compared to that in which the generation of their parents were brought up and the bearers of which they still are. For many researchers, like for us, a key determinant of the mutation of family concept is the historical turn of European culture toward globalization followed by sociocultural transformations that has been eroding the national cultural environment through an inflow of universal images often diametrically opposed to the authentic principles of traditional culture.

We believe that the examples of ‘social degradation’ in the discourse of the struggle for the preservation of the traditional family as well as the arguments for a natural transformation of the family in the discourse of postmodern society are based in essence on the same factors which influence both processes despite their difference – they are of economic, technological, political and civil-law nature. No doubt we cannot fully ignore historical background because the interaction between the deterrent force of traditions and modernization forces generates a new vision of family.

2. Problem Statement

In this paper we’re going to discuss global benefits modern society has brought and is still bringing to family and parenting, i.e. to consider a positive context.

3. Research Questions

It is important for us to trace the trend of the rallying of parents around schools not only for the successful promotion of their children in a homogeneous socioeconomic environment but also for the recognition of family as the main actor in education, meeting family’s expectations for educational establishments, professional help and support of parents.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is a scientific interpretation of the status of contemporary family in a broad sociocultural context.

5. Research Methods

Nowadays the study of a broad sociocultural context is a traditional research tool in comparative education. It sets an explicit standard for the interpretation of empirical results, and to a certain extent predetermines the character of theoretical explanations. We are going to discuss the influence of sociocultural context on the development of family relationships, the evolution of the institutions of family and parenting in European region in general and in individual European countries. Thus this study is based on a three-level analysis strategy connecting single, particular and general.

Why do we restrict our analysis to the geographical framework of Europe? Into this concept we introduce Balzac’s, in some measure romantic, idea of ‘the great continental family whose efforts reach toward I know not what mystery of civilization’ (Ortega y Gasset, 2001). We intentionally limit the

comparative framework to European geographical borders focusing on the traditions of school model preserved in Europe.

To analyze the problem in different socioeconomic and sociocultural vectors of the development of European society we use the traditional dichotomy 'risk/benefit' which set the standards for scientific argumentation in human and social sciences.

6. Findings

The growth of economic wellbeing of the individual of modern developed society, a 'First World' citizen, cannot be denied, and it is proved by the possibility to survive alone. At the same time survival values are replaced by self-expression values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), or, in a more familiar interpretation, deficiency needs are replaced by growth needs (Maslow, 1954). This means that in a significant part of the world which we are focusing on the norms of industrial society with its pursuit of achievements through discipline and duty give place to a broader freedom of individual choice of life styles and self-expression. The shift from materialistic values of physical and economic safety to post-materialistic values of individual self-expression and quality of life is the most fully documented aspect of modernity.

This move on the value axes is followed by the changes which directly concern family. For instance, postindustrial economy with its digital dominant and virtualization generates specific forms of family recruiting, i.e. the selection of a partner. Network communication has not only extremely widened the pool of potential partners; it also has saved humankind from the feeling of loneliness including the loneliness in old age when there is often no one to take care of a person.

Along with this there is no reason to pay so much attention to common opinions about the immorality and depravity (including sexual) of young generation that leads to the collapse of family and marriage institutions. According to the research devoted to sexual relationship of millennials and centennials (those who were born after millennials, from the mid-to-late-1990s and onward), 15 % of them had no sexual partners since age 18 in their early 20s. Their parents being the same age were having sex twice and a half as frequently, and their chastity (described through the number of virgins among female millennials) corresponds to that of the appropriate cohort at the beginning of the 20th century (Twenge, Sherman & Wells, 2017).

The social concept of universal basic income which at first sight might appear utopian is well-known and popular in most developed countries nowadays (Basically flawed..., 2016). The supporters of this concept believe that along with the nearest prospects concerning the need for the reform of social welfare systems, facing the challenge of industrial robotization, in the future this revolutionary idea can fully change the attitude of the individual towards labor, it can enable people to conceptually rethink their employment and to release energy for innovations, creative work and entrepreneurship. Therefore, labor will gradually change its essence becoming oriented toward the benefits of a community and creative life and often transforming into new forms such as freelance, remote and work-from-home jobs. In this way the home and its inhabitants acquire special significance and the decision to form a family is based on purely personal intentions, but not on public attitudes to family institution and social conventions. At the same time under these circumstances materialistic reasons (prosperity, social status, working time and work schedules) do

not influence the decision to have or not to have a baby so much and it is caused mainly by the need to pass on life values to the child.

Socioeconomic stability, comfort, health care quality make up a set of favorable conditions, a kind of 'opportune moment'. A child who comes into the world at an opportune moment is a new phenomenon of modern life. This is a child who enables the parents to reach maturity, to obtain the feeling of individual autonomy, self-expression and freedom of choice. This aspect reflects the liberalization of family policy and its goals set by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. According to the Report of the conference the family planning 'should be based on the right of couples and individuals to choose the number, spacing and timing of the birth of their children' (Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994).

This idea also contributes to the struggle against ageism in the sphere of family and reproduction and helps to overcome the stereotypes which produce prejudiced attitudes towards people 'of a certain age'. Thus the increase in the average age at first marriage and the birth of the first baby is discussed in the postmodernist discourse. The limits between life stages become blurred, the age hierarchy weakens, social age norms change, and social order and control allows of a liberal understanding of freedom as availability of alternatives for individual actions and as individual responsibility for their choice.

In this context a child conceptualizes family in a new way. Nowadays the emergence of new forms of family units is mainly associated with 'hybrid' or 'patchwork' families where the partners enter a new family with the children from prior marriages. And child becomes a kind of family frame (matrix, paradigm) that reassembles a new family unit using the wreckage of previous failed marriages and partnerships. This family configuration (the concept which replaced the familiar term 'family composition') corresponds to contemporary trends of pluralization of family relationships and interaction between all family members on the base of the 'networking' principle because family can be interpreted as a network of people (who are often not relatives) connected with stable ties.

Despite widespread criticism of contemporary family in modern globalized world intergenerational bonds are maintained and family exhibits permanent resistance, for family solidarity and blood ties turn out to be the strongest although marriages become quite fragile. The growing influence of older family members (grandparents) is caused by population ageing in 'first world' society, increasing life expectancy and sometimes by the financial wellbeing of pensioners who can support younger members of the family. We believe there is no point in predicting the nuclearization of contemporary family, it is rather family recomposition in its neopatriarchal vision. Some researchers claim that the generation conflict doesn't exist, it simply can't exist because of the huge gap between generations X, Y and Z in their perception of the world and the future. Centennials openly declare their strong attachment to the parents and close relatives of the older generation. The building of a good happy family is for them often more important than professional self-realization. They have patriarchal views of gender roles: a woman should stay at home and look after children while a man's job is to earn money (30 Factov o Sovremennoi Molodezhi, 2017).

Analyzing modern sociocultural context of family evolution, we can't ignore education and family-school interaction as both, family and school, lie on the intersection of all parallels and meridians of social life.

By 2040-50 'First world' people will have been living in the society of life long and life wide learning (Commission of European Communities, 2001; The World Bank, 2003). This idea, first introduced at the Lisbon conference 2000, has remained and will remain relevant not only due to its humanistic pathos. The paradox is that in the nearest quarter century the average length of employment will exceed the 'lifespan' of dominating technologies as well as of the set of professional skills that ensure individual competitive ability. National education systems, designed according to today's industrial schemes, life expectancy and professional competences, are not ready to meet the challenge. The introduction of the concepts of life long and life wide learning, informal, non-formal and context-based learning, distance education, educational mobility etc. shows that the global project of education increasingly takes the forms that go beyond the limitations of the classroom and enable the individual to obtain life skills, to learn a profession, to pursue various interests using any available chance. These forms can be called the universities of life, they positively influence the development of personality and open up great opportunities as under these circumstances individual autonomy and self-expression values play the main role. It's precisely the kind of education in its informal and non-formal forms that can harmonize the relationships between family and school through the co-acquisition of new knowledge and new values, through the co-development of new competences concerning human ecology, healthy lifestyle, reproduction and child-rearing, through the balance between private and public life.

In this context digital systems will occupy the learning spaces of traditional localized education due to the introduction of new equipment (tablet computers, smartphones, smart watch, e-books, apps with learning content) and new learning technologies (personalized learning, flipped class, educational networking, cloud computing). Transparency, personalization, gamification of education and an appropriate adjustment of learning process gradually transfer its routine part to electronic environment and transform the classroom into the area of innovation, creativity and research (Orekhova & Shaidenko, 2016).

And what about parents who were grown up in the traditional 'coordinate system' of formal education? Are they able to educate and socialize their children within a new economic, technological, cultural framework? We believe yes rather than no. But under the circumstances mentioned above parents wish and aim to familiarize their relationships with school.

We consider familiarization process in dichotomous unity with scholarization in broad interdisciplinary understanding as centrifugal and centripetal forces. In fact, social and professional wellbeing of parents directly depends on children's scholarization, i.e. on the possibility to stay at school as long as they need and to gain proper education and care. Thus the dominating actor in familiarization/scholarization correlation is the school – this approach has been remaining habitual for Europe for a long time. Most researchers and teachers consider school to be a symbol of continuity and permanence and entrust it with the role of the transmitter of knowledge, values and cultural norms from generation to generation. They believe that school, as the micro-world and the environment where children spend most of their time, needs pedagogical control to create favorable conditions for children's development, self-affirmation and self-realization.

The support of education can be provided in different ways including preventive measures against educational inequality. The existence and active development of Priority Education Zones (ZEP) and Priority Education Networks (REP) in France as well as Education Action Zones in England which cover

disadvantaged urban and rural areas is the example of education policy oriented toward the normalization of social situation in schools and families. This is the policy of positive discrimination aiming in the name of solidarity 'to give more to those who have less'. The main goal of the schools in these areas is to create favorable social environment around pupils which can prevent inequality and deviance. The schools develop active partnership with local authorities, associations, libraries, cultural establishments struggling for each pupil and each family who need support (Orekhova & Lotova, 2015).

In this context school becomes the place where equal educational opportunities help to improve pupils' cultural awareness and to overcome the consequences of social differentiation. School seeks to scholarize parents, too, i.e. to provide them with ongoing technical and technological support which facilitates the proper performing of their social function according to contemporary norms and requirements (Perregaux, Changkakoti, Hutter, Gremion & Lecomte Andrade, 2016; Rakocevic, 2014).

In most European countries the legislation concerning family upbringing involves partner relationship between family and school. For example, parents are represented in a range of consultative bodies at different levels – national, regional and local (Austria, Norway), they are involved in school governance (Spain, Italy, Denmark, England) and participate in decision-making process relating to the recruiting and appointment of teachers (Spain, England) as well as to the determination of curricula (Denmark, Spain, Ireland), parents also have representation in school councils (the French Community of Belgium, Denmark) (Giles, 2015; Lorcerie, 2016b). Parent associations exist at local and national level everywhere in Europe. National organizations are the members of the politically and confessionally neutral European Parents' Association (EPA) that represents more than 150 million parents from all over Europe and reflects a growing consensus on their expectations. EPA aims to support the highest possible quality of education, to promote dialogue and to foster the active participation of parents in decision making. Through more than 50 member organizations EPA has a nearly full coverage of Europe.

Parents want to speak the same language with teachers, to participate in school life not only as their assistants for organizational affairs like extra-curriculum activities, school celebrations, trips, cleanup days etc. Family do not anymore tacitly accept the rules that allow a child to fit in at school. What's more, family tends to become 'an emotional cocoon' that protects and hides a child from the burden of social environment. And school, in parents' opinion, should learn him or her to live in it but with respect to the values of the family a child is brought up in. It implies the reduction of social distance between the participants of the upbringing process, family and school, as the communication actors. Parents need the familiarization of education based on the principles of targeting and privacy and seek help from the school that can propose a solution to complicated intricate problems and make it easier to cope with them.

Nowadays this trend is discussed in interdisciplinary discourse. Cultural studies describe it through the intimization of cultural context as the formation of comfortable individual environment. Sociology sees it as the intentional reduction of the sphere of public interaction to family framework. And political science explains it in terms of easternization as the civilization alternative to westernization. As for pedagogy, it identifies this phenomenon with a subjectivization of the relationship between teachers and parents which involves adaptation, adjustment, deformalization etc. The familiarization is an integral part of many curricula and recommendations for schools, it is also the subject of current investigations devoted to pedagogical technologies (Lasson, 2007).

In this context to support parents in performing their functions and duties means, first of all, to think of parents themselves, their everyday life, the decisions, both personal and professional, they have to make as well as of the matters that provoke parental risks (Lorcerie, 2016a).

The discourse of familiarization is created through the dialogue between family and school, through the purposeful organization of their communication in the framework of informal education, and information technologies just support this process narrowing temporal and extending spatial limits of the interaction. This leads to the blurring of the lines between inner and outer worlds (inside and outside) which represent the two parts of the basic symbolic psycho-cultural opposition. This trend bears testimony to the commonness of cultural development of the society where modern forms of communication and culture influence family/school relationships and transform them within the limits mentioned above.

When positive relationships between family and school are established it becomes possible to develop the interaction between 'real' parents and 'real' teachers without mutual reproaches, but on the contrary, with respect to mutual interests. Creativity and openness in relationships between parents and teachers arise quite rarely, they are, as a rule, the result of individual initiatives. If it happens parents and children see the teacher as a life tutor. Thus the interaction between family and school takes the shape of co-upbringing and co-scholarization. This kind of interaction reflects not only simple participation of parents in school life but also what researchers and officials call 'parental involvement' which presupposes the development of certain competences in the sphere of child upbringing and education.

The strategy defined as parental education and family literacy is in high demand in Europe for the increasing flow of migrants is followed by the growing number of immigrant families. Initially parental educational programmes were developed for deprived areas of big cities with high percentage of malintegrated population and 'difficult' families. But now these programmes become widespread and relevant for all parents whose children attend school.

The improvement of parental competences is included in the educational programmes developed at local and regional levels and often gain financial support from national governments and international organizations. Council of Europe Recommendation on policy to support positive parenting defines it as 'parental behaviour based on the best interests of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child' (Council of Europe, 2006).

Thus the transformation of the relationships between family and school requires the improvement of appropriate competences which should be incorporated in contemporary concepts of continuing education and development of teachers' professional culture (Capitanescu & Maulini, 2016; Maulini, 2016).

7. Conclusion

The analysis showed that contemporary society has entered a new phase of global evolution characterized by the commonness of modern socio-economic challenges that arise from globalization and highlight the issues of education and upbringing of new generations, as well as the role of family and school in this process. We can state that European countries face common problems connected with a crisis of the

family, upbringing, relationships between children and adults in school and non-school environments, besides, they exhibit similar trends concerning the interaction of family and school.

Family and family life remains top priorities of the society as nowadays the individual predominantly finds support and help within the family rather than in social environment. Family is seen as a preferred and privileged place for passing on values to the younger generation. It is also the place where all family members can work together to achieve wellbeing and overcome the burdens of everyday life. Despite a certain estrangement of family from the institutions of education and upbringing, the transformation of its moral guidelines and values the main trends in the development of modern family obviously reflect its openness to active interaction with social institutions.

Nevertheless, the school along with the family also play an important role in socialization and education of the younger generation although its dominance is often disputed.

Globalization changed the relationship between family and school, it brought a distinctive spirit of freedom and uncertainty and redirected 'the vector' of the interaction from school to the family.

The support of parents and their involvement in child upbringing and education, an increasing role of the family in scholarization, building partnership with school, the trends towards co-scholarization and co-upbringing bear witness to the familiarization of upbringing and education. This tendency corresponds to the context of continuing education and its various forms that go beyond the limitations of the classroom and highlights the importance of family as the main actor of successful child upbringing and education.

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