

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF “ADAPTATION” IN EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*The article examines the problem of personality adaptation and self-adaptation in the context of higher education, with a particular focus on first-year university students. The transition from school to university is accompanied by significant psychological, social, and academic challenges that often result in difficulties in mastering educational programs, decreased academic performance, and increased dropout rates. The study analyzes adaptation as a prerequisite for active learning and successful functioning of students within a new social and educational environment. Special attention is given to the lack of necessary academic skills among first-year students and the insufficient coordination of pedagogical interaction between teachers and students as key factors hindering effective adaptation. Successful student adaptation is considered through involvement in a new social environment, participation in educational and cognitive processes, and integration into a new system of interpersonal relationships. The article emphasizes the importance of timely support and the creation of favorable pedagogical conditions for the formation of students' social and professional identity, as well as for their personal and professional development.*

At present, the problem of personality adaptation and self-adaptation, as well as the formation of social and professional identity, is extremely relevant. The issue of first-year university students' adaptation is currently at the center of attention of many researchers and practitioners working in the field of education. This is evidenced by a large number of published articles, textbooks, and dissertations.

First-year students often lack various skills and competencies that are necessary at university for successful mastery of the academic program. Attempts to compensate for



this deficiency through perseverance alone do not always lead to success. It takes a considerable amount of time for students to adapt to the conditions of higher education, and many achieve this at a very high cost. As a result, academic performance during the first year is often low, and dropout rates after examination sessions are high. Adaptation to new conditions requires significant effort; therefore, there are substantial differences between learning activities and educational outcomes at school and at university. One of the reasons for low levels of student adaptation is the lack of coordination in pedagogical interaction between teachers and students when organizing learning methods.

Adaptation itself serves as a prerequisite for active activity and as a necessary condition for its implementation. This reflects the positive value of adaptation for the successful functioning of an individual in a particular social role. Adaptive capacity is understood as a person's ability to adjust to various demands (social and physical) of the environment without experiencing internal discomfort or conflict with the surrounding environment.

Difficulties in adaptation are essentially difficulties in coordinating the joint efforts of teachers and students in organizing effective learning methods.

Successful student adaptation can be analyzed as their involvement:

- ✓ in a new social environment;
- ✓ in educational and cognitive processes;
- ✓ in a new system of interpersonal relationships.

Former school students enter university while still being on the path toward self-determination. Many consciously choose a specialty in which they intend to receive education and work in the future; however, there are also those whose life plans are not yet defined. The way in which individuals become acquainted with new conditions of entry into a social environment, as well as how they overcome difficulties in acquiring professional skills (especially in the absence of independent learning skills), determines the formation of their ability to find ways of self-realization not only within their profession but also beyond it. On the basis of these skills, personal and professional growth, as well as the formation of life plans, will be built in the future.

Thus, today the problems of personality adaptation and self-adaptation, as well as the formation of social and professional identity, remain extremely relevant.

In psychology, the term "adaptation" refers to the restructuring of an individual's psyche under the influence of objective environmental factors, as well as a person's ability to adjust to various environmental demands without experiencing internal discomfort or conflict with the environment [1].

Problems of adaptation are among the most fundamental interdisciplinary scientific issues, which are studied at pedagogical, psychological, as well as socio-economic, biomedical, and other levels.

The study of the process of first-year students' adaptation to new conditions involves an analysis of the category of "adaptation." In the encyclopedic dictionary, the term "adaptation" is defined as "...the adaptation of self-organizing systems to changing environmental conditions," which mainly characterizes the medical and biological aspects of this process [2].

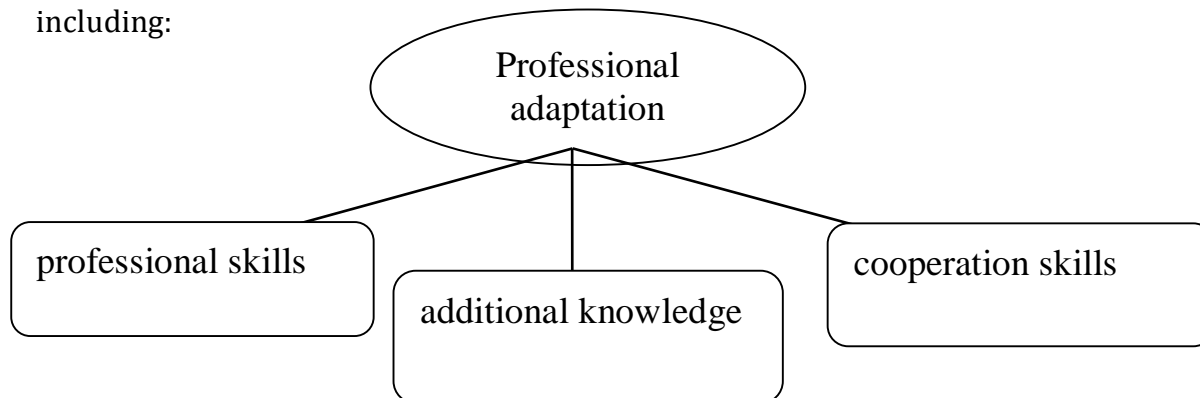
Adaptation (from Latin “adapto” – to adapt) is the process of adjusting to changing environmental conditions [3].

There are several types of adaptation: psychophysiological, socio-psychological, professional, and organizational.

“Psychophysiological adaptation” is adaptation to new physical and psychological workloads and physiological working conditions. During psychophysiological adaptation, a set of conditions develops that exert various psychophysiological influences on an employee during work.

“Socio-psychological adaptation” is adaptation to a relatively new society, norms of behavior, and relationships within a new team. In the process of socio-psychological adaptation, a person becomes involved in the system of interpersonal relations of the group, with its traditions, norms of life, and value orientations.

“Professional adaptation” is the gradual improvement of a person’s work abilities, including:



As a rule, job satisfaction occurs when certain results are achieved, which come as the employee masters the specifics of work at a particular workplace.

“Organizational adaptation” involves mastering one’s role and organizational status within the workplace and departments in the overall organizational structure [4].

Adaptation processes are characterized by duality: a person acquires new capabilities while simultaneously restructuring existing ones. Maintaining the effectiveness of activity is associated with readiness to adjust to new situations.

The immediate trigger for the beginning of social adaptation processes is often an individual’s or social group’s awareness that previously acquired behavioral patterns no longer ensure success and require urgent restructuring in accordance with new social conditions or conditions that are new for the adapting individuals.

In general, there are four stages of individual adaptation to a new social environment:

1. the initial stage, when a person or group understands how they should behave in a new social environment but is not yet ready to recognize and accept the value system of the new environment and strives to adhere to the old value system;
2. the stage of tolerance, when the individual, group, and new environment demonstrate mutual tolerance toward each other’s value systems and behavior;





3. accommodation, that is, recognition and acceptance by individuals of the main elements of the value system of the new environment while the environment recognizes certain values of the individuals or group;

4. assimilation, i.e., complete coincidence of the value systems of the individual, group, and environment [5].

Within the framework of the humanistic orientation of psychology, issues of adaptation are analyzed in the context of optimal interactions between the individual and the environment. A. Maslow considers adaptation processes as dynamic processes of interaction between the individual and the environment, with the degree of integration with the environment being the main criterion of personality adaptation [6].

Fundamental issues of socio-psychological adaptation of personality are reflected in the works of domestic and foreign researchers such as A. A. Ball, L. I. Bozhovich, V. A. Petrovsky, J. Piaget, S. Freud, E. Erikson, and others.

In the neo-Freudian approach, adaptation is analyzed in the context of social activity of the individual. Modern psychoanalysts widely use Freud's concepts of "alloplastic" and "autoplastic" adaptation, distinguishing two types of psychological adaptation:

1. "Alloplastic adaptation", achieved through changes in the external world made by a person to align it with their needs.

2. "Autoplastic adaptation", ensured by changes in the individual (their structure, skills, etc.), through which they adapt to the environment [7].

Among psychoanalytic approaches, the conceptual approach of E. Erikson deserves special attention. He proposed the idea of continuous mutual adaptation between the individual and society. The adaptation process is described by him through the formula: contradictory-anxiety-defensive reactions of the individual and the environment leading either to harmonious balance or conflict. Erikson analyzes conflict as a possible outcome of interaction between a person and the environment when defensive reactions and environmental "concessions" are insufficient to restore balance [8].

G. A. Ball considers the concept of adaptation based on universal tendencies toward achieving balance between components of real systems. He argues that the category of adaptation is applicable to analyzing personality development and its psychological mechanisms. Ball emphasizes that the tendency toward balance, as an expression of the principle of regularity of existence, occurs at all levels of matter formation, from physical to social. According to him, adaptation processes are aimed not only at preserving and reproducing predetermined relationships but also at transcending the existing psychological situation [9].

According to J. Piaget's concept, adaptation in biology and psychology is viewed as the unity of two oppositely directed processes: accommodation and assimilation. Accommodation ensures changes in the functioning of the organism or actions of the subject in accordance with environmental properties, while assimilation modifies elements of the environment by incorporating them into existing structures or behavior schemes. These processes are closely interconnected and mutually mediated: "There is no assimilation without accommodation, just as there is no accommodation without assimilation."



Piaget states that adaptation ensures balance between the organism's influence on the environment and the environment's influence on the organism, or balance in subject-object interaction. Sources of adaptation are usually understood as changes in the object of adaptation (natural or social environment) or changes in the subject of adaptation, i.e., the individual [10].

L. I. Bozhovich points out the dependence of adaptation on ontogenetic stages. At early stages, psychological traits emerge as a result of the child's adaptation to environmental demands. Later, these traits gain independent significance and influence further development. The child does not merely adapt to circumstances but actively refracts environmental influence based on previously formed personal qualities, consciously or unconsciously adopting a certain internal position. At higher levels of development, conscious goals increasingly regulate assimilation and accommodation, turning the subject from a passive assimilator of social experience into its creator [11].

In this article, we want to show the practice of studying the problems of first-year students' adaptation to university conditions:

Admission to university inevitably affects students' inner well-being, self-confidence, calmness, and psychological comfort, commonly referred to as "adaptation." The main task of teachers is to understand how first-year students adapt to university life and to provide assistance if necessary.

Student adaptation to learning is a complex, lengthy, and sometimes painful process due to the need to abandon familiar patterns and overcome numerous adaptation and professional difficulties.

Students' psychological and age-related characteristics include emotional immaturity, openness, suggestibility, and self-identification. The learning environment plays a crucial role, especially since students often come from diverse social backgrounds, such as rural and urban areas, affecting the adaptation process differently.

I. G. Repyeva believes that successful adaptation requires:

1. considering adaptation difficulties when designing curricula;
2. using teaching methods focused on developing analytical skills rather than memorization;
3. implementing an "Introduction to the Specialty" course;
4. using adaptation training programs;
5. offering a "Business Communication Psychology" course;
6. increasing the role of academic advisors (curators) [12].

Successful adaptation is expressed through involvement in a new social environment, educational activity, and a new system of relationships. Timely diagnostics allows for individualized approaches.

Various methods are used to study adaptation, including observation-based school adaptation diagnostics, intellectual lability tests, the Bourdon correction test, projective tests (Tree test), Eysenck's test, and psychoneurological adaptation methods [13].

In conclusion, the structural approach in education emphasizes not only individual traits but also interpersonal relationships. The goal of psychological and pedagogical



support is to help each student achieve success by creating a safe and supportive environment.

Forms of support include collective, group, and individual approaches. Collective forms include adaptation camps and academic advising.

Adaptation camps help students integrate into university culture, reduce anxiety, build relationships, and develop teamwork skills. Tutors play a vital role in guiding students, fostering responsibility, and supporting personal development.

Adaptation success significantly influences students' academic achievements, psychological well-being, and life orientation. Parents also play an important role in supporting students during this transition.

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