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AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference**SOCIAL STIGMATIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL FAILURE IN
HIGHER EDUCATION SOCIOLOGY: INTER-INFLUENCE**

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Abstract

The formation of the life strategy of young people depends on successful education, conditions for personal self-realization, and psychological comfort in the process of social communication among subjects. The given article is devoted to the analysis, systematization, and generalization of research on the relationship and inter-influence of social stigmatization and students' educational success/ failure. Social stigmatization, being a phenomenon of social exclusion of an individual, influences a young person's self-determination and self-realization. Due to its negative consequences, stigmatization is most dangerous in education, demotivating a student. He can become uninterested not only in studying but in various social interactions. Thereby stigmatization influences the formation of the life strategy of an individual as a whole. The purpose of the article is a sociological analysis of social stigmatization in the educational process and its relationship with the educational failure of the Russian student body. The paper examines the concepts of social stigmatization and students' educational failure. The authors analyse social factors that influence success/failure. The main research methods used were the methods of analysis, systematization, and generalization of scientific sources on the problem under consideration. The observation method and secondary data analysis from sociological research were used as empirical methods.

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1. Introduction

At the end of the XX - beginning of the XXI centuries, "sociology of education" appeared as a new direction in Russian sociological science. Owing to particular content, specifics, conditions for realization, and academic results, the sociology of education produced higher school (higher education) sociology. Over the past 20 years, higher education has become as popular as specialized secondary education 50 years ago, thus occupying a special place in the socio-cultural space. The very term "higher" suggests comparison with lower levels (primary, secondary) (Tuzikov & Zinurova, 2019). In modern society, the absence of a higher education diploma is one of the criteria of social stigmatization. It is almost impossible to achieve significant results in climbing a career ladder without it in most areas of professional activity.

Analysing American and domestic development of the sociology of education, the USA is rightfully supposed to be a leader in the sociology of education since it originated and achieved high results there. Burton Clark, a well-known scientist, researched the problems of higher education. He published his essay "The development of higher education sociology" in 1973 in the book "Sociology of Education." In his work, Clark explained the meaning of a new branch of sociological knowledge for that time. According to the scientist, his "goals are to assess their advantages and disadvantages based on the analysis of the conducted sociological studies of higher education and identify the prospects for such studies in the future" (Clark, 2007, p. 3).

The formation of higher education sociology in our country is divided conventionally into three main periods. The first one referred to the 1960s - early 1980s. At that time, the first point studies of sociologists related to the problems of youth in general and particularly education began to appear. Groups, departments, laboratories for the study of higher education were beginning to form. The second period occupied a time interval from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. Then there were prerequisites for the formation of higher education sociology as an independent branch within the framework of sociological knowledge, which entailed the need for its more profound scientific research.

At that time, scientific works became more extensive; the first monographs, textbooks, and manuals appeared. They paid attention to the problems of higher education. And if the first two stages characterized the formation of higher education sociology, thus the third period described its development. Starting at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, the stage continues today. Russian sociologists, dealing with the problems of higher education note, "This is the period of the constitution of higher education sociology, and its transformation into an independent branch of sociological science. At this stage, scientific works became more extensive. The first monographs, textbooks, and manuals appeared. They paid attention to the problems of higher education. And if the first two stages characterized the formation of higher education sociology, thus the third period described its development. Established at the turn of the XX - XXI centuries, it continues today. Russian sociologists, dealing with the problems of higher education note:

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sociological studies are being conducted nationwide. International comparative studies of higher education are being carried out. The foreign experience of the development of higher education is studied; the works of leading foreign scientists devoted to its most pressing problems are translated into Russian. Russian theories and concepts of higher education are characterized in monographs and articles. The Russian Association of Higher Education Researchers (RAHER) is being created under the auspices of HSE University, and international conferences on the problems of its development are being held. Centres, departments, sectors, and laboratories of sociological and interdisciplinary research of higher education appear in research institutes and large universities. (Zborovsky & Ambarova, 2019b, p. 283)

Today higher education sociology, along with other problems, is engaged in studying social factors that influence academic success/ failure. In this regard, the central area of research is the study of the negative impact of stigmatization and self-stigmatization on the learning process.

2. Problem Statement

The emergence of the scientific interest of sociologists in stigmatization is attributed to the second half of the XX century. Research on a wide range of deviant forms of individual behaviour began to appear then. Representatives of the humanities of Russia and the neighbouring countries became interested in the problems related to social stigmatization only in the XXI century. The first works on this issue were mainly of an overview nature and covered the theoretical foundations of the concepts of stigmatization presented by such foreign scientists as I. Goffman, G. Bloomer, Ch. Cooley (Stigmatizatsiya..., 2020).

2.1. Stigmatization in the educational process

Works on the study of the phenomenon of stigmatization of a later period, consider it more deeply and notice the interdisciplinary nature of this problem. A striking example is the PhD thesis on the sociology of management on the topic "Social stigmatization as an object of management in the educational space," prepared and defended by Belarusian scientist Lipai (2008) under the guidance of Professor of Lomonosov Moscow State University A.K. Mammadov. These authors also published a monograph, "Introduction to the theory of social stigmatization," and several other scientific papers (Lipai, 2008).

According to scientists, social stigmatization is understood as a definite reaction to deviations from generally accepted norms in culture and the subsequent consolidation of these deviations with the help of various symbolic forms. As a social phenomenon, stigmatization accompanies the process of interaction within social communities and realizes in resolving contradictions between the stereotypes of society and the value-normative attitudes of the individual (Yelsukov, 2014). The principal conditions for the emergence of stigmatization include the following: the presence of fixed stigmatization attitudes in society; the evident differences between the individual and other members of the social community

("dissimilarity" of thinking, behaviour, appearance, and the like), and the individual's acceptance of these stigmatizing attitudes (Turkulets et al., 2018).

Students are one of the social communities most susceptible to stigmatization. Several factors are among the ones that influence this. They are the social status of the family and the socio-cultural values acquired in it; the individuality of a person with a certain level of independence and the ability to independently choose behaviour; fixed social deviation that affects the formation of the opinion of classmates. It should be considered, that the learning process, as a rule, falls on childhood and adolescence in modern society. It is the young age that functions as a social indicator because it shows the whole motley palette of the process of social stigmatization. Scientists agree that stigma has an exceptionally significant influence on the self-awareness and behaviour of a person (especially at a young age). It unjustifiably exalts or humiliates him based on only external signs. Social stigmatization is dangerous because it can cause such a reaction as deviant behaviour by affecting a person's social identity. It is also hazardous for society because it strikes at public morality and humane social attitudes, which can cause conflicts (Mamedov & Lipai, 2008).

2.2. Subject-subject relations in the educational process

Among other things, scientists consider the managerial potential of stigmatization. In particular, Lipai (2008) argues that stigmatization is mostly a spontaneous process. At the same time, the knowledge of unique laws of its development allows us to predict the possible consequences of this phenomenon. It also makes it possible to prevent their occurrence and, most importantly, to weaken the negative influence of this phenomenon on members of social communities. "However, managers do not consider stigmatization to be an object of social management. It is due to the undeveloped nature of the problem and the underestimation of its significance to form subject-subject relationships in groups" (Lipai, 2008, p. 27).

It is worth considering the subject-subject interaction in the educational environment in more detail. We are talking about a particular relationship in which the teacher and the student perceive each other as equal communication partners. Such equality allows everyone to defend their position in the dialogue without requiring the participants to have similar views. Thanks to this, it becomes possible to express the individual "I" to the communication partner. It has a positive influence on the student's self-identification. And it partially influences academic success. It is necessary to explain the semantic content of the concept of "academic success /failure." This concept has two semantic aspects, including the objective and subjective one. In an objective sense, academic success is indicated by qualities that do not depend on a particular subject of learning, on his conscious-volitional properties, individual efforts in obtaining knowledge, forming skills, and developing peculiar abilities. Objective aspects of success/failure are expressed, for example, in such parameters as academic performance, attendance, average score, the number of scholar hours for studying the discipline, the "colour" of the diploma received, and other parameters that are institutionalized in the education system. In a subjective sense, educational success/failure directly expresses the personal characteristics and personal qualities of the subject of learning. It is by showing them that a person can develop a unique experience of acquiring knowledge, forming new skills, and developing his abilities with their help. These are, for example,

creative (critical) thinking, attentiveness and concentration on the subject of study, courage in making decisions, responsibility for your choice, the ability to admit your mistakes and misconceptions, and rational activity in the organization of the educational process. A student's awareness of his subjectivity and its acceptance strengthen and develop his desire for independence, self-cognition, effective self-realization, and positive self-stigmatization (Yartseva, 2014). Considering communication as the subject interaction in the educational process assumes that the teacher sees the student as a personality and communicates with him as an equal partner.

3. Research Questions

Recently, there has been an increase in the culture-forming role in the higher education system. The formation of general cultural competencies of a student comes to the fore in the educational process. It is these competencies, according to some scientists, that determine a person's active life, his ability to navigate in various spheres of social and professional life and harmonize the inner world and relations with society (Yartseva, 2014). In this regard, education moves from the traditional to the personality-oriented paradigm. Such integrative personality qualities as purposefulness, self-confidence, and making responsible decisions turn out vital.

3.1. The importance of general cultural competencies in the educational process

When describing general cultural competencies, it is worth noting that they are not conditioned professionally on the one hand. It means that all modern specialists should possess them regardless of their professional field since these competencies allow graduates to be more competitive in the labour market. On the other hand, general cultural competencies are professionally significant since they form the basis for professional competencies, although they prove to be more stable.

So, if professional competencies can be short-lived (due to the increasing change of activity technologies, obsolescence of applied knowledge, and the like). Thus, a person carries basic competencies throughout his whole life, having the opportunity to build his new professional image on their basis every time. In this regard, general cultural competencies can be considered as the basis for the formation of professional mobility of a specialist. (Yartseva, 2014, p. 3)

Communication is a crucial element in the formation of general cultural values. Upon graduation, specialists, regardless of the place of work, must demonstrate a high level of self-organization, a broad outlook, and possess organizing abilities. Thus, he should create a microclimate of culture and spirituality around him. The task facing the higher education system today is to develop the personality of a future professional, and it involves the disclosure and maintenance of the subjective qualities of a person and creative potential.

At the same time, it often happens in reality that in the learning process, instead of positive motivational influences, the personality is exposed to various negative impacts, which leads to the so-called "educational failure."

3.2. Educational failure as a problem of higher education

In Russian society on the whole (in higher education in particular), there is deep dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and recognition of the need to change the vector of its reforms (Zborovsky & Ambarova, 2019a). In the article "Educational failure of Russian students: a sociological interpretation of the problem," Zborovsky and Ambarova (2021) identify and analyse the problems associated with educational failure and identify social factors that reinforce it. The scientists claim that "the traditional interpretation of educational failure solely as academic failure has exhausted its heuristic potential today" (Zborovsky & Ambarova, 2021, p. 18). The chief manifestation of students' educational failure is supposed to be an academic failure. But for the interpretation of this phenomenon to be more accurate, it is worth including in its content the lack of motivation to receive education, inability to professional self-determination, research passivity, unformed life strategies, and negative social emotions (Sarra et al., 2019). These explanations are essential to identify the mechanisms of students' scientific, social, and educational activity, allowing them to cope with educational failure more effectively (Duguet et al., 2016; Herbaut, 2020).

Zborovsky and Ambarova (2021) base their conclusions on their research conducted at universities of the Ural Federal District.

According to the survey, 55% of students of provincial universities were characterized by positive educational motivation. At the same time, only 15% of them realized this aspiration. 40% of the students in this group wanted to study successfully but could not. They lacked the knowledge and skills for this because of poor school preparation. 45% had no desire to study. At the same time, 30% of them were ready to master the educational standard, and 15% were classified as "uneducated" students. Thus, approximately 85% of students of provincial universities, in one way or another, belonged to the risk group. They could neither study successfully nor want it at all. (p. 18)

Based on the data obtained, scientists attempted to structure the studied educational community, highlighting the "core," "semi-periphery," and "periphery" in it, based on the criteria of the place and role of individual groups in the life of the university and students as a whole.

The named elements are characterized as follows: the "core" means the "vanguard" of students. These are groups of students who achieve high results in scientific research, inventions, sports, art and show an active social position in every possible way. "Semi-periphery" implies that students gain certain heights in these areas, mainly in educational activities. This category of students is considered more widespread and constitutes the learning community. As for the "periphery," it includes all other groups of students. They do not strive to succeed either in student life in general or in the learning process and science, in particular. "Studying the research data, we assume that the approximate ratio of the "core," "semi-periphery," and "periphery" of students make 15, 55, and 30% accordingly. Educationally unsuccessful students belong to the "periphery," and about half of them to the "semi-periphery." Let us note that we are talking about students of non-leading universities located in Russian regions and thus

belonging to the zone of the "semi-periphery" and "periphery" of domestic higher education" (Zborovsky & Ambarova, 2021, p.19).

Recently, social factors negatively affecting positive motivation of students to study, along with the low level of school and other pre-university training, economic and social inequality of students, such as the rapid digitalization of higher education and the lack of due attention from the state to the problem of educational failure of students have been added to the list (Ryabova, 2020). The situation becomes more complicated by the active introduction of distance-learning technologies into the educational process that causes discrepancies in the assessments of the content and quality of the academic process. Students note that it has become easier to contact the teacher, it is much easier to take tests, exams and pass other forms of control, but it has become more complicated to get high-quality knowledge. Some students consider distance learning as an opportunity to acquire digital competencies and collaborate effectively with classmates via various programs (Seliverstova, 2020). At the same time, there are students who, for various reasons, became hostages of academic deprivation, dropped out of the educational process, and, having accumulated numerous academic debts, became candidates for exclusion.

According to the representatives of the university administration, the sharp digitalization of the learning process stimulated the educational independence of students, and in some cases, contributed to improving academic performance.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is a sociological analysis of social stigmatization in the educational process and its relationship with the educational failure of Russian students. The paper reveals such concepts as "social stigmatization" and "educational failure" to achieve this goal. The authors analyse various social factors that influence the successful mastering of educational programs by students.

5. Research Methods

The main research methods used in the paper are analysis, systematization, and generalization of scientific sources on the problem under consideration, together with analysis of secondary data from sociological research. In addition, one of the empirical methods used in the paper is observation since the authors, being university teachers, had the opportunity to conduct participant observation of the impact of stigmatization on the success/failure of students' educational activities.

6. Findings

Any natural or social quality can serve as a reason for stigma; it is more often a negatively perceived trait of a person's appearance, character, and social status. Traditionally, stigma is defined as a social attribute of a person or group formed by the external social environment. Social stigma is usually characterized by emotional colouring. It often is reasonably unjustified by reality. So, in some cases, the basis of stigma may be the student's responsible attitude to the educational process ("nerd"), belonging to a secured class ("major"), and the like. In the context of given research, we should refer to such criteria of

stigmatization that limit the successful development of a student's personality in the learning process. So, it is often possible to hear from the students or teachers such an assessment of the student: "technician," "humanitarian," "all-rounder," "ignoramus," "neither fish nor meat," "mediocrity." As a rule, these assessments are accompanied by a definite negative semantic connotation. For some students, such a characteristic, expressed publicly to him, becomes a demotivator to the furthermore learning process and, in general, social communication. It is clear that such labels, or stigmas, can negatively influence a student's educational success in the future. At the same time, the educational failure itself, in turn, also serves as a basis for stigmatization by both classmates and teachers.

Experience shows that the stereotypical perception of a person as a "technician" or "humanitarian" immediately limits his creative abilities or inclinations to accurate scientific knowledge. By definition, a "technician" is perceived by the Humanities teachers as a person who is deprived of creative imagination and general cultural erudition. And, on the contrary, Technical and Natural Science teachers consider "humanitarians" to be deprived of the ability to fundamental scientific knowledge, to an accurate and verified perception of the scientific picture of the world. At the same time, practice often proves the unfairness of such stereotypes. For example, resuscitator Albert Axelrod and engineer Mikhail Yakovlev were among the creators of the popular creative television amusing game "Club of the Cheerful and Sharp-witted (CCS)." In addition, until the early 2000s, the overwhelming number of CCS participating teams was represented by the country's leading technical universities.

According to the previously mentioned information, "stigma and prejudice are associated with several processes and phenomena. They include categorization, "labelling", stereotyping, negative emotions, discomfort during the interaction, social rejection, and other forms of discrimination, loss of social status, and the like" (Stigmatizatsiya..., 2020, p. 26).

7. Conclusion

The theoretical and empirical analysis allows us to draw the following conclusions:

The concepts of social stigmatization and educational failure have a strong relationship and mutual influence on each other. The division of students according to the principle - "core," "periphery," and "semi-periphery" - can be attributed to stigma, which, in turn, entails educational failure.

The problem of mutual influence of stigmatization and educational failure considered by the authors is a complex problem, the solution of which is possible only at the interdisciplinary level. Foregrounding the research on the given issue in higher education sociology needs various pedagogical and psychological research methods. They can provide significant assistance in clarifying the mechanisms of overcoming the influence of stigmatization on educational failure. In addition, it is advisable to train the teaching staff and representatives of the administration of universities in specific pedagogical technologies.

As far as the students are concerned, it is necessary to realize educational activities that contribute to students' self-confidence and confidence in their abilities. Proper attitudes should counteract stigmatization and develop social communication skills, which, in turn, will serve as a working impulse to motivate successful educational activities.

The formation and development of a proper socio-educational environment is the most effective mechanism to develop educational success and overcome educational failure. Under new conditions, the phenomenon of negative social stigmatization will be minimal, and all participants of the learning process (university administration, faculty, student body) will be equal and responsible partners.

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