REVISTA ESPACIOS

Social and personality roles in the adaptation of the first-year students in the study groups

Roles sociales y de personalidad en la adaptación de los estudiantes de primer año de los grupos de estudio

Marina Gennadyevna FEDOTOVA 1; Alla Georgievna DMITRIEVA 2; Ekaterina Sergeevna RUKAVISHNIKOVA 3; Elena Valentinovna STOLYAROVA 4

Contents

ABSTRACT:

The article describes social and personality roles in the study-group of 1st-year students based on the research conducted at Plekhanov Russian University of Economics and the authors tackle the issue of students' adaptation to new social environment of tertiary education. The research comprises three stages and employs psychopedagogical techniques aimed at examining students' integration to higher education activity. The article focuses on the details and outcome of the first research stage to evaluate individuals' personality roles in the process of establishing of small social group. This issue is considered to be increasingly important as first year students encounter challenges in both academic and personal spheres and seek for identifying their own personality and group roles. The authors also reveal the techniques of the research that ensure achiving the target goals.

Keywords: psycho-pedagogical techniques, adaptation, social roles, personality roles, small social group, 1st-year students, foreign language, tirtiary education, balanced group

RESUMEN:

El artículo describe los roles sociales y de personalidad en el estudio-grupo de estudiantes de 1er año basados en la investigación realizada en la Plekhanov Universidad rusa de economía y los autores abordan el tema de la adaptación de los estudiantes a un nuevo entorno social de terciario Educación. La investigación comprende tres etapas y emplea técnicas psicopedagógicas destinadas a examinar la integración de los estudiantes en la actividad de educación superior. El artículo se centra en los detalles y resultados de la primera etapa de investigación para evaluar los roles de personalidad de los individuos en el proceso de establecimiento de un pequeño grupo social. Este tema se considera cada vez más importante ya que los estudiantes de primer año se enfrentan a desafíos tanto en esferas académicas como personales y buscan identificar su propia personalidad y roles grupales. Los autores también revelan las técnicas de la investigación que aseguran achiving los objetivos objetivo.

Palabras clave: técnicas psico-pedagógicas, adaptación, roles sociales, roles de personalidad, grupo social pequeño, estudiantes de 1er año, lengua

1. Introduction

Higher school studies mean working with individuals who have passed the age of puberty, but still have immature nervous system, which will mature as they grow up. Immature nervous system, physical and psychological stress, new social environment - all these factors call for necessity of measures to adapt and integrate first-year students into the university. The measures facilitating adjustment and accommodation to the new activity, social relations and new status – a student status, shall be the key component of the pedagogical process and curriculum.

Teaching at higher education institutions becomes complicated, primarily, due to the fact, that during the initial academic terms first-year students are in desperate need of adaptation that takes much time and effort and directly influences successful acquisition of professional knowledge and overall learning process.

Referring to the adaptation role in the economics curriculum it is important to note that economics students are under double pressure. Not only the need of behavioral changes to match the dynamic environment but also large quantities of previously unknown information associated with the economics educational sector make the teaching and learning process even more difficult . Economics and related disciplines are continuously embracing new scientific and hands-on knowledge and researches as the economics science is developing and keeping up to date on an ongoing basis.

First-year students have the experience of previous school relationship, which is generally based on the territorial pattern. The major approach to formation of a student study group (a student group hereinafter is referred to as a small social group) is the specialty selected as the main subject. The group is formed being based on professional interests and abilities and this assumes no face-to-face contacts among the students prior to the university entrance.

Siomichev A.V. in (Siomichev 1985, p. 9) states that "first –year student adaption involves overcoming difficulties associated with entering a new social environment, establishing intergroup relations, adaptation to a new mode of study" (Siomichev 1985, p. 9).

Various psychological techniques become an important teaching tool and learning how to apply them is an important aspect related to practical teaching activities (Siomichev 1985, p. 9; Dikaya 2007; Dubovitskaya and Krylova 2010; Gingel 2007; Kurts 2010; Kusakina 2011; Litvinova, Kazin, Lurie and Bulatova 2011; Zhirkova 2008).

2. Methodology

Three psychological techniques that study person self- assessment and self-awareness, social roles in the group and group cohesiveness have been selected for this research.

2.1. Q Methodology – Stephenson sorting.

This technique studies person self-image and gives an insight into the behavior and function of the individual in the group. The advantage provided by this technique is the chance to study the real self of the research subject and not compliance with the social code and trends. It allows identify six major person behavioral trends in a real group: dependence, independence, sociability, unsociability, fight acceptance and avoidance. This questioner consists of 60 entries questions and was submitted to the research subjects as a list, with "yes" or "no" response options, in exceptional cases a "not sure" option was acceptable. We will describe the above six trends in brief. Dependence – internal and external need to accept group standards and values; a personality apt to "dependence" trend is often described as a humble individual, obeying instructions.

Independence – strive not to agree to group standards; such personality is apt to self-

sufficiency, determination and pursuit of own interests. Sociability – strive to create emotional connections inside the group and beyond it, cheerfulness and interest for communication.

Unsociability – missing strive to create emotional connections inside the group and beyond it, unsociable demeanor, passivity, reticence. Fight acceptance – strive to participate in the life of the group, to achieve a status in the group, insistence in achieving own goals, exactingness. Fight avoidance – avoidance of interaction, indifference and quest for compromise, self-surrender.

2.2. Group roles T. Galkina T. (2001, pp.182-187).

This technique allows study roles of separate individuals in the group describing the roles consistent with their functions. In a successfully functioning group, each its member plays one or several of eight roles described below and these roles are distributed inside the group in a way when, ideally, each role could be represented, at least, by one person. This technique identifies the following roles and matching functions and attributes.

Chairperson.

Functions: collects and reviews various opinions and makes decisions. Traits: listening skill, good oral communication and public speaking skills, logic, determination. Type: calm, stable, needs a highly motivated group.

Builder.

Functions: a leader joining efforts of the group members. Traits: agility, determination. Type: dominating, sociable, needs a qualified and skilled group.

A chairperson vs builder – two opposite approaches to the general management of the group.

Generator of ideas

Functions: generating of ideas. Traits: good cognitive development, creativity. Type: a personality generating many materials; needs a motivated circle of people who will respond to his/her ideas.

Evaluator of ideas (critic).

Functions: analysis and logical derivations; control. Traits: analytical thinking, intelligence, comprehensive knowledge; control over the group and its touch with reality. Type: a reasonable and strong-will personality type; needs continuous new information flow.

Work facilitator.

Functions: converts ideas into particular tasks and facilitates their implementation. Traits: managerial skills, will power, determination. Type: strong-willed personality type; needs group proposals and ideas provided by the group.

Group facilitator.

Functions: encourages harmony in the group, accommodates differences, and is aware of the group needs and issues. Traits: sensitivity, diplomacy, kindness, sociability. Type: an empathic and sociable personality type; needs continuous contact with all the members of the group.

Explorer of resources.

Functions: a mediator with the external environment. Traits: sociable, devoted, energetic, attractive. Type: "assertive extravert", needs liberty of action.

Finaliser.

Functions: urges the group to complete everything on time and until the end. Traits: professional meticulousness, commitment, responsibility. Type: meticulous personality type; needs group responsibility and commitment.

2.3. Determination of K. Seashore group cohesion index (Fetiskin, Kozlov and Manuylov 2002, pp.179-180).

Group cohesion is one of the most important parameters indicating the group integration level, its cohesion to form a unity. This means group affiliation for the members, their mutual relations, commitment to unified values and cues. This parameter may be determined using the survey technique that includes five questions. The resultant parameter means group cohesion index ranging from a low to high value.

3. Research process and preliminary summing up.

The research was carried out in several stages to reduce a load on research subjects and avoid impact on the progress and efficiency of the pedagogical process. All three techniques were applied in the same student group during the first academic term (October – December 2016). Since participation in the research was on the voluntary and non-attributable basis, each student was at liberty not to participate in the research. 24 first-year students were surveyed.

The authors of this article, PRUE foreign language teachers who further plan to teach these students during next years and a professional psychologist conducted this research (table 1).

Table 1
"Q - Sorting" technique application results

Trends	Number of the respondents featuring prevalence of this trend
Dependence	13 (1 – the trend is not apparent, ambivalence)
Independence	10 (1 the trend is not apparent, ambivalence)
Sociability	23
Unsociability	1
Fight acceptance	8 (5 the trend is not apparent, ambivalence)
Fight avoidance	11 (5 the trend is not apparent, ambivalence)

The review of research results has shown that just over half of the students demonstrate trends to accept the group norms, indecisiveness and submission to leaders. On the other hand, nearly half the group demonstrates behavior not depending on group norms, self-sufficiency and persistence in goal achievement.

Nearly the absolute majority (96 %) of the respondents demonstrate strive to create emotional connections, sociability and probable desire to make friends inside the group. As per research results only one person demonstrated the unsociability trend, though the relevant results are nearly ambivalent. Distinct manifestation of sociability is typical for a young team, where social connections are underdeveloped and the fellow student initial response is not easy to forecast due to insufficient communication experience. The high-degree sociability manifestation also suggests the "health" of the group that managed to avoid any serious conflicts during the first weeks of studies. Sociality and interest to the fellow students constitute an important result of this research, which will help to identify the pedagogical process concept.

Referring to the trend ambivalence that, probably, tells us about the inner conflict of the personality, it is important to address the results of fight avoidance/fight acceptance research. More than 20% of the respondents demonstrate trend to active participation in the group social life and achievement of high social status on the one hand, and strive to avoid conflicts on the other hand. Nearly half the group demonstrates strive to avoid conflicts, seek compromise and

readiness to self- surrender. More than 30% seek high status in the group, and are ready to pursue their goals, not avoiding conflicts.

It is important to note that strive to avoid conflicts may be motivated not only by personal traits of the individuals, unstable connections in a new young social group, but also by the researcher status, i.e. a teacher.

Results derived through application of "Group roles" techniques by T.P. Galkina (Dikaya 2007; pp.182-187) (Table 2).

The results derived through application of this technique are submitted in a table for illustrative purposes.

Table 2
Results derived through application of
"Group roles" techniques by T.P. Galkina

Roles/ students	Chairperson	Builder	Generator of ideas	Evaluator of ideas	Work facilitator	Group facilitator	Explorer of resources	Closer
1						+		
2						+		
3								+
4						+		
5						+	+	+
6	+							
7	+							
8					+			
9								+
10			+		+			
11	+							
12	+							
13						+	+	
14			+					
15		+						
16								

17					+			
18						+		
19		+						
20	+		+					
21	+				+	+		+
22					+	+		
23								+
24					+			
Total	6	2	3	0	6	8	2	5

This table illustrates the following trends:

First, nearly all the roles but for one, are relatively evenly distributed among the students. The most respondents posture themselves as a "Group facilitator" – a person responsible for the emotional comfort inside the group, defuses conflicts and improves the communication quality and this correlates with the results obtained using the previous technique. Focus on productive communication and conflict avoidance can describe the group at the end of the first academic term.

Second, a quarter of the group members posture themselves as a "Chairperson" i.e. a person who makes decisions and considers the group motivation and resources. The other quarter of the group members posture themselves as a "Work facilitator" (no "Chairpersons" view themselves as "Work facilitators"); they revise the "Chairperson's" ideas and are responsible for dynamic actions towards implementation of ideas.

4. Conclusion

The results derived through the technique application suggest relatively balanced role distribution, where each student views his/her role in the group functioning and perceives her/himself as its part, accordingly. All the students ignored only one role during the first academic term, that is "Evaluator of ideas", role of a critic who is continuously assessing group ideas and actions with reference to the real situation and making corrections to them as well. We believe that this fact does confirm the group immaturity, when its members are not sufficiently acquainted with each other and prefer not to assess actions of the people around. This fact also correlates with the trend to conflict-free environment and maintaining amicable atmosphere despite the fact that many students are capable of confrontation, which is confirmed by the data obtained through Q-sorting method application.

Results derived through application of K. Seashore Group cohesion index method (Dubovitskaya and Krylova 2010, pp.179-180).

The research conducted as per this technique resulted in determination of this group cohesion index. 18 respondents showed high-level group cohesion, 6 – medium-level and higher, which suggests high integration level and common goals existing for all the first-year students surveyed. We are prone to assess the obtained results as manifestation of respondent expectations for the further period of studies. Since the group was formed less than 6 months

ago, we assume that the received results represent more like idealized insight into the group functioning.

The research results seem extremely important as they demonstrate the students' readiness to form a balanced and cohesive group, which can significantly enhance performance and teaching efficiency of each future qualified expert in the economics area.

References

Dikaya L.G. (2007). Adaptation: Methodological issues and research envelope. Adaptation psychology and social environment: modern approaches, challenges, prospects. Mocow: Psychology Institute at Russian Academy of Sciences, pp. 17-41.

Dubovitskaya T.D. and Krylova A.V. (2010). Method of research of students adaptability in a higher education establishment 2010. Psychology Science and Education Digital Journal, 2

Fetiskin N.P., Kozlov V.V. and Manuylov G.M. (2002). Seashore group cohesion index determination. Social-psychological diagnostics on individual and small group development. Moscow, pp. 179–180.

Galkina T.P. (2001). Management sociology: from a group to team: Training manual. Moscow: Finansy I Statistika, 182–187.

Gingel Ye. (2007). Dialogue as an adaptation attribute for first-year students 2007. Higher education in Russia, 9, 158-160.

Kurts M.V. (2010). Pedagogical factors and obstructions to development of student self-realization capabilities in learning activity: synopsis of thesis Cand. Sc. (Psychology). Kazan, pp. 23.

Kusakina Z. S.N. (2011). Psychological readiness to studies in a higher education establishment. Preschool Educational Institution Management, 8, 243-247.

Litvinova N. A., Kazin E. M., S. B. Lurie S. B. and Bulatova O. V. (2011). Role of individual psychophysiological features in adaptation to mental activity. Proceedings of Kemerovo State University, 1, 141-147.

Siomichev A.V. (1985). Psychological features of student adaptation to higher education school learning and communication environment. Synopsis of thesis Cand. Sc. (Psychology). Leningrad, pp. 17.

Zhirkova A.V. (2008). Psychological and pedagogical support of educational process as a precondition for student sociological and psychological adaptation. Science and Education, 2, 10-13.

1. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, 117997, Russia, Moscow, Stremyanny Lane, 36; E-mail: mgfedotova@yandex.ru

2. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, 117997, Russia, Moscow, Stremyanny Lane, 36; E- mail: allagdmitrieva@gmail.com

3. MPhil, The Red Cross (Austria), E-mail: erukavishnikova@gmail.com

4. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, 117997, Russia, Moscow, Stremyanny Lane, 36; E-mail: elena100lyarova@gmail.com

[Índice]

[In case you find any errors on this site, please send e-mail to webmaster]