

Alienation of Personality in Higher Education

Pavel N. Afanasyev^a and Tatyana P. Sharaj^a

^aKazan (Volga region) Federal University, Kazan, RUSSIA

ABSTRACT

The problem of alienation of personality in the learning process is common for all the education levels in our country and abroad. In this connection, it is becoming increasingly important to identify its causes and the ways to overcome them. The article presents a complex vision of the phenomenon of alienation of personality in the field of higher education in modern Russian society from the philosophical, sociological, psychological and pedagogical positions. The general approach we chose when considering the phenomenon of alienation in the field of higher education is the activity approach which is well-developed by Russian researchers and examines the social subject as an active actor included in the actual system of social relations. Within the framework of empirical research conducted in the phenomenological tradition, the subjective experience of the individual in the system of higher education and the individual-personal side of the objective social reality is represented. In the article the factors affecting the alienation reproduction in the higher education learning process are revealed; the characteristics of the traditional approach in teaching, contributing to alienation are shown; the basic forms of alienation of high school students are highlighted; the most formulated and most established subjectivizing practices in higher education are described; the basic elements of subjectivizing social practices are formulated. The identified social practices of alienation overcoming may be directly used in the education process in higher school. Also, the main results of the study can be used in working-out the concept of specialists training in the system of higher education.

KEYWORDS

Alienation, identity, education, students, subjectivized practice

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 January 2016
Revised 10 May 2016
Accepted 22 May 2016

Introduction

Modern Russian society is in the process of economic, social and cultural transformations. Many scientists have concluded the crisis in the education system as the one of the most important social institutions of society (Rozin, 2013; Hvedchenya, 2014; Perminova, 2012).

CORRESPONDENCE Pavel N. Afanasyev ✉ af_pavel@mail.ru

© 2016 Afanasyev and Sharaj. Open Access terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) apply. The license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, on the condition that users give exact credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if they made any changes.

Speaking about the crisis of national education, - we also can note that it is difficult to find a country which would have been satisfied with their education system, - it should be noted that this crisis has been always mentioned. It has been talked about even in relatively prosperous times (Coombs, 1970).

Higher education is an element which closes the chain of social identity formation. It contributes to the formation of a specialist, professional, citizen. We can say that the current state of higher education determines the level of economic, scientific-technical and cultural progress of society as a whole.

Considering the crisis of russian higher education, we need to consider two aspects. Firstly, the connection of this crisis with the changes that have taken place in our country, and the arising problems of funding and of cooperation between science and education. Secondly, the connection of this crisis with the changes taking place on a global scale caused by the change of the social role of education in the modern world, the need to develop a new outlook, corresponding to the realities of post-industrial and information society.

Today, for many university students the value of higher education is determined by the formal diploma. The knowledge with which they come into contact, their own self-determination, self-education remain for them strange, and it is directly related to the quality of education, which in this case leaves much to be desired. The real interest in knowledge comes only after high school, when a graduate starts his practical activity. During the learning itself, this development doesn't happen, which means that a certain "incarnation" of the culture also doesn't happen. This is largely due to the dominance of formal rationality in the modern world, which evaluates things in terms of their adaptability, utility and practicality, and not in accordance with basic human values such as justice, peace, happiness.

As a result, all the arguments about the education concepts, the new ideals of the educated person, about the forms and the content of education and the crisis of education on a global scale cause to losing the personality of a particular student, who is in a state of alienation to many of these phenomena, as well as to their own learning process. The need for scientific understanding of the alienation process in the higher education appears, for searching its origin mechanisms, that would give an opportunity to develop ways to overcome it.

Methodological Framework

Methods

The empirical base of the study are:

- semiformalized depth interviews with students of higher education institutions (the full-time education form) in Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Ukhta;
- expert interviews with teachers of high schools of Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Ukhta, engaged in the study of the modern education problems;
- the results of independent work of students of the social and economic faculty of KNRTU (Kazan) who developed programs of improving the educational process during the training course "Social engineering".

15 teachers and 25 students of higher educational institutions took part in the in-depth semiformalized interview. This number of respondents with a homogeneous set of surveyed individuals was considered to be most appropriate. We interviewed senior students, on the assumption that they may see the learning

situation at the university and the problems that exist there more holistically. The method of in-depth interview was selected as the most suitable for the study of alienation that helps to describe the problem in details and depth. Alienation, in addition to its manifestation in the outer life of the individual, is also been experienced as a certain emotional state, and in-depth interview helps to explore the emotional sphere of human activity and of the life practice.

The aim of qualitative methods is to compile the list of opinions, estimates or statements that exist in society and, presumably, have non-zero degree of spread. In a qualitative study the concepts of mathematical statistics as the "general population", "sample" are not used. Representativeness and validity of the study, in this case are related to the completeness of the collected opinions, which appears when the amount of new information from each respondent decreases, and the views are repeated.

Stages of the study

The study was conducted in three phases:

- the first stage - preparatory - the current state of the research problem in the philosophical, sociological, psychological and pedagogical theory and practice were analyzed, was the research techniques appropriate to the tasks of research were selected;

- the second stage diagnostic. Due to the intended purpose and objectives of the study we picked up the following research methods: the method of the depth semiformalized interview, the expert interview method, the method of theoretical research;

- the third stage - research. At this stage, we carried out the study of teachers and students using techniques of the expert interview and the depth semiformalized interview;

- on the fourth, the final stage we performed the processing and registration of the results, their interpretation and synthesis; refined theoretical conclusions.

Results

The aim of our study was to determine the characteristics of the alienation process in the Russian higher education, affecting the identity of the student during his learning, to study and to search the ways to reduce the level of alienation among students of higher educational institutions. In the course of research, we came to the following results:

1. The study and its subsequent analysis allowed to identify the following factors affecting the reproduction of alienation in the process of learning in higher education:

- external, or context, in relation to the education system;
- internal, being in itself;
- directly related to the student's personality.

The external influences include social-economic and political situation in the country, the situation on the labor market of university graduates, the attitude to higher education in the society from the point of employers and other social institutions, etc. Among the internal influences we can mention the model of education itself, the type of interaction between students and teachers, the methods

and the quality of education and the learning environment. For reasons related to the students themselves, we can talk about the psychological state of the learners in the process of education; the attitude of students to classes; the inner motivation related to self-development, disclosing the potential, the acquisition of new knowledge and the extrinsic motivation, aimed at achieving a high position, prestige in society, higher earnings.

2. The basic characteristics of traditional learning contributing to alienation, are:

- 1) teacher - the owner of the knowledge, the learner - the intended recipient;
- 2) the lecture, the tutorial and other intellectual verbal teaching – as the main method of knowledge transfer to the recipient, and the exam measures the extent to which the student has received this knowledge;
- 3) teacher - the owner of the power, the student – the one who obeys;
- 4) minimum of trust;
- 5) subjects (students) are best controlled by keeping them in a state of periodic or constant fear;
- 6) democracy and its values are ignored and practically scorned;
- 7) there is no place for the whole man in the education system, there is a place only for his intellect.

3. The study allowed to highlight the following forms of alienation of students:

- First – alienation in the sphere of thought. Alienation of thinking – the thinking is dogmatic, inflexible, the switching from one topic to another is practically impossible, such type of thinking can't allow controversy;

- The second form - alienation in an interview. Such a person is identified with his opinion in a conversation, he is concerned to defend their point of view and to find more compelling arguments. He's not going to change his position, and hopes that the other will change his. Changing the point of view – means losing some part of their property.

- The third form - alienation in reading. For alienated person the book acts as a kind of exciter, he reads it according to the consumption principle, getting a certain "cultural property";

- The fourth form – the alienation in the sphere of knowledge. The aliened knowledge is characterized by the phrase: "i have the knowledge of" instead of "i know";

- The fifth form - the alienation is based on the learning itself. When learning is oriented on the possession the lectures content doesn't become the part of the students' own thought system, does not enrich or expand it. Everything they hear is being just recorded, and no connection appears between the content of the lecture and the students, they remain strangers to each other.

In addition to the foregoing, we can distinguish some additional moments:

- alienation from the professional activity - due to the fact that for many students study and development of a specialty is considered to be some intermediate tool, necessary for other achievements. Higher education is not associated with professional installation it is considered to be a tool to find an appropriate social status, which would allow further high earnings. The larger role is played by the

function of formal socialization (for many students today, "it is very important to have a diploma of higher education");

- alienated relation to the education process - manifested in the formal adaptation to it, the significance of such external incentives in learning activity such as monitoring of school attendance, the opportunity to receive the scholarship, assessment, "force" impact of the deanery, etc. The need for own significant efforts to acquire knowledge, to gain professional self-determination is being ignored.

4. As a result of the study, we identified the following most formed and established subjectivizing practices in higher education:

- initiated by the structure of the university department of additional education;

- initiated by individual teachers training workshops copyrights;

- cultural-entertaining practices that contribute to the manifestation of the creative abilities of students.

The initiator of the artistic and cultural practices are structural formations of universities: student clubs, trade union committees. The participation in cultural-entertainment and game activity activities within the higher education system, paradoxically, may contribute to increasing activity in the learning process on the part of the student because here comes the emotional lift that helps to engage in relationships, including the relationships with the teaching. Educational and communicative processes are inseparably connected in process of getting education. It is necessary to get away with both of these processes for becoming qualified specialist. In the traditional form of training, students are deprived of full communication during trainings, that's 'why entertaining or game situations are complementary element to the comprehensive training of university

Such social practice as a workshop is usually triggered by a teacher. Its activity takes place outside the higher education institute and it is connected with scientific or practical research of such practice's founder. As a rule, it is directed both on theoretical research and sub professional development. But, at the same time, the mindset formation and personality's formation can be observed. Such practice has a group character and it is of current interest for many years. Today, the workshop is the most required and important form in comparison with others, thanks to 4 points.

The first comes from the very structure of the workshop, the relations developing there between student and teacher - "master". These relations are characterized by mutual learning during the team working. Nowadays, everything is changing very fast, the old knowledge lose their value, and to maintain competence, it is necessary to improve their level of education constantly, by educating yourself, because today humanity has passed from the world of things that for centuries have not changed o the conditions and the nature of life in the world processes that constantly have changed our life, making it all new facilities, new knowledge, new ideas about man and its environment.

The second point of workshop importance is its operation, namely the group, joint activity, which inherently presents there. Inclusion in small groups helps to overcome alienation, where adults and students are cooperated together, microgrouped dynamics helps to overcome the alienation experienced individually, the joint activities such as communication skills, creative interaction. The product of the workshop is a specialist in its field, has received no information about the

representation of his profession, and survived on their own experience in practice. Today, as one of the main values becomes individualism, independence (count only on yourself), people become unconfident, the role of the group, ability to work together is becoming the most important part of people's life.

The third point is that at the level of "secondary education" (in the terminology of g. Bateson) a researcher collides with personality's value. As a result of rueful feelings that a person experiences during the team working, he acquired skills of mutual responsibility and mutual support, the ability to provide support to a person, who works with him. Thus, the person is aware of and accepts as its own, the values of understanding, tolerance, that the most important thing in education, work - it is not only the study or work, but also how relations influence people in the process of this activity. A person understands that he is responsible for his country and family.

And the last point is the understanding that the workshop is a method of self-development and self-education, thus thanks to these components, because of the value of individualism; this method becomes the most important and significant. The prevalence of such practice as workshop is "educational web" which connects those who want to teach and those who want to be taught.

We have also stated the basic elements subjectivized social practices, which include:

1. Personal interest.
 - 1.1 Subjective sense of activity.
 - 1.2 The acquisition value of self-development and self-education.
2. Creativity.
 - 2.1 Game element.
 - 2.2 Voluntary participation.
 - 2.3 The emphasis on process.
3. Inclusion into practice.
 - 3.1 Availability of product activity.
 - 3.2 The acquisition of real skills (not information).
 - 3.3 Self-education needs occurrence.
4. Focusing on relationship.
 - 4.1 The equals interaction.
 - 4.2 The informal contact.
 - 4.3 Focusing on common rueful feelings.
 - 4.4 Mutual teacher and student learning element.
 - 4.5 Co-operation (work experience in the group, mutual help and mutual support).

Discussions

Education in recent years is one of the popular topics of research. This is because of the fact that the education system has always played and will play an important role in society. There are whole areas of scientific activity, dedicated solely to the study of education: teaching, education, philosophy, psychology of

education, sociology of education. However, consideration of exclusion issues in general and its manifestation in education also has its own tradition.

In sociology and psychology the term «alienation" has come from philosophy, where most of the report focuses on the writings of German philosophers of the XIX century G.Hegel (1977) and K. Marx (2000). Marx also considered the first sociological phenomenon of alienation, found its origins in the social life of people, namely, the existence of private property, outlined the main forms of exclusion and outlined ways to overcome it. In XX century, E. Fromm (1992), K. Horney (1993) and many other researchers continued consideration of a phenomenon of alienation in capitalist society. They saw alienation as a problem of external and man's inner world. M. Weber (1990) talked about the growth of formal rationality, leading to the alienation of everyday life. G. Simmel (1950) pointed out that the modern man is forced to fight to go out of his control and expressed the frozen forms of cultural social forces. In addition to them, the exclusion phenomenon studied G. Marcel (1994), C.R. Mills (2001), J. Habermas (1993), R. Blauner (1964) and others.

The phenomenon of alienation in education researched I. Illich (1971), P. Freire (1972), and G. Richardson (1997), who also developed ways for overcoming it. K. Rogers & D. Freiberg (2002) - founder of the student-centered approach to education, also investigated the getting rid of alienation in the learning process.

During the soviet period in our country a full study of the phenomenon of alienation was impossible for ideological reasons. However, scientists tried to investigate this problem. These specialists were I.S. Kon (1984) and S.L. Rubinstein (2003), who studied the problem of alienation as an unnatural "mask" the problem of man, hiding his identity. In modern russian science, researches, who engaged this problem, are: V.A. Vakaev (2013), E.N. Osin (2015), N.N. Niyazbaeva (2010), O. Lucash (2013), V.N. Kosirev (2009), E.V. Kudryavtseva (2011), O.D. Panteleeva (2013), L.L. Timchenko (2009).

But, at the same time, we can't say how this phenomenon can be revealed, we can't determine its forms and the methods of overcoming it in student's life.

Conclusion

The analysis conducted by the theoretical and empirical research, showed the following results:

1. In modern society, the growth of the formal rationalization and development of the bureaucracy in the education system leads to the alienation of the university students in the learning process.
2. The most appropriate approach in the study of the process of alienation among students is a sociological approach, considering the alienation as a systemic characteristic of higher education.
3. The alienation in the process of education is manifested in certain forms: alienation from the educational activities of its results, the alienation of students from his species-being, alienation of students from each other, as well as the alienation of students from their learning management, from the national culture.
4. In order to overcome the alienation of the student should participate in social practices characterized by the personal interest of student learning, the presence of the element of the game, focus on relationships that are included in practical activities.

5. One of the most important today practices is to overcome the alienation of the individual in the process of higher education workshop training, which can be organized by the teacher.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank to Kazan (Volga region) Federal University for the program of competitiveness improvement.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Pavel N. Afanasyev is associate professor of general psychology, Institute of psychology and education at Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

Tatyana P. Sharaj is associate professor of pedagogy and methodology of preschool education, Institute of psychology and education at Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia.

References

- Blauner R. (1964). Alienation and freedom. *The factory worker and his industry*. Chicago. 323 p.
- Coombs F. (1970) *The crisis of education in the modern world*. System analysis. Moscow: Progress. 264 p.
- Freire P. (1972). *Education: the practice of freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. 299p.
- Fromm E. (1992). *The human soul*. Moscow: Republic. 430p.
- Habermas, J. (1993). The relationship between the system and the life in the world at the conditions, the set of late capitalism. *Thesis, 2*, 123-136.
- Hegel G. (1977). Encyclopedia of philosophy. *Vol.3. The philosophy of the spirit*. Moscow: Thought. 471p.
- Horney K. (1993). *The neurotic personality of our time. Introspection*. Moscow: Progress Publishing "Universe". 480p.
- Hvedchenya L. V. (2014). The nature of the crisis in modern education. *Sociology*, 1, 78-86.
- Illich I. (1971). *Deschooling Society*. New York: Harper & Row. 160p.
- Kon I. S. (1984). *In search of personality and its identity*. Moscow: Politizdat. 380p.
- Kosirev V. N. (2009). Alienated of school students work. *Higher education in Russia*, 11, 138-143.
- Kudryavtseva E. V. (2011). Psychological characteristics of students with different forms of alienation. *Vestnik Tambov university. Humanities series*, 5(97), 172-176.
- Lukash O. (2013). Psychological ideas about positive alternatives to the alienation of man. *Cultural-historical psychology*, 1, 62-70.
- Marcel G. (1994). *To be and to have*. Novocheerkassk: Agency SAGUNA. 158p.
- Marx K. (2000). *Sociology: a collection*. Moscow: "Canon-press-c", "A handful of in the field". 432p.
- Mills C.R. (2001). *Sociological imagination*. Moscow: Publishing House NOTA BENE. 264p.
- Niyazbaeva N. N. (2010). The existential foundation of alienation of the individual in pedagogical interaction. *World of science, culture, education*, 5, 80-82.
- Osin E. N. (2015). Category alienation in educational psychology: history and prospects. *Cultural-historical psychology*, 11(4), 79-88.
- Panteleyeva O. D. (2013). Psychological analysis problems occur during the field training work. *Journal of Tambov university. Humanities series*, 4(120), 219-223.
- Perminova L. M, Yakovlev N. I, Perminov V. L. (2012). *Education in times of crisis: the XXI century*. Moscow: Moscow institute of open education. 150p.
- Richardson, G. (1997). *Education for freedom*. Moscow: RSUH. 211p.
- Rogers K., Freiberg D. (2002). *The freedom to learn*. Moscow: Meaning. 527p.



- Rozin V. M. (2013). The crisis of pedagogy knowledge and the formation of a new educational formation. *World of psychology*, 3, 66-82.
- Rubinstein S. L. (2003). *Being and consciousness. Man and the world*. St.Petersburg: Peter. 512p.
- Simmel G. (1950). *The metropolis and mental life*. Trans. by k. Wolff. N.Y.: Free Press. 225p.
- Timchenko L. L. (2009). The problem of alienation in Russian education. *Philosophy of education*, 1, 19-26.
- Vakayev V. A. (2013). The phenomenon of alienation in higher education. *Journal of the Altai academy of economics and law*, 4, 121-123.
- Weber M. (1990). *Selected works*. Moscow: Progress. 808p.