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Psychology of Personality: Real and Virtual Context

ACADEMIC ADAPTATION IN THE INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article deals with the study of the interrelationship between social and academic adaptation of students with disability in the Inclusive learning environment of the higher education and is aimed at helping to enable such students attain professional competencies. The authors present data of methodic guidelines "Adaptability of higher education students" and "OMO". The results obtained allowed to highlight both the common tendencies in the course of adaptation in an inclusive university environment, and the specific features of the adaptation of students with disabilities. While studying the relations between socio-psychological (group) adaptation and psycho-pedagogical adaptation (adaptation to the learning activity) the authors arrived at the conclusion that the importance should be given not only to the interpersonal relations in the inclusive group, but also to the problems with the becoming of learning activity. The data obtained prove the necessity to search for mechanisms, create conditions for the formation of the personality of students and modify programs of academic disciplines. The results of our study can be used in the projecting of an individual educational route, as well as the design of materials for the higher education system in the context of inclusion. The results of the study can be considered as a starting point for the subsequent search for the necessary conditions for solving the problem of learning adaptation of students with disabilities.

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Keywords: External control, inclusive learning environment of the university, learning activity, social adaptation, students with disability.



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1. Introduction

Problem field

Inclusive learning environment of the university has been widely discussed and studied in Russia over the past five to six years. Initially a spatial component was actively developed and continues to “fill up” in the Russian regions at the present time (the spatial, social and psychodidactic components are distinguished according to the ecopsychological model of the learning environment (Yasvin, 2001), which is closest to us). To date, all universities have to some extent created the material and technical base in the form of a barrier-free environment.

At the same time the attention of specialists was focused on searching the nature and quality of the relationship between all subjects of learning activity (students, teachers, administrators, etc.). Collected large amount of empirical data aimed at studying the level and factors of the socio-psychological well-being of university students with and without disability (Kantor & Proyeck, 2019), tolerance towards students with disability (Evtushenko et al., 2015; Aronova et al., 2019), features of interpersonal relationships in an inclusive student group (Burilkina & Kamenskiy, 2018), personality characteristics (vitality, self-activation, etc.) of students with and without disability (Aysmontas et al., 2017; Aysmontas & Odintsova, 2018) and others.

Considering the above, the goal of our study was to study the interrelation of socio-psychological - adaptation to a group (the desire to join the social environment and collaborate with other people, to feel comfortable among them; the ability to maintain a satisfactory relationship with people based on control and strength; to experience interpersonal relationships) and psycho-pedagogical - adaptation to learning activity (success in mastering subjects, ability to communicate with the teacher, participation in discussions etc.). The obtained data is partially presented in this article.

2. Problem Statement

The third component of the inclusive learning environment - psychodidactic - is the most poorly developed and presented in the modern theoretical and empirical studies (Lukianova et al., 2016; Kharitonova et al., 2017). Every working program of educational discipline projected by teacher includes a paragraph on ensuring the educational process for people with disability. However, we are still talking about technical devices that help such students to get access to educational information or to complete tasks of mid-semester evaluation, i.e. we are dealing with a spatial component as well.

There are well-known following components of adaptation to the university environment - adaptation to a group (to new relationships with peers, the formation of an individual style of behavior typical of youth etc.), adaptation to learning activity (to learning planning, self-organization, accuracy of doing tasks etc.), professional adaptation ((to the formation of professional competencies)) (Rean, Kudashev & Baranov, 2008). At now, we have empirical material relating mainly to the first component.

3. Research Questions

What should be the main focus of university staff in working with students with disabilities?

4. Purpose of the Study

Considering the above, the goal of our study was to study the interrelation of socio-psychological - adaptation to a group (the desire to join the social environment and collaborate with other people, to feel comfortable among them; the ability to maintain a satisfactory relationship with people based on control and strength; to experience interpersonal relationships) and psycho-pedagogical - adaptation to learning activity (success in mastering subjects, , ability to communicate with the teacher, participation in discussions etc.). The obtained data is partially presented in this article.

5. Research Methods

Theoretical and empirical methods were used:

Theoretical methods: theoretical analysis of philosophical, pedagogical, psychological literature, generalization, comparison, modeling.

Empirical methods: questionnaires, the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results, methods of mathematical statistics (Vysokov, 2020).

Experimental base of the study

Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education "Russian University of Transport" (MIIT) was chosen as an experimental base of the study. Total empirical work covered 217 students: an experimental group (EGr) - 61 students with disability - 30 females and 31 males) - and a control one (CGr) - 156 students - 70 females and 86 males - without disability.

Stages of the study

The study was carried out in three stages: there was defined problems and research design at first – theoretical - stage. The second stage was devoted to empirical study. The survey was conducted through a special electronic portal, Google Forms, where students were asked to express their opinion on the proposed statements in the methods according to the instructions. Before proceeding to the statements of the questionnaires, each participant indicated his nickname (pseudonym), age, gender, course, presence or absence of disability. Quantitative-qualitative analysis, including using the Student's t-test and C. Spearman correlation analysis, and interpretation of the obtained data were carried out at the third stage.

Next questionnaires were used:

- ❖ "Student's Adaptation in a University" (Dubovitskaya & Krylova, 2010)
- ❖ "OMO" (Rukavishnikov, 2002)

This choice is explained by the possibility of comparing data on adaptability to the group and learning activity, as well as the search for possible causes that affect this process.

6. Findings

We got the following data.

- Questionnaire "Student's Adaptation in a University" (Dubovitskaya & Krylova, 2010)

A) Scale of the adaptation to the group - Control group. The detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 01. The results of the questionnaire “Student’s Adaptation in a University”. Scale of the adaptation to the group. CGr, where CGr1 means first-year students, CGr3 – third-year students

	Adaptation level	Females		Males		Total	
		Pers.	%	Pers.	%	Pers.	%
CGr1	Low	9	32	18	37	27	35
	High	19	68	31	63	50	65
CGr3	Low	15	36	14	38	29	37%
	High	27	64	23	62%	50	63

Regardless of the first/third-year students, the prevalence of successfully adapted students is almost equal (1 course - 65%, 3 course - 63% has a high level). The majority of Control group students (both females and males) do not experience discomfort in communication or difficulty in establishing contact with classmates.

Scale of the group adaptation. Experimental group. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 02. The results of the questionnaire “Student’s Adaptation in a University”. Scale of the adaptation to the group. EGr, where EGr1 means first-year students, EGr3 – third-year students

	Adaptation level	Females		Males		Total	
		Pers.	%	Pers.	%	Pers.	%
EGr1	Low	9	50	13	50	22	50
	High	9	50	13	50	22	50
EGr3	Low	5	42	3	60	8	47
	High	7	58	2	40	9	53

The data of the Experimental group differ (quantity) from the control group. In general, the number of the third-year students with a high level of adaptation to the group increases slightly (53% and 50%, respectively). The most noticeable changes are in the female’s group, in contrast to male’s one. However, this may be due, firstly, to qualitative (different nature and severity of health restrictions), and secondly, to the quantitative composition of respondents in this course (only 17 third-year students with disability).

A qualitative analysis of the data obtained shows the common tendency in the process of the adaptation to the group for both EGR and CGR: a large majority of students believe that classmates are interested in them, they can easily find common ground with classmates, they easily follow the rules of the group, they can easily get help from classmates. Nevertheless, the following feature can be noted: experimental group’s students are less likely to take the initiative, (inactive behavior prevails over active in a 1,5: 1 ratio). This students are twice as likely as students without disability to remain aloof, demonstrate restraint in relationships, since they believe that classmates may be misunderstood them.

B) Scale of the adaptation to the learning activity. Control group. The detailed results are presented in Table 3.

Table 03. The results of the questionnaire “Student’s Adaptation in a University”. *Scale of the adaptation to the learning activity.* CGr, where CGr1 means first-year students, CGr3 – third-year students

	Adaptation level	Females		Males		Total	
		Pers.	%	Pers.	%	Pers.	%
CGr1	Low	10	37	24	49	34	44
	High	18	63	25	51	43	56
CGr3	Low	19	45	21	57	40	51
	High	23	55	16	43	39	49

As we see overall the third-year students have more difficulties in the learning activity (the level of adaptation to learning activity of the first-year students is higher). A possible explanation is that as a rule the curriculum of the first/second years in the technical universities includes disciplines of the social and humanitarian cycle. Disciplines of a technical profile start and prevail in the third-year plan. The results of adaptability to the learning activity in the female’s group are higher in comparison with a male’s one.

Scale of the adaptation to the learning activity. Experimental group.. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 04. The results of the questionnaire “Student’s Adaptation in a University”. *Scale of the adaptation to the learning activity.* EGr, where EGr1 means first-year students, EGr3 – third-year students

	Adaptation level	Females		Males		Total	
		Pers.	%	Pers.	%	Pers.	%
EGr1	Low	12	67	18	69	30	68
	High	6	33	8	31	14	32
EGr3	Low	10	83	2	40	12	71
	High	2	17	3	60	5	29

The data obtained allow us to talk about common tendency - the results of adaptability to the learning activity in the first/third-year student’s groups are similar, both in the control and experimental group: more difficulties in the learning activity are observed at third-year. Nevertheless, differences should be pointed out: the level of adaptation to learning activity of the first/third-year students of experimental group are much lower than in control one (68% and 71% vs 44% and 51% consequently).

A qualitative analysis of the research data revealed not too much features in common with a control group in comparison with results of the adaptation to the group. Students with disability more often point out the difficulties with taking part in seminars, indicate the complexity of the content of the disciplines, 50% third-year students don’t pass the control tasks in time, a third part of students find it difficult to contact with professors. The most obvious difficulties are experienced by third-year students (females). They experience significant difficulties with the becoming of professional self-determination.

❖ Questionnaire "OMO" (Rukavishnikov, 2002)

The search for the causes of difficulties in adapting to learning activity in the experimental group guided us to use Questionnaire "OMO". Without dwelling on the data obtained in detail, we present the results of the correlation analysis (Spearman) by these two methods (Table 5).

Table 05. Correlation analysis of the data of the questionnaires “OMO” and “Adaptation of students in high school”. EGr

Scale	Inclusion		Control		Affect	
	Ie	Iw	Ce	Cw	Ae	Aw
Adaptation to the group	0,436**	0,318**	0,175	-0,294**	0,398**	0,088
Adaptation to learning activity	0,230	0,043	0,152	-0,320**	0,176	0,107

Note:** Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (two-way)

We note the tendency between the scale of "External Control ((Cw))" and the level of adaptation to learning activity (-0.320 **). We can say that the higher the level of dependence of behavior on external control, the less successful the student in learning activity. These data coincide with the results of our previous study (Mishina & Tarasova, 2018), showed that for parents of children with disabilities the most desirable quality is their independence, but adults are not ready to provide it to the child, living symbiotically with him.

The results obtained allowed us to highlight both the common tendencies in the course of adaptation in an inclusive university environment, and the specific features of the adaptation of students with disabilities. The level of adaptation of the students with disability to learning activity is lower than to the group. Correlation analysis indicates inverse link of the level of adaptation to learning activity and the level of dependence of behavior such students on external control.

The obtained data explain the fact that the importance should be given not only to the interpersonal relations in the inclusive group, but also to the problems with the becoming of learning activity.

Resolving of this problem will determine further self-realization and professional self-determination of students with disability.

7. Conclusion

One of the goals of studying at a university is to prepare an active, creatively minded students, as well as to provide the labor market with competitive specialists, focused on continuous self-education and self-development and responsive to changes in socio-economic conditions. All of the above is true for students with disabilities as well. However, in this case it is necessary to understand that these students can achieve this goal in a different, “roundabout” (according to L.S. Vygotsky) way: someone needs other ways of presenting information, someone needs other methods of control, someone else has other methods and learning techniques, etc. It depends on both nosology and the individual psychological characteristics of a student with a disability. The data obtained indicate the need to search for mechanisms, create conditions for the formation of the personality of students and modify programs of academic disciplines. The results of our study can be used in the projecting of an individual educational route, as well as the design of materials for the higher education system in the context of inclusion. The results of the study can be considered as a starting point for the subsequent search for the necessary conditions for solving the problem of learning adaptation of students with disabilities.

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