

## Psychological support of foreign students from Kazakhstani institutes of higher education in the course of their adaptation

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**Abstract.** The experience of work, made by both domestic and foreign researches in the sphere of ethnopsychology, has been analyzed and generalized as the change of ethnic worldview and its influence on interethnic adaptation of foreign students in Kazakhstani higher school on conditions of Kazakhstani ethnocultural environment. Social and psychological factors, forming the ethnic worldview, have been discovered. The mechanism of person's interethnic adaptation in the course of training in the institution of higher education is presented. The process of person's ethnic worldview transformation in the process of adaptation is elucidated. The process and results of influence of foreign students' ethnic worldview on the process of adaption in the course of their training in Kazakhstani institutions of higher education are shown.

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### Introduction

One of the tendencies of modern education development is its internationalization, which is conveyed by increase in quantity of students, who get an education outside the native country. Training of foreign specialists has political, economic and social meaning for all countries, giving educational services, so this fact brings the problem of special conditions organization to the state level for this group of people [1].

During the last two decades Kazakhstan has made international cooperation in the sphere of higher education more active. Integration of higher education system of the country into the world educational environment is one of long-term strategic priorities of the republic. Considerable quantity of bilateral intergovernmental agreements on cooperation with higher schools of foreign countries has been concluded, and also there is a significant increase in the number of separate contracts with foreign universities [2].

The following measures have been already undertaking by the system of republic higher education for some years: reformation of higher education in Kazakhstan and the Bologna process, full entry of Kazakhstan into the Bologna club, purposeful work on supply of conditions for joining the Bologna process. First of all, these measures are related to approximation and ensuring of correlation of structures and education periodizations, transfer to the three-range education system with the Bachelor's, Master's, Doctor's degree conferment in accordance with the spheres [3].

Thus, the actuality of this research topic is

defined by the fact that the problem of person's psychological adaptation to the changes of ethnocultural environment is conditioned by the range of reasons: owing to the intensification of interethnic contacts (economic and educational migrations, interactions, mediated by mass media) in the XX century there has been powerful contact, and even contradiction between different cultures. These contradictions of worldviews, which often were opposite to each other, of different value systems, which earlier had never come into contact or made it seldom, led to the necessity of their connection at the level of individual consciousness, psychological adaptation to another system of values and senses. The other reason is the qualitative change of ways of living: contradictoriness and instability of social situation, increase in speed of technical progress and information reservation, noted by almost all researchers, - which leads to the growth in the number of people, who are not able to control these changes, i.e. to adapt, first of all, psychologically, to indeterminacy and unsteadiness of modern society.

The need to study a psychological adjustment to other ethnocultural community is connected with a poor development of problem: there are discussions on the interpretation of a psychological adjustment concept to other ethnocultural community, phenomenon nature, components of structure, criteria of adaptation/deadaptation.

A fundamental contribution to the development of theoretical and methodological foundations of the psychological support made in the writings on cultural conditionalism of psycho and

semantic structure of consciousness by L.S.Vygotskiy, A.N. Leontev, S.L. Rubinstein, the conception of personality meaning of A.N.Leontev, D.A. Leontev, the conception of modified forms of M.M. Bakhtin, M.Buber, L.Ya.Dorfman, V.Yu.Khotinets, the conception of collective and dialogic cognitive activity of S.M. Djakupov.

There are also theories developed in writings of Kazakhstani authors: M.S. Azhenov, O. Kh. Aymaganbetov, S.Sh. Ayazbekova, S.B. Elyubayeva, K.B. Zharikpayev, A.M. Kim, L.V. Kolesnikova, Zh.U. Kydyralina, N.A. Ladzina, and also the writings on problems of interethnic adjustment, an interrelation of a social community and person, personality development in the process of socialization of the Russian and foreign cultural experts, educators, psychologists, philosophers such as K.K. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, F.B. Berezin, I.S. Kon, N.M. Lebedeva, M.B. Romm, T.G. Stefanenko, C. Bochner, S. Furnham, H. Triandis, C. Ward.

A phenomenon of adjustment is one of the most significant and common phenomena of the XXI century social life. An adjustment is a natural phenomenon, an element of global processes which are connected with a international mobility of students from different countries and regions of modern world. Study of the phenomenon Kazakhstani adjustment of foreign students in the psychological aspect as well as the study of the socio-psychological and psycho-pedagogical problems in teaching foreign students of foreign countries, the process of their adjustment to a new macro-and micro-environment, the use of past ethno-socio-cultural experience of students, differentiated accounting of national and psychological characteristics of the individual students needs to develop mechanisms for promoting successful adjustment to high school [4].

All components of a human (foreign student), as an individual, as a person, as a subject of activity, as individuals, are manifested in students from different countries and nationalities, ages and characters in new ways. These components undergo the significant changes, including structural changes in personality with all its consequences, both positive and negative nature.

Unfortunately in Kazakhstan the majority of foreign students who come to study at the universities in Kazakhstan are not subject to pre-university education but it should play an important role. Since the most of foreign students poorly informed on the political, economic and social systems of Kazakhstan, norms, customs, traditions and culture of the people in the country, present higher education. For most students the first problem is the internationalization that requires communication,

sharing values of a variety of social, ethnic, national norms and cultures. The problems which are connected with the presence of foreign students in the new ethnic environment and variety of adjustment due to the transformation of ethnic peace became the subject for study of foreign researchers much earlier than in Kazakh and Russian languages.

Integration of theoretical and applied aspects of studying the problem of adaptation of foreign students to the higher school of Kazakhstan is represented by actual and important line of development of the modern higher education, shown in particular through its internationalization. Now the total number of students and other categories of studying people in the world who have been taught out of the country, is about 1,5 million people around the world. Activation of mobility caused emergence of networks of regional and international educational institutions or separate divisions in traditional Institutions of Higher education which includes not only international structure of students, but also management and financing carried out in common by group of the countries.

As a whole the academic mobility with Kazakhstan is being developed now:

- within traditional international cultural agreements;
- by implementation of target programs of various organizations, funds, the societies providing assistance in training of specialists according with the priority directions in modern conditions;
- through interuniversity cooperation.

Expansion of the academic mobility of foreign countries with Kazakhstan within various forms of education of foreign students demands active participation of psychologists, teachers, sociologists and social workers in providing educational services to foreign students [5].

The problems connected with foreign students, trained in Institutions of Higher education of the different countries of the world, according to S. Bochner [6], can be divided to four categories:

- first, the status of the foreign student as the foreigner living in unfamiliar for it an ethnic environment. This problem isn't specific to the foreign student in any certain country, as it spreads in various degree on all people coming to other countries. The adaptation of the student to his new environment passes through a set of ethnic distinctions such as language, customs, and valuable orientations.

In this context the main task for the foreign student is to study a set of ethnic norms, expanding an ethnic picture of the world to correct the behaviour with the norms accepted in this country. And the main task for people getting in contact with foreign

students is to understand and, correspondingly, to explain their behaviour.

- secondly, the foreign student meets with difficulties, without associating his foreign origin. They are general for any first-year student but owing to a difference which exists between the school and university education, each student entering the university, meets unfamiliar requirements to him. Nevertheless, this task will be more difficult for the foreign student because there is a huge psychological barrier between its ethnic culture and ethnic culture of that country to which he comes.

- thirdly, the foreign student faces with age problems which general for all youth. Excessively emphasizing a foreign origin of the foreign student, many authors are inclined to ignore the experience peculiar to his age period.

- fourthly, the foreign student, being the representative of his country abroad, is very sensitive to the ethnic origin and that status which he will have in the unfamiliar to him country.

As F. Mayer notes [7], sometimes the degree of ethnocultural distinctions is so great that there can be difficulties at communication of students, and then there is also mutual understanding between them which involves removal of a psychological barrier at communication.

As for the period of aging of foreign students, which conducts in different ethnic culture, it should be noted that, it suggests a new circle of socialization in unaccustomed conditions for him. Depending on how close an old and a new ethnic cultures are, a previous socialization can simplify or prevent from getting new social roles.

It was determined in J.T. Gulahorn and J.E. Gulahorn researches [8] that coming home a foreign student after a long and successful period abroad finds himself as «stranger» in his own ethnic culture. Some students that deeply identified themselves with a foreign ethnic culture abroad, clash with an old tradition values.

Foreign students from ethnic cultures where the national status is very important wanted others to appreciate that fact [9, 10]. And this detail should be taken into consideration during working with foreign students [11].

In order to approbate the program of psychological support of foreign students in Kazakhstani universities during their adaptation 2 groups of students were singled out and researched: the control group of unprepared students and the experimental group of prepared students.

At examination of personal qualities in interpersonal interaction in empirical research we used the following methods: interview, R. B. Cattell multifactor individual research method, H. J. Eysenck

Personality Inventory, T. Leary The Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality method, personal differential, self-assessment of mental states [12].

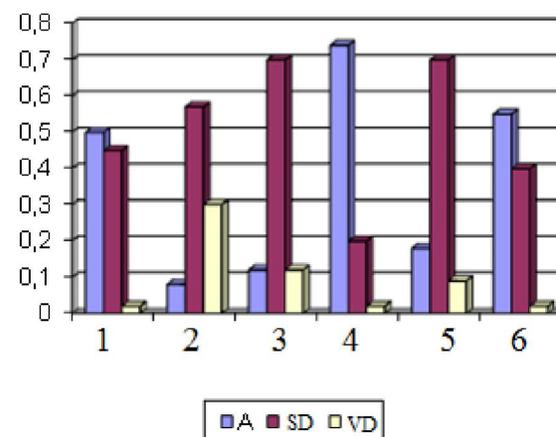
Those methods allowed to study the dynamics of personal indicators in the process of students' the interethnic adaptation and to determine the effectiveness of our developed method of psychological help in the interethnic deadaptation.

Work with the probationers, carried out according to the principles of research of interethnic adaptation, consisted of four basic stages. Each stage consisted in carrying out diagnostic procedures.

With all the students of the experimental group during the month special lessons were conducted which directed to preparation of adapting new ethnocultural environment.

The following diagnostic material during the all steps of research allowed to observe the effectiveness of ethnocultural training program. At examination of an average indicators of personal level and interpersonal relations level of students from the experimental group essential changes were noted, which are not marked in the control group and seriously affected on the students adaptation level.

In order to determine level of adaptation and deadaptation and evaluation of the level of program effectiveness the students' comparative analysis was carried out in the control and experimental group (Picture 1).



**Picture 1. Level of mental adaptation of control and experimental groups at 1, 3, 4 investigation phases**

As it is shown, before joining different cultural environment on the first phase, the students of the experimental group have already had a strong character of adaptation rather than the control groups ones (experimental group: effective mental adaptation (And) – 76%, unstable mental adaptation

(SD) – 24%, high level of deadaptation (VD) – 0%; control group: And – 52%, SD – 48%, VD – 0%). It is connected with that during diagnostic actions training of students for occurrence into the new ethnocultural environment was already conducted. Efficiency of the program of the ethnocultural training, carried out with students of experimental group, we can estimate when comparing results of two groups at the 3rd stage.

The research has showed that deadaptation in the experimental group is present, but not so clearly expressed and, as in the control group (experimental group: A - 19% , SD - 71% , VD - 1 % , control group: A - 1 % , SD - 57% , VD - 33%). At the 4th stage in the experimental group results also differ significantly in comparison with the control group (experimental group: A - 57%, SD - 43%, VD - 0 % , control group: A - 14 % , SD - 72 % , VD - 14%). This can be explained by the fact that timely psychological aid gave a positive result, which resulted in more successful rehabilitation.

Basing on the analysis of the mean values of parameters, we can assume that the degree of adaptation is dependent on the individual preparation for accession to other cultural environment and interaction with representatives of a new ethnic group [13].

Structure of internal connections at each stage in the experimental group has its own specifics both on individual level and at the level of interpersonal relationships (Pic. 2).

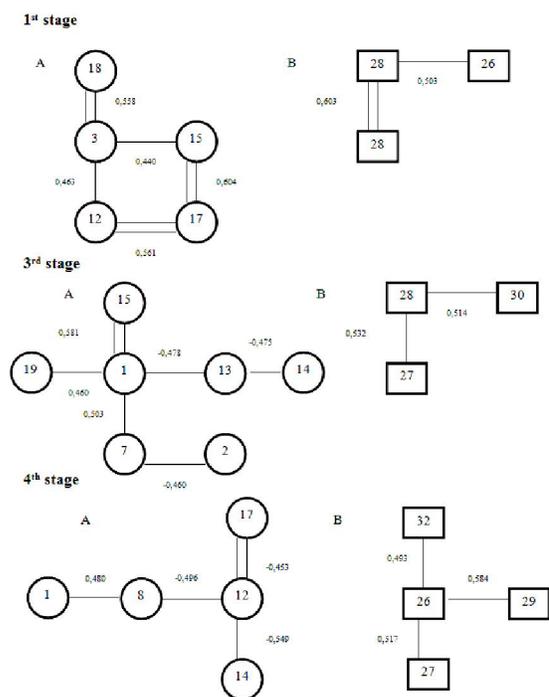
At 1<sup>st</sup> stage, the more significant association between P.15 and P.17, P.12 is marked, which is reflected in a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence of students. Indicator of emotional stability (P.3) is in conjunction with the indicators of volitional qualities, independence (P.18). More confident behavior towards people (P.28) corresponds to the persistence (P.26), and willingness to collaborate with people (P.33).

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage results and nature of relationships have changed. We have a low level of sociability (P.1), corresponding to the timidity and indecision (P.7), low activity (P.19), suspicion and mistrust (P.9), while maintaining high self-control (P.15). Character level of interpersonal relations indicates a relationship between indicators P.27, P.28, P.30, which means that students have a high level of stubbornness and persistence which corresponds to a high level of emotional restraint, thus there is a thrift and independence.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> stage the center of the pleiad is P.12, which interacts with P.17, P.14, P.8, P.1. Nature of the relationship between these parameters means that more confident behavior of students corresponds to self-acceptance, satisfaction,

autonomy and independence, high level of sociability. The presence of self-confidence in their behavior (P.26) is connected with a propensity to cooperate (P.32), but there are selfish traits such as thrift, narcissism (P.27).

When comparing the results of the research of experimental and control groups subjects, received at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of the study of ethnic adaptation, we can see a number of differences. In particular, it was found that in the control group unconfident behavior, emotional instability and high frustration are present, and in the experimental group we do not notice clear indicators.



**Picture 2. Correlation pleads of experimental group at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> research stages**

As we could verify, structure and order of the relationship indicators are different in various conditions of adaptation. Dynamic mapping of correlation structures, as well as inter-layer connections, both in the control and experimental groups of subjects confirms that during the adaptation period there are no stable and permanent connections. There is a continuous change of them.

Experience gained during the research and practice activities with students in foreign culture environment allows us to create and develop means and methods of psychological assist in adaptation to a new life event.

The research has shown that many students are facing ethnic deadaptation, the level of severity depends on each individual case and on the

individual personality characteristics of the person. Adaptation in cultural environment develops the ability to create new ways to interact with representatives of other cultures, adapting to each other, as well as to assess adequately and understand behavior patterns due to cultural factors, which leads to self-development and personal growth of the individual, but on the condition of timely social and psychological support. As Odeggard noted - a man caught in the cultural environment is in a situation of crisis. Efficiency out of it largely depends on the preparedness of the migrant and its adaptive capacity. As we can see, each person faces difficulties in cultural environment, and prepared to interethnic contacts people can assess problems and overcome their own, which gives an opportunity to interact positively and painlessly with a new ethnic group and reduce exclusion.

Use of well-chosen methods of psychological care based on individual personality characteristics has a positive impact on the effectiveness of social and psychological adjustment. Individual life experience, his willingness to change, knowledge of the culture and customs of a new country, plays an important role in the success of ethnic adaptation, this also facilitated by such personal characteristics that we found in his study, as low authoritarianism, lack of rigidity, tolerance and self-esteem adequate, emotional stability, high self-control of behavior, sociability. Value system of a migrant has a great impact on the effectiveness of adaptation, namely their human components, such as tolerance for different views, interest in others, the tendency to cooperate. Personality characteristics of a person must be in accordance with new cultural norms, the norms of the country from which migrants have to face, getting into the cultural environment.

Expansion of world ethnic picture allows students to interact effectively with a new ethnic group and to avoid ethnic tensions. Difficulty in adapting ethnic identity arises from differences in values that are common for different cultures characterizing human behavior and the level of adaptation. Knowledge of ethnic features helps to investigate the nature of the problems of interethnic deadaptation, to better understand the cause of the phenomena and processes that can have a positive impact in the adaptation of the person.

The program of ethno-cultural training helps in preparation of students to interact with a new ethnic group, in which the acquisition of knowledge of the students of the host culture, familiarization with the differences between their own ethnic and cultural values and behavioral norms and ethnic culture of the host society are taken as a basis.

The performed review of works written by

native and foreign researchers on a problem of foreign students' adaptation in conditions of a new ethno-cultural environment has shown that the situation is specified correctly and the research theme is topical. But for today there is still no clear definition of the essence of a person interethnic adaptation in a scientific literature; the matters of a psychological help to migrants (in particular, to students during student exchanges) are elucidated poorly. The foreign authors' researches mark the problem of foreign students' interethnic deadaptation and specify the necessity to prepare them for an interethnic interaction being yet in their native cultural environment.

This psychological research allowed us to create a social-psychological portrait of a foreign student in a Kazakhstani high school and to get the objective data on the educand's possibilities, which can be a reference point in a choice of forms and methods of the differentiated approach to the personality of each student in an international educational group and a choice of the most expedient and effective methods of psychological and pedagogical influence upon the educatee.

Thus, the dynamics of a psychological adaptation is demonstrated by the increasing independence (self-sufficiency), autonomy, self-determination, authorship, creativity and tolerance.

Summing up, we should notice that the problem of the world ethnic picture transformation is still one of the most urgent problems in theoretical and practical spheres. In conditions of the increasing life dynamics and changing ethno-cultural environment, and as a result of wider opportunities of the scientific and student exchange, international tourism and trade, the increasing number of people from many countries co-operate with each other, which cause a number of complexities connected with the ethnicity-caused and individual peculiarities of the interaction participants. The research has shown that the international character of higher education in Kazakhstan defines an actuality of the further development of the foreign students' adaptation psychology as a "new" branch in the practical social psychology.

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