

**AMURCON 2020**  
**International Scientific Conference**

**PEDAGOGICAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS'  
ADAPTATION TO THE UNIVERSITY SOCIOCULTURAL  
ENVIRONMENT**



Boris E. Fishman (a)\*, Olga V. Bukhovtseva (b), Olga A. Fokina (c), Inessa L. Pitsuk (d),  
A.V. Lapaeva (e)  
\*Corresponding author

- (a) Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, 70a Shirokaya St., Birobidzhan, Russia, bef942@mail.ru  
(b) Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, 70a Shirokaya St., Birobidzhan, Russia, luxurygrase@mail.ru  
(c) Sholom-Aleichem Priamursky State University, 70a Shirokaya St., Birobidzhan, Russia, olya\_true2003@mail.ru  
(d) Pacific National University, 136 Tihookeanskaya St., Khabarovsk, Russia, pitsukin@mail.ru  
(e) Far Eastern State Transport University, 47 Serysheva St., Khabarovsk, Russia, lapaeva.anastasi@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The article deals with the problem of insufficient readiness of many first-year students for educational activities at the university. The updated system of pedagogical support for students' activities is presented, which provides assistance to the self-determination of each first-year student in the socio-cultural environment of the university. The curator's activity in this system is focused on the development and functioning of the student community. When the curatorial activity is updated, the correspondence of its character to the human nature of students is strengthened. At the same time, the curatorial activity is transformed into a system for organizing special meetings between the curator and students. An important role in the interaction of participants is played by understanding and learning the experience of joint resolution of personally significant situations. A modular program of annual pedagogical support of students' activities by a curator has been developed. Initiating the process of adaptation of first-year students to the environment of the university in its implementation passes into the participants' understanding of personally significant problem situations and determining ways to solve them. Each participant's self-awareness is developed, and the curator promotes their personal self-determination. First-year students regularly reflect on their own and joint activities, and evaluate the results obtained. Diagnostic of students' adaptation levels to the socio-cultural environment of the university confirmed the effectiveness of the developed system. The level of adaptation has increased. Students became co-authors of the educational process. This helped each of them find an individual meaning and goals for their development.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* First-year students, curator's activities, pedagogical support, adaptation to the university environment, self-determination of first-year students



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

There are various problems in the educational practice of universities. Many of them are of a chronic nature. In particular, from year to year, the lack of readiness of many freshmen for educational activities at the university is revealed, and as a result, the lack of effectiveness of this activity. It is known that the transition of such students to the new educational system of the university from the usual school system causes internal tension in them. It often takes the form of "freshman shock" associated with ignorance of the specifics of higher education, inability to adapt to the academic environment, lack of understanding of the requirements, etc. The young people's unpreparedness for independence, which they need to show, also affects (Novichikhina et al., 2020).

In accordance with the norms of age-related development, student age is the start of a young person's life path. Young people learn to make important decisions on their own, form their life position, relying not on their life experience that comes over the years, but on their ideas about the future and about the society in which they will live (Habibu, 2017). The above means that the tasks of students' life and professional self-determination become relevant for them.

Problems that should be comprehended and solved by freshmen have been considered by many researchers, for example, in (Beregovaya et al., 2020; Goebel, 2016; Tafari, 2016; etc.). Nevertheless, the literature notes that the issues of pedagogical support of students' activities on these problems' decision have not been studied and analyzed sufficiently (Beregovaya et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider the existing approaches to creating a system of conditions conducive to the students' adaptation to the university sociocultural environment.

## 2. Problem Statement

Joining student life, yesterday's schoolchildren define themselves in the university sociocultural environment. They face various challenges, but they don't always get the support they need. Since the University's educational system is mainly focused on supporting learning, it does little to help students in their attempts to solve problems that are not directly related to learning (Beaumont, 2012; Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020). The curator of the group could provide the necessary assistance, but in practice, his orientation towards the student as an object of pedagogical influence in teaching dominates.

Authors of this article were determining how to radically update the activities of the curator who accompanies first-year students. The conditions that are necessary for the nature of the curator's activity to correspond to the human nature of students were studied. It was established how to really contribute to the self-determination of each first-year student in the university environment while at the same time forming his life and professional position.

## 3. Research Questions

It is known that in the modern educational practice of universities, the curator of the student group mainly implements control and information functions. At the same time, its activities are primarily aimed at meeting the requirements of the university administration, and not at individual development and self-

determination of students. This contradicts the needs of students who realize that they need a trusting relationship with their lecturers. After all, ideally, the focus of the curator's activity should correspond to his mission of spiritual mediation between the student, society and the profession. Such discrepancy indicates the need to update curatorial activities. This can only be achieved through the modernization of the curator's work, his transition from the position of mentor to the position of inspirer of student activities (Fishman & Bukhovtsev, 2017).

The way to meet this need is for the curator to master the culture of pedagogical support, and, above all, its concepts, methods and technologies. The object of support is the components of students' life and activities:

- at the initial stage – the process of adaptation of first-year students to the university environment;
- then – the processes of personal development of young people in the course of their life and professional self-determination.

It is clear that pedagogical support for these processes can be provided by a curator who has realized the need for such an innovation and has the appropriate competencies. Such competencies are formed as a result of professional improvement and development of curators in their professional activities. However, according to Slobodchikov (2005),

the difficulty here is that the expected competencies are not transferred from hand to hand, they are not formed in the mode of communicating information and explaining. They must be literally grown, practically put “on themselves” with the direct participation of the teacher himself”. (p. 30)

Unfortunately, the existing system of advanced training and retraining of university teachers does not set itself the purpose of the specified professional and personal development of curators and therefore does not provide a solution of the mentioned above task. Meanwhile, it is known that the best option for such development is “the inclusion of everyone in the development of ... educational programs that implement the basic goals and values of education” (Slobodchikov, 2005, p. 30).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The authors have developed a special support system for accompanying the freshmen's activities by the curator. The purpose of the functioning of such system is to create conditions which are promoted each freshman's self-determination in the university environment and the subsequent formation of his life and professional position.

#### **5. Research Methods**

As a result of the analysis, the following general principles and approaches were selected, on the basis of which a system for supporting the activities of first-year students was created.

The *anthropological principle*, which is embodied a holistic view of a person, harmoniously combining the bodily, personal and spiritual principles in his own essence and activity. It is such a person who is able to become the master of his own life.

*Personally oriented approach*, which is based on the principles of self-worth and genuine respect for the individual. Implementation of this approach means taking into account the individuality of each participant, relying on his personal experience.

The concept of the *subject-subject approach*, which means the need to build equal relationships between participants in the educational process on the basis of mutual understanding and mutual respect, equality of opinions and assessments of all participants, giving everyone the opportunity to choose and self-determination.

The *activity approach*, the central requirements of which are creative work and cooperation, development through personal activity, independence of actions, and knowledge as the natural consequence of conscious overcoming of difficulties.

The following methods were used that are adequate to the principles and approaches presented above.

- orientation of accompanying curatorial activities on the development and functioning of the student community;
- interaction of the students' community members and the curator, contributing to the development of the qualities necessary for the effective students' adaptation to the university sociocultural environment;
- mastering the experience of designing personally significant situations;
- reflection by students of their own, as well as joint activities and the results obtained;
- the curator's diagnosis of the adaptation achieved by students and self-diagnostics of their own achievements.

The development of methods for the curators' activities to support the effective freshmen's adaptation to the university environment was carried out in accordance with the general concept of implementing purposeful human activity. The structure of activity is usually represented as a sequence of components that follow one after the other: motive → aim → means → action → result.

The motive for the curator's activities can be: needs, social attitudes, beliefs, interests, emotions, etc. (Killpack & Melón, 2016). Experiencing positive emotions from interacting with freshmen, the curator is also aware of their problems.

The specificity of the freshmen motivation is predetermined by their unmet needs, interests, desire for self-realization, and the striving for public recognition. An essential role in the formation of motivation for the interaction of students is also played by their independence in choosing the current and strategic goal of the activity, the means, methods and partners used.

The study implemented the method of updating the curatorial activity, which was provided with consistent pedagogical support of the process of students' adaptation to the university sociocultural environment. Curatorial activity was transformed into a system of organizing special Meetings of the curator and students. In this case the unity, harmonious interweaving of connections and relations of the participants were formed and developed.

This was ensured by the fact that such Meetings became significant in the life of freshmen, since they were focused on the personal growth of the participants, on their self-expression, self-disclosure and self-knowledge. For this, a warm emotional atmosphere of communication, openness and honesty of the participants, interested, empathic listening to each other and attention to the feelings of others were maintained.

A specific form of such interaction was the existence community - the unification of freshmen according to the principle of "here and now" on the basis of common values and meanings: moral, educational, professional, and ideological. This community formed a unique living unity of students, characterized by mutual understanding, mutual acceptance, and the inner disposition of each participant to each other, trust and empathy.

It was this kind of pedagogical support that made it possible for first-year students to believe in themselves, fully realize their choice, reveal their potential and productively use the existing experience of interacting with other people.

In accordance with the logic and stages of the experimental study, its implementation included the following five steps:

- program development of curator's support activity with an indication of the means to ensure the effective adaptation of freshmen to the university environment;
- the selection of the means necessary for diagnosing the quality of the implementation of the pedagogical support program, as well as for diagnosing the level of students' adaptation to the university sociocultural environment;
- implementation of the program of pedagogical support for the students' adaptation to the university environment;
- evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the developed program;
- the curator's comprehension of the results obtained and his new experience, the formation of methodological recommendations.

## 6. Findings

The program of pedagogical support for students' adaptation to the university environment contains five consistently implemented modules of their interaction with the curator (Bukhovtseva, 2018).

The *first module* allows students to realize self-oriented behavior in a new social environment and form options for mutually acceptable activities. There is a search for oneself and the initial formation of answers to the questions: "Who am I? Who are they?". The *second module* gives the participants the opportunity to realize the ambiguity and inconsistency of real and simulated problem situations, to outline possible ways to resolve them. In joint activities, we are looking for answers to the following questions: "Can you change yourself? What does it mean to give up your essence?" The *third module* is focused on creating conditions for the development of students' self-awareness. The search for ways to change oneself for the better is being carried out. There was a search for answers to the question: "How to change oneself?" Intrapersonal contradictions and interpersonal tension in the group are analyzed. The *fourth module* allows students to determine their stable position in the group. A role structure of the group is being formed. Networks of formal and informal relations are created. The construction of a functional-role correlation of

the personal position of each member of the group with one or more roles begins. Joint activity supports the personal self-determination of each freshman, promotes to the development of the qualities necessary for this. The *fifth module* consolidates the results of the initial stage of personal and professional self-determination.

Pedagogical support by the curator of the project activities of students is an important condition for their adaptation to the socio-cultural environment of the university. In the course of project activities, the construction and development of complex life and educational situations is being implemented (Schrufer et al., 2020). Students gradually come to understanding the possibility of building and implementing a project of their own life. At the same time, the curator implements the functions of a partner, assistant, consultant, helping to understand in which direction the student needs to move when designing ways to solve a particular problem. Pedagogical support by the curator of the project activities of students is an important condition for their adaptation to the socio-cultural environment of the university. In the course of project activities, the construction and development of complex life and educational situations is being implemented (Schrufer et al., 2020). Students gradually come to understanding the possibility of building and implementing a project of their own life. The curator implements the functions of a partner, assistant, consultant, helping to understand in which direction the student needs to move when designing ways to solve a particular problem.

It is known that the more the positive human experience is mastered in its various manifestations, the more effectively the process of individual's adaptation to new living conditions proceeds. Analysis of the results of the experiment showed that mastering the experience of designing life and educational situations had a positive effect on their adaptation to a new university environment.

The research (Bukhovtseva, 2018) presents a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the developed system, obtained in the course of its testing. In particular, the diagnosis of the initial state of the participants showed that only 18% of the freshmen were at a high level of adaptation to the university sociocultural environment, 50% at the level of moderate adaptation, and 32% at a low level. And at the end of the academic year, the level of effective adaptation to the socio-cultural environment of the university was recorded in 24% of students in the experimental groups, the level of moderate adaptation in 66% of freshmen, and 10% at a low level. It means that 28% of freshmen had a statistically significant increase in the level of the considered adaptation.

At the beginning of their studies, only 4% of freshmen had a high level of social empathy. The average level of empathy was found in 58% of the students, and low - in 38% of the freshmen. The results of the final diagnostics of the level of social empathy showed that it increased in the experimental groups. At the end of the first academic year, a high level of empathy was found in 24% of the participants, an average level in 68%, and a low level in 8%. At the same time, the results of the initial diagnosis of the level of social empathy in the experimental and control groups did not differ statistically significantly, and in the final diagnosis they differed significantly.

During the final diagnostics of the motives of educational activity, it turned out that the dominant motive in the experimental groups was the motive "the acquisition of deep and lasting knowledge" (82% of students). At the beginning of training, the predominant motive was "getting a diploma" (78% of students).

## 7. Conclusion

The main value-meaning reference point of pedagogical support was the design of such educational processes in which it becomes possible to develop a young person's ability to adapt to new conditions and to be a true master of his own life. His life activity becomes exactly what he designs for himself. At the same time, the students turn into co-creators of the educational process, which contributes to finding individual meanings and goals for their development. The formed socially significant qualities become the result of students' adaptation to the university environment. It allows them to consciously assume various social roles in the life of the university.

When the curator accompanies the process of students' adaptation to the sociocultural environment of the university, there is an active transformation of the relations "curator-student", "curator-group", "student-student", and «student-group». And positive relationships within the group are reproduced in relationships with other significant people (lecturers, peers, parents).

## References

- Beaumont, D. J. (2012). *Service quality in higher education: the students' viewpoint*. <http://ughandbook.portals.mbs.ac.uk/Portals/0/Docs/myprogramme/dissertations/Dan%20Beaumont.pdf>
- Beregovaya, O. A., Lopatina, S. S., & Oturgasheva, N. V. (2020). T'yutorskoe soprovozhdenie kak instrument sociokul'turnoj adaptacii inostrannyh studentov v rossijskom vuze [Tutor support as a tool for socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students in a Russian University]. *Higher Education in Russia*, 29(1), 156-165. [in Russ.].
- Bukhovtseva, O. V. (2018). *Soprovozhdenie processa adaptacii studentov k sociokul'turnoj srede vuza [Support of the process of adaptation of students to the socio-cultural environment of the University]*. Krasnoyarsk. [in Russ.].
- Fishman, B. E., & Bukhovtsev, O. V. (2017). Protivorechie v deyatelnosti kuratora studencheskoj gruppy: neobhodima novaya orientaciya, no dominiruet staraya [Contradiction in the activities of the curator of the student group: a new orientation is needed, but the old one dominates]. *Alma mater (Bulletin of the higher school)*, 1, 48-51. [in Russ.].
- Goebel, E. S. (2016). Adaptation of first-year students to the educational process. *Higher Education in Russia*, 10, 144-147.
- Habibu, D. A. (2017). Towards developing the orientation programme content for the first-year students at the university of Dodoma. *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*, 2(6), 18-24. <http://ijissh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/IJISSH-020603.pdf>
- Killpack, T. L., & Melón, L. C. (2016). Toward inclusive STEM classrooms: what personal role do faculty play? *Life sciences education*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-01-0020>
- Matusov, E., & Pease-Alvarez, L. (2020). Moving from collaboration to critical dialogue in action in education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2020.292>
- Novichikhina, E. V., Ulyanova, N. A., Kolokoltsev, M. M., Romanova, E. V., & Suslova, E. A. (2020). K voprosu adaptacii studentov-pervokursnikov k obrazovatel'nomu processu v vuze [On the issue of adaptation of first-year students to the educational process at the University]. *Modern Problems of Science and Education*, (3). <http://science-education.ru/ru/article/view?id=29907>[in Russ.].
- Schrufer, G., Vrenger, K., & Lindemann, I. (2020). Education for sustainable development: "reflections" as a tool for forming competencies. *The issue of education*, 2, 152-174.
- Slobodchikov, V. I. (2005). *Ocherki psichologii obrazovaniya [Essays on the psychology of education]*. BSPI. [in Russ.].
- Tafari, D. H. (2016). Teaching Social Justice AIN'T Easy: the unique challenges and opportunities of teaching social justice at an HBCU. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 7(2), 15-35.