

SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF STUDENT AS A REFERENCE GROUP OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION: DEVELOPMENT OF TRENDS

Irina V. Shaposhnikova

Kherson State University (Ukraine)

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of socio-cultural environment of the student youth as a reference group of professional socialization. According to the collected theoretical and practical material, the development components, trends and standards are reviewed. The research results show that the process of unsuccessful professional socialization and adaptation, which may result in a process of social exclusion, also deserves careful research attention. The obstacles of successful professional socialization are mentioned, such as a sharp increase in social differentiation and changes in the structure of public relations, which act as factors – demotivators of the process of professional socialization. It is emphasized that the main determinant of stabilization should act as handling social conflicts (misunderstandings), which is inevitable. It is noted that the initial professional socialization within the university as a social institution can be seen as a means of reducing social conflicts, because in the professional socialization and proper labor standards and values, the greatest achievement of combining norms and values is held.

KEY WORDS: reference group, socialization, socio-cultural environment, professional socialization and adaptation.

Anotacija

Straipsnis skiriamas sociokultūrinės aplinkos, kaip profesinės socializacijos, tyrimui dalyvaujant studentiško jaunimo kontrolinei grupei. Remiantis sukaupta teorine ir praktine medžiaga, pristatomi plėtros komponentai, tendencijos ir standartai. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidžia, kad nesėkmingas profesinės socializacijos ir adaptacijos procesas gali turėti įtakos socialinės atskirties formavimuisi. Kaip sėkmingos profesinės socializacijos kliūtis autoriai išskiria socialinės diferenciacijos didėjimą ir viešųjų ryšių struktūros pokyčius, kurie veikia kaip pagrindiniai veiksniai, turintys įtakos profesinės socializacijos demotivacijos procesui. Akcentuojama, kad pagrindinė motyvacijos stabilizavimo prielaida – socialinių konfliktų priežasčių šalinimas. Universitetas, kaip pradinės profesinės socializacijos socialinis institutas, kuriame formuojasi studento požiūris į rinkos standartus ir vertybes bei darbo normų ir vertybių suderinamumą, vertinamas kaip prielaida mažinti socialinių konfliktų galimybes.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: kontrolinė grupė, socializacija, socialinė-kultūrinė aplinka, profesinė socializacija ir adaptacija.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15181/tbb.v7i12.1099>

Introduction

Ukrainian society in the last two decades has been undergoing significant social change. Institute of Education has been under significant transformations; this

fact has increased the number of people with higher education. Besides, the value of certain types of labour has significantly decreased.

Today the prestige of the profession is not associated with its social value, but with the level of income that relevant professional activity provides. Everything mentioned above causes some deformation of labour orientations and professional values of future specialists.

In addition, a basic requirement of modern employers is the need to ensure a higher level of professional adaptation to performing their professional functions. Under such circumstances, the only way to satisfy the current requirements for future employees is their social adaptation (as an ideal condition – their socialization) to future professional careers.

Considering the current student community as a stable reference group of professional socialization is certainly premature.

However, it is in the process of social interaction with the immediate environment during the study period the formation of a certain working and professional value is held, and there is interiorization of certain well-established social working norms (or professional activity).

At the same time these processes take place in parallel with the social transformations that are caused by public post-industrialization (post-modernization).

In the current process the very nature of broadcasting these values is changed determining their virtualization and informatization. As a result of this social control in its turn is weakened as a means of social pressure in the process of interiorization of norms. Also all the socio-ideological model of social development can be transformed.

Basic theoretical discussions on the transformation in advanced industrial countries are held around the theory presented by American sociologist R. Inglehart in his book “Quiet Revolution”, published in 1977 and later developed in his numerous articles and book published in 1991 “Cultural shift in advanced industrial society” (Inglehart, 1990, p. 90).

R. Inglehart substantiated that there is a gradual transition of society from the priority of “materialistic” values (advantage of physical and psychological safety and well-being) to the “post-materialistic” values – in which there is distinguished importance of belonging to a group of self-expression and quality of life.

In this sense, the student community serves as an environmental socialization of certain group regulations which in their turn determine the attractiveness (or unattractiveness) of certain professional activities, considering such a professional career in the light of opportunities to achieve certain public (group) standards.

Explanation of radical change of values in modern society is grounded on two hypotheses by R. Inglehart, approximately called as a deficiency hypothesis and a hypothesis of socialization.

Deficiency hypothesis derived from the assumption that the values of the individual reflect the socio-economic environment. People tend to give more importance to those needs, which they lack.

When the primary economic and psychological needs of the individual are satisfied, values based on them lose their previous importance and yield to others.

Following this hypothesis it could be expected that the change in economic conditions immediately lead to changes in the value priorities. That is a long period of economic growth and prosperity will lead to post-materialistic values, and economic decline – to reduction of their significance.

Supplement to the deficiency hypothesis is the socialization hypothesis, which suggests that the relationship factors and individual value priorities is not so straightforward. The social and political values of a grown-up individual are affected by his early socialization. In the case of occupational socialization stated thesis is entirely fair. However, while analyzing the professional socialization, this statement is false because of the fact that to complete the professional socialization one need a certain level of labor socialization and overall level of professional knowledge.

Canadian sociologist Scott Flanagan in the series of articles, criticizing Inglehart's theory, put forward an assumption concerning the existence of not one but two value planes in public consciousness – the plane of materialism / non-materialism and the plane of authoritarianism / liberalism. He also put forward the idea that change of values along authoritarian / libertarian plane is more important in today's environment. The results of his studies have shown that changes in values caused by the change from one generation to others, occurs only in the plane of the authoritarian / libertarian values (Inglehart, 1999, p. 268). Without going into the debate, it is worth noting that these dichotomies are interdependent and inter-related, because liberalism is one of the theoretical foundations of postmodernism. The second model is the description of the socio-cultural environment associated with traditional indicators of social status – income, education and occupation. Most likely is that thriving groups were in more secure economical position during their formation than the less prosperous group.

That is, the more successful the group is, the more it expresses post-materialistic values.

In our opinion, the Ukrainian realities indicate the adequacy of that part S. Flanagan's theory, which states that some age differences are more significant for authoritarian / libertarian values.

H. Andryeyenkova noted this situation in Russia: “Inglehart’s” “quiet revolution” in the sphere of values occurs primarily as a shift from authoritarian to libertarian values, or the so-called “participation values” (Andreenkova, 1994, p. 73–81). On the basis of these studies, which were based on the Inglehart’s theory H. Andryeyenkova notes that groups with higher socio-economic status should have more post-materialistic orientation than the group with lower status. But even if such dependence is indicated, there is a question about its causes. There are at least three explanations for the causes of such dependence.

The first one the scholar explains by crucial importance of attachment to post-materialistic values of economic security experienced by the individual. Another possible explanation may serve as a difference in the level of education. A third explanation for the strong link between socio-economic variable and materialistic / post-materialistic values, which Inglehart himself keeps to, is the differences in the degree of economic security that the individual felt during their formation.

It means that relations are important if they automatically combine levels of education and welfare, students come to an understanding of the harsh realities (Andreenkova, 1994, p. 73–81).

In general agreeing with the proposed model it should be noted that the national present is in the phase of transitivity, which leads to activation of postmodern values. In our opinion, we should also compare the virtual and the real possibilities of achieving certain social standards and values as a condition of goods (values) substitutes’ usage. We believe in the case of failing to achieve real prospects in education, for example, we can speak about getting a simulacrum of education (i.e., often a non-functional copy of the base product). In this context, the issue of transmission and transformation (as well as their own socialization) of postmodern values obtains more difficulties.

In this alternative to liberalism is authoritarianism (which may be in the form of state intervention in social processes). However, this model is appropriate for the national youth, which is quite a large group of students who prefer a career under the auspices of state paternalism.

Significant stratification of students occurs in the classroom too. It is not only the success, level of diligence, etc., but also differences in the factors motivating the process of learning. As a result of the author’s research it was revealed that a significant proportion of students responds adequately to market impulses and therefore is active in the development of knowledge. However, there is a parallel large group of students with the opposite determination. They are characterized by the absence of more or less clear guidelines, formal adjustment or exclusion from the educational process, great importance in the study of external stimuli – such as the “power” influence of the dean, strict monitoring of attendance and etc.

Moreover, they ignore the need for significant effort to master their knowledge, receiving of professional self-determination, social and protective functions of higher education in some cases form captive positions of students, paternalistic model of behavior. These aspects we associate with low labor socialization, and essentially vocational and educational exclusion.

An extreme form of this process may be disintegration, the causes of which may be insufficient initial level of social inclusion or social exclusion, having originated already in the process of learning as the result of cognitive dissonance, in case of conflict between personal values and the values and norms of a particular profession. The above mentioned fact leads to higher research attention to the process of integration of young people.

In the field of employment such integration contributed to the formation of two behavioral strategies: on the one hand, it is determined by the Russian researcher N. Fedotova as “a special type of behavior of social subject associated with minimizing the effort to achieve a pre-fixed and amount and quality of a reward for participating in the activities of various industrial and economic institutions, which is not associated with these efforts” (Bandura, Zajac, Kutcenko, 2006). On the other hand – to achieve the desired amount of compensation without key attention to the amount of effort that will be spent in the process of achieving it. In this first strategy does not guarantee even basic social and economic survival; the second can lead to social isolation.

As rightly N. Fedotova notes “stereotype, according to which young people in society was seen as a cheap and immature resource was gradually formed” (Fedotova, 1998, p. 15–16).

Also, the author notes that “in a society based on coercion, integration into social structures could be achieved only if the man meekly accepted their fate” (Bandura, Zajac, Kutcenko, 2006, p. 15–16). Without denying the first part of the statement it should be noted that the essence of adaptation (with which the researcher herself agrees) is the adaptation of the individual to the social and economic conditions, the roles and functions of social norms, etc.

Thus it is, in fact, a review of the individual with those standards. Feedback factor (a disagreement of the individual to follow them) means individual unwillingness to adapt to the conditions of a particular society. In fact, each individual in the process of adaptation has “meekly to accept their fate” or to be isolated from society. As the Russian author Yu. Zubok noted integration combines two parallel processes: mechanical incorporation into the social community and awareness of being part of this community.

At the empirical level, the integration of young people in society is determined by the extent of its involvement in the social structure and the degree of internal

self-identification with them through the interiorization of values and norms of the community (Zubok, 1998, p. 47). Agreeing with this opinion we consider it necessary to clarify that the integration of the professional activities also occurs as contamination and as self-awareness. The presence of a profession (education) and professional status will indicate relevant characteristics.

In this case, the latter is not possible without socialization before professional activity.

Instead, a significant impediment to successful professional socialization, in our opinion, is a sharp increase in social differentiation and changes in the structure of public relations, which are factor demotivating process of professional socialization. Moreover, in general intensive contacts of modern young generation of Ukrainian youth with new social mediators, uncharacteristic for the socialization of previous generations make generation differences more significant, and thus increase the socio-cultural and value-normative gap, which results in complications of generation dialogue (as in the field of professional socialization, in which the role of such a dialogue is significant). Yu. Zubok identifies a number of problems that prevent integration (and socialization, in our opinion) of young people in social structures and processes (including the professionalization):

- firstly, in terms of social transformation youth more often denies adult's experience than absorbs it. This changes the shape of the continuity in the first link of the reproductive process;
- secondly, the socio-economic crisis worsened situation of the most vulnerable groups, which include youth, and put it in conflict controversy with the public;
- thirdly, society still has not developed a clear understanding of the development model, thus the general adaptation strategies of young people are still confusing (Zubok, 1998, p. 47). While agreeing with the explanation it should be added that the lack of social priorities prevents the formation of life strategies not only for the youth.

Middle-aged people making decisions about the need to change life strategies also come into competition with the youth for building new living conditions and adaptation strategies in that social field, which they were not familiar with before.

In fact, the level of public competition is increasing, causing its sharpness, deepening controversy and complicating labor socialization format.

For example, if the middle aged people went to other social fields (in other industries, professions) their place would be occupied by the young. Their professional socialization will be carried out by the older generation, which further complicates the process of socialization through much greater generation misunderstanding.

However, considering the opinions of T. Parsons, we can say that the full integration of the processes in this case one cannot say about because the state of integration implies the existence of ordered conflict-free relations within the social system, the main essential characteristics which are recognized are “sustainability” and “social order” (Parsons, 1951, p. 180). Outlined social processes on the contrary exacerbate conflict in the social system (due to decreased demand for labor in the crisis economies, which include the economy of Ukraine). The absence of integration makes it impossible for young people to compete in the labor market. So obviously there is (or should be) other relatively conflict forms of social interaction in the process of social integration to labor and labor socialization.

At the same time one cannot but note that Ukrainian social reformation is carried out by the further complication of social organization, strengthening the structural and functional differentiation. This process is under growing tensions and social conflicts, contributing to their aggravation (Parsons, Shils, 1951). Processes of social post-modernization also deepen differentiation, further exacerbates the problem of labor socialization and integration. In this context, we can speak of the need to overcome the disintegration tendencies and way out of conflict within specific social groups (especially in the generation context).

Also some importance is given to preserving the integrity and stability of society as a whole by creating search systems integrating social mechanisms. Obviously scarce labor (which was the deficit as a result of the economic crisis) cannot be such resources. Therefore, handling unavoidable social conflicts (contradictions) should be the main determinant of stabilization.

Similar recommendations are given by Yu. Zubok, who in this context considers reconciliation as something different from the traditional understanding of the meaning of parsonian sense of integration. In her opinion, the integration should be seen not as the achievement of stability and immutability, but as a way of resolving social conflicts. Youth in the course of its development as a subject of social reproduction conflict with the social system at all levels.

Moreover, if under the conditions of social stability conflicts usually are local in nature and mostly resolved at the micro-level, in an unstable society there is their escalation to the macro-level that is to society as a whole (Zubok, 1998, p. 47). In this format, the primary professional socialization within the university as a social institution can be seen as a means of reducing social conflict because the socialization process in professional and proper labor standards and values is the greatest achievement of norms' and values' nearness.

In fact, labor and professional sphere acts as the only medium of social generation dialogue, the existence of which is objectively necessary (because work ac-

tivity is a purposeful form of activity , the implementation of which is impossible without the consent of the parties).

Thus, depending on the efficiency of the process of professional socialization young people can integrate into society that is can share all the social relations, structures and be approved in self-identification with them or experience social exclusion.

In this case, the appropriate exception can occur not at public, but at the professional level, which encourages young people to move away from the professional activities of a certain kind imitating professional search, or to attempt to put in other professional community (both occur fairly often).

Usually responsibility for the unsuccessful integration process is put on the social institution of education that does not provide sufficient conditions for the implementation of professional opportunities of young people (giving substandard knowledge, does not provide the quality of practice, etc.), prevents their self-realization, thus contributing to its social exclusion.

The process of unsuccessful professional socialization and adaptation, which may result in a process of social exclusion, also deserves careful research attention.

Received 2014 10 15

Approved for publishing 2015 06 08

References

- Andreenkova, A. V. (1994). *Materialistic/post-materialistic values in Russia*. The Sociological study Journal.
- Zubok, Y. A. (1998). Exclusive to the study of problems of youth. *The Sociological study Journal*.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Cultural shift in advanced industrial society*. Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R. (1999). *Modernization and post-modernization*. New Wave industrialization in the West.
- Parsons, T. (1951). *The Social System*. N.Y.
- Parsons, T., Shils, E. (eds.) (1951). *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bandura, S. I., Zajac, N. A., Kutcenko V. I. et al. (2006). *Social development of Ukraine: current perspectives of transformation*. Cherkasy: Brama–Ukraine.
- Fedotova, N. N. (1998). *Social integration of young people in work in the field of activity*. Saratov.