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ADAPTATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS OF KAZAKHSTANI UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract. This article examines the characteristics of international students' adaptation to the educational process of higher education institutions. Scientific studies on the problem of adaptation, including its theoretical foundations, are reviewed and analyzed. The scientific analysis is based on the works of Kazakhstani and foreign scholars. The essence of the concept of adaptation is revealed, the types of adaptation are described, and the content of the adaptation process is examined. This process is determined by the specificity of the subjects of adaptation, which define the direction of its development and the nature of interaction, which should be constructed within the framework of a comprehensive approach. Particular attention is paid to personal development and the features of students' adaptation to a new environment during their studies at a university. At present, issues of psychological assistance in the intercultural adaptation of migrants are insufficiently addressed, especially psychological support for students arriving from other countries and residing in a foreign cultural environment. An analysis of the specifics of the adaptation process in universities under modern conditions of educational development is conducted, as well as of teaching methods and the organization of the learning process. The main objective in analyzing foreign experience in student adaptation is the integration of methods that have a positive impact on adaptation; issues of psychological and pedagogical adaptation of the individual in the educational space are also actively examined. The success of international students' adaptation to university studies is largely determined by value orientations as a factor ensuring the effective organization of the educational process.

Keywords: institution of higher education, adaptation, international students, intercultural adaptation, psychological and pedagogical adaptation, academic performance.

Introduction. In the concept for the development of higher education and science in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023–2029, one of the priority objectives is defined as the strategy of internationalization of higher professional education organizations, the creation of favorable conditions for learning and obtaining quality education, the development of individual educational trajectories of students, the provision of necessary resources and support related to socio-economic status, gender, and language of instruction, as well as the creation of a favorable socio-psychological climate and the provision of psychological support to students at universities [1].

According to the Ministry of science and higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the number of international students in the 2024–2025 academic year amounted to 30,711 people, including 28,458 undergraduate students, 1,724 master's students, 500 doctoral students, and 29 residents [2]. Further considering statistics for 2025, currently about 35,000 international students from 88 countries are studying in Kazakhstan, which is significantly more than in the previous academic year [3]. These data indicate an increase in the number of international students, the attractiveness of studying in Kazakhstan, an improvement in the quality of education, and the development of educational programs offered by Kazakhstani universities. When choosing universities, students take into account the quality of education, university rankings, implemented educational programs, regional location, and other factors.

One of the leading universities in Kazakhstan and a flagship of education is Sh. Yessenov Caspian university of Technologies and Engineering (Yessenov University), where more than 500 international students and repatriate students (kandas) study, and where more than 150 international students are annually admitted to various educational programs [4]. Considering the geography of student arrivals, the predominant share of international students are citizens of neighboring countries and Caspian states—Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Armenia—as well as students from more distant countries such as China, Cameroon, Nigeria, and others. The university's strategy is aimed at the internationalization of education, cultural exchange, and the development of intercultural understanding, which stimulates the development of foreign language communication skills among students.

In accordance with higher education development programs, a trilingual scientific and educational environment is being implemented, aimed at creating flexible educational programs that allow students to choose modules and courses depending on their interests and needs. This contributes to individualization, the formation of learning trajectories, and enables students to shape their own educational experience. International students actively study the Kazakh language and other languages at the university's Language Center; classes are conducted taking into account individual characteristics, using adapted programs for students with disabilities, as well as modern educational technologies.

According to research, the participation of students from different countries in the educational process improves the quality of teaching and learning by enriching it with diverse cultural and interpersonal experiences. In addition, students gain the opportunity to immerse themselves in an international environment during their studies, which contributes to the formation of a global mindset and preparation for active participation in global processes.

An important stage in introducing an individual to the values of higher education is admission to a higher education institution and the acquisition of fundamental scientific knowledge and basic professional concepts. Accordingly, professional development, growth, and self-realization of the future specialist are possible under conditions of successful adaptation to the university environment. In this regard, the problem of adaptation of repatriate students and international students to learning conditions and to the new university environment becomes particularly significant.

Students face a number of obstacles in the process of adapting to university life. The reasons for these obstacles are determined by various factors, both external (organization of the educational process, features of interpersonal relations, intercultural communication, etc.) and internal (students' self-esteem, learning motivation, discipline, responsibility, etc.), which influence adaptation in higher education institutions. A different education system, new social norms, language barriers, and new living conditions complicate students' adaptation. For example, different assessment methods and learning styles may negatively affect students' academic performance. For immigrant students, adaptation to university is not limited to achieving academic success; it also includes processes of establishing social relationships, rethinking one's identity, and understanding cultural diversity [5]. In an educational environment with a high level of pedagogical competence, students are more likely to successfully complete these processes. At present, the problem of university adaptation of students, regardless of whether they are Kazakhstani or international students, remains one of the key issues in education and requires productive solutions and more detailed research.

Materials and methods. Currently, adaptation issues are studied within various scientific fields. A number of works examine adaptation from biological, physiological, and medical perspectives (V.G. Aseev, F.Z. Meerson, A.A. Nalchadjian, N.I. Sardzhveladze, A.I. Volozhin, V.P. Kaznacheev, V.I. Medvedev, G. Selye, Yu.K. Subbotin, E.I. Tsaregorodsky, M.S. Yanitsky, etc.). Research on human adaptation to various conditions is reflected in the works of J. Godfroy, A.V. Petrovsky, P.K. Anokhin, H. Selye, and others. The works of domestic and foreign scholars such as V.G. Berezin, G.A. Ball, H. Hartmann, A. Maslow, A.V. Petrovsky, E. Erikson, and others are noteworthy, as they reveal psychological aspects of adaptation.

In modern foreign and domestic psychological literature, there is a significant number of works analyzing the characteristics of personality adaptation, emphasizing the complexity and importance of this process.

In science, the concept of adaptation is understood as “the process of adjusting human activity to changed conditions of existence, as a process of active interaction between the individual and the environment, and active adjustment to individual living conditions” (A.K. Bolotov et al.) [6]. In psychology, the term “adaptation” is understood as the restructuring of an individual’s psyche under the influence of objective environmental factors, as well as the individual’s ability to adjust to various environmental demands without experiencing internal discomfort and without conflict with the environment [7]. According to the modern view, “human adaptation is presented not as a process of changing individual physiological and psychological functions and qualities, but as a systemic reaction of the organism and psyche, a unified process and result of achieving functional correspondence to the requirements of the external environment” (V.A. Bodrov, L.G. Dikaya, A.L. Zhuravlev) [8].

A significant contribution to the development of the problem of psychological and pedagogical support for students during their adaptation to the polyethnic educational environment of the university at the initial stage of study has been made by many prominent domestic psychologists and educators. The works of G. Nasyrova, G.B. Nietbaeva, I.K. Amanova, A.S. Agafonova, and others focus on studying the characteristics and stages of professional and pedagogical adaptation of students, the importance of pre-university training of future teachers in the modern education system, and the distinctive features of the initial professional adaptation process of students.

The problem of international students’ adaptation to educational activities is studied in several directions:

- *psychological and pedagogical* (P. Bourne, G.M. Andreeva, S. Bochner, M.A. Ivanova, T.N. Matulis, N.A. Titkova, A. Singh, A. Furnham, etc.);
- *socio-psychological* (K.T. Vetchinkina, N.M. Lebedeva, S.V. Lurie, E. Makaryan, T.L. Smolina, L.L. Shpak);
- *issues of ethnopyschological adaptation, examined in the works* of L.M. Demkina, I.S. Kon, A.B. Letnev, S.V. Lurie, A.N. Moseiko, E.A. Shauro, V. Lasky.

In psychological and pedagogical literature, several types of adaptation are distinguished: sociocultural, socio-psychological, intercultural, and socio-professional. Sociocultural adaptation is identified as a type of social adaptation and is understood as both a process and a result through which an individual achieves a state of correspondence and harmony with a new cultural environment. Sociocultural adaptation includes two interrelated aspects: an internal aspect, expressed in a sense of satisfaction and psychological comfort, and an external aspect, manifested in the individual’s active participation in the social and cultural life of a new group.

Thus, *sociocultural adaptation* is both a process and a result of the adjustment of an individual (the adaptee) or a group to the conditions of a new sociocultural environment, that is, to new values, norms of behavior, and traditions, as well as the development of the adaptee’s abilities for independent activity in all spheres of life.

Social and psychological adaptation involves the process of an individual’s adjustment to a new social environment, behavioral norms, and the establishment of interpersonal relationships within a new group. In the course of social and psychological adaptation, the individual becomes integrated into a system of group relations, accepts its traditions, norms of life, value orientations, and rules of behavior.

A specific form of students’ social and psychological adaptation is *intercultural adaptation*. According to T.G. Stefanenko, intercultural adaptation is defined as “the process of an individual’s entry into a new culture, the gradual mastery of its norms, values, and patterns of behavior. At the same time, genuine adaptation presupposes the achievement of social and psychological integration with another culture without the loss of the richness of one’s own” [9].

Of particular scientific and theoretical significance for the analysis of theoretical approaches to the study of personality adaptation to a different ethno- and sociocultural environment are the propositions that individuals' entry into another culture is accompanied by profound psychological upheaval, the so-called "cultural shock." According to researchers, "cultural shock is the shock of encountering a new and unfamiliar culture. It is almost always experienced as unpleasant, partly because it occurs unexpectedly, and partly because it can lead to a negative evaluation of one's own culture" [10].

Researchers such as J.W. Berry, D.L. Sam, P.S. Adler, and others argue that despite its association with negative consequences, cultural shock can, to a certain extent, have a positive effect on personal growth. Manifestations of this phenomenon may include the acquisition of new values, attitudes, and behavioral models. In the process of encountering a different cultural environment, individuals acquire knowledge through personal experience, which contributes to the awareness of the sources of their own ethnocentrism and the formation of new views on the essence of human diversity [11].

Adhering to this position, it can be argued that cultural shock plays a positive role when repatriate students are ready to accept new values and behavioral models and, ultimately, when it serves as a source of their self-development and self-improvement. The degree of manifestation of "cultural shock" is usually expressed in the following signs: feelings of confusion, awkwardness, loneliness, rejection, and the sense of being a "stranger" in a new group; difficulty in immediately accepting moral norms, clothing, and food; problems of self-identification; fear of contact with people; language barriers; increased anxiety, fear, and a sense of incompetence; nostalgia for one's homeland and close relatives, and similar experiences.

Social adaptation represents a type of interaction between an individual or a group and the social environment in which the requirements and expectations of social actors are aligned with their capabilities and the realities of the social environment. The essence of the social adaptation of foreigners temporarily residing in a host country lies in the possibility of preserving and maintaining their habitual way of life and established patterns while accepting a foreign culture—not through assimilation, but through acceptance and respect for foreign laws, traditions, values, norms, and mentality.

Modern researchers agree that personality adaptation in a new social environment often proceeds through four stages, which can be described as follows:

1. **Initial stage**, characterized by the individual's or group's awareness of the need to change their behavior in accordance with the new social environment. However, they are not yet fully ready to recognize and accept the values of the new environment and continue to adhere to their previous value system.

2. **Tolerance stage**, in which the individual, group, and the new social environment demonstrate mutual tolerance and respect for each other's value systems and behavioral patterns.

3. **Accommodation**, which implies recognition and acceptance by the individual of the main elements of the value system of the new social environment, while allowing for the preservation of certain values of the individual or group that may be recognized by the new environment.

4. **Assimilation**, in which a complete convergence of value systems occurs between the individual, the group, and the new social environment [12].

Research Results. The result of adaptation is manifested in the level of adaptedness of an individual or a group. Adaptedness can be defined as a state of the subject that allows them to feel free and confident in the sociocultural environment, to engage in core activities, to perceive changes in the habitual sociocultural surroundings, to deepen intrapersonal spiritual reflection, and to enrich their own inner world through more advanced forms and methods of sociocultural interaction (V.P. Tugarinov et al.) [7].

Considering adaptedness as the outcome of adaptation, it is necessary to focus on the criteria or indicators of adaptation. Researchers distinguish between objective and subjective (internal or external) indicators. Thus, L.L. Shpak, analyzing subjective indicators of sociocultural adaptedness, identifies the following: the adaptee's satisfaction with their position in the sociocultural

environment; conscious acceptance and maintenance of the norms and traditions of the new sociocultural environment; and a desire for interaction. Objective indicators of adaptedness, according to the researcher, primarily include an increase in the level of creative activity in sociocultural processes of the environment and society as a whole; enrichment of the content and nature of cultural activities within a given sociocultural environment; active and intensive mastery of new ideas and technologies of cultural progress; participation in various spheres of public life; and the stability of the subject of adaptation within the given sociocultural environment (L.L. Shpak) [12].

Significant studies devoted to examining the relationship between the level of cultural intelligence of international students and their level of acculturation show that international students communicate effectively in a new cultural environment, successfully adapt, possess high self-esteem and openness, and demonstrate a moderate level of acculturation (Alkar E., Atasoy E.) [13].

In studying the adaptation process, scholars introduced the concept of “*human adaptive potential*,” which is understood as personality traits and capacities that enable successful adaptation to new environmental conditions. When developing and selecting diagnostic methods for conducting psychological and pedagogical assessment of the level of students’ adaptation to university learning, a comprehensive approach is recommended, taking into account adaptation indicators such as physical and mental state, social activity, and interaction in a new environment.

The effectiveness of students’ adaptation to higher education institutions can be determined according to the following criteria: first, **objective criteria**—assessment of the level of students’ academic achievements (academic performance indicators), the state of students’ health during the learning process, expressed in the absence of signs of overfatigue, the development of academic and communicative skills, and the level of anxiety; second, **subjective criteria**—students’ personal attitudes toward academic disciplines, the degree of satisfaction with the educational process at the university, attitudes toward acquired knowledge, future profession, the student community and interpersonal relations within the group, as well as students’ activity or passivity in academic and social activities (L.L. Redko, Yu.A. Lobeiko) [15].

At present, the process of adaptation in the university environment is considered as a stage of students’ personal and professional development. The adaptation of first-year students includes the following levels of adaptation within higher education institutions:

- **biological** (adjustment to a new place, living conditions, and a new daily regime);
- **psychological** (adaptation to the emergence and satisfaction of new motivational and need-based complexes, and the necessity of implementing new forms of behavior);
- **professional** (educational and professional adaptation to new content and organization of learning);
- **social** (adaptation to the academic group and to instructors).

When analyzing students’ social and psychological adaptation, adaptation to learning in a higher education institution is understood as a continuous process of active adjustment to the conditions of the social environment, changes in the nature of connections and relationships, students’ attitudes toward the content and organization of the educational process, and the transformation of the environment “to suit oneself.” The following components of this process are identified: motivational, cognitive, and communicative-behavioral (L.A. Kostina, L.M. Milyaeva) [16].

Considering the social adaptation of international students in the university context, it is necessary to note the factors influencing the level of adaptation:

1. **objective factors**, related to educational activities and adaptation to new social and living conditions, the student community, and similar aspects;
2. **objective–subjective factors**, which include underdeveloped skills of independent work, self-discipline, and related abilities;
3. **subjective factors**, encompassing individual and personal characteristics of students, learning motivation, cognitive and emotional capacities, and others (D. Ibragimova) [17].

Of particular importance in students’ adaptation within higher education institutions is the organization of the educational and upbringing process, pedagogical conditions, methods, techniques, and forms of work that facilitate the adaptation of international students during their professional

training, as well as psychological and pedagogical support of their adaptation at the university. This complex of psychological and pedagogical conditions for the effective implementation of the adaptation process should be realized through the active participation and integration of efforts of curators, advisors, faculty deans' offices, student self-government bodies, students, parents, and other stakeholders [18].

Another crucial requirement for successful adaptation is the development of students' tolerance—the ability for social interaction based on accepted moral and legal norms, social standards, and respect for the culture and traditions of other peoples. Students' successful adaptation is facilitated by the organization and content of the educational process at the university, which is aimed at designing individual educational trajectories, creating a comfortable educational environment, forming an attractive social, creative, and innovative space, as well as fostering values and professional competencies. Adaptation to the university encompasses the process of integrating students into their new environment as a whole in academic, social, and cultural dimensions.

Conclusion. Based on the above, students' adaptation to the educational process represents a process of interaction between the individual and the social and intellectual environment of the university, contributing to the formation of new personal qualities, professional identification, the acquisition of new social roles and social status, the development of new values, and the comprehension of the significance of the future profession.

The adaptation and integration of international students within the holistic pedagogical process of the university include psychological and pedagogical, social, and intercultural work with all participants involved in internationalization. The main areas of support include psychological and pedagogical counseling, psychological diagnostics, intercultural training, educational and upbringing activities, and related forms of assistance. All of these are essential for the successful psychological and pedagogical, socio-psychological, and sociocultural adaptation of repatriate students and international students in higher education institutions.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ ЖОҒАРЫ ОҚУ ОРЫНДАРЫНДАҒЫ БІЛІМ БЕРУ ҮДЕРІСІНЕ ШЕТЕЛДІК СТУДЕНТТЕРДІҢ БЕЙІМДЕЛУІ

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада жоғары оқу орнының білім беру кеңістігінде шетелдік студенттердің бейімделу үдерісінің ғылыми-теориялық және практикалық аспектілері қарастырылады. Бейімделу мәселесіне арналған ғылыми зерттеулердің теориялық негіздері талданып, қазақстандық және шетелдік ғалымдардың еңбектері негізінде кешенді ғылыми талдау жүргізілді. Бейімделу ұғымының мәні ашылып, оның негізгі түрлері жүйеленді, сондай-ақ бейімделу үдерісінің мазмұны сипатталды. Аталған үдеріс бейімделу субъектілерінің ерекшеліктерімен айқындалып, оның даму бағыты мен өзара әрекеттесу сипаты кешенді тәсіл тұрғысынан қарастырылады. Зерттеуде студенттердің тұлғалық дамуына және жоғары оқу орнында білім алу барысында жаңа әлеуметтік-мәдени ортаға бейімделу ерекшеліктеріне ерекше назар аударылды. Қазіргі кезеңде мигранттардың мәдениетаралық бейімделуі жағдайында көрсетілетін психологиялық қолдау мәселелері жеткілікті деңгейде зерделенбегені, әсіресе жаңа мәдени ортада білім алып жатқан шетелдік студенттерге арналған психологиялық көмектің өзектілігі атап өтіледі. Білім берудің қазіргі даму жағдайында жоғары оқу орындарындағы бейімделу үдерісінің ерекшеліктері, сондай-ақ оқыту әдістері мен оқу үдерісін ұйымдастыру формалары талданды. Шетелдік тәжірибені талдаудағы негізгі міндет – студенттердің бейімделуіне оң ықпал ететін тиімді әдістерді білім беру тәжірибесіне кіріктіру, сонымен қатар білім беру кеңістігіндегі тұлғаның психологиялық-педагогикалық бейімделу мәселелерін кешенді түрде қарастыру болып табылады. Шетелдік студенттердің жоғары оқу орнында табысты бейімделуі оқу үдерісін тиімді ұйымдастыруды қамтамасыз ететін маңызды фактор ретінде олардың құндылықтық бағдарларымен тығыз байланысты екендігі айқындалды.

Түйін сөздер: жоғары оқу орны, бейімделу, шетелдік студенттер, мәдениетаралық бейімделу, психологиялық-педагогикалық бейімделу, академиялық үлгерім.

АДАПТАЦИЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ К ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОМУ ПРОЦЕССУ КАЗАХСТАНСКИХ ВУЗОВ

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Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются особенности адаптации иностранных студентов к образовательному процессу вуза. Изучены и анализированы научные исследования проблемы адаптации, включая его теоретические основы. Для предоставления научного анализа послужили работы казахстанских и зарубежных ученых. Раскрыты сущность понятий адаптация, описаны виды адаптации, а также содержание адаптационного процесса, которая определяется спецификой субъектов адаптации, задающих направление его развития и характер взаимодействия, который необходимо строить в концепции комплексного подхода. Особое внимание уделено личностному развитию и особенностям адаптации студентов в процессе обучения в вузе, к новой среде. В настоящее время вопросы психологической помощи при межкультурной адаптации мигрантов освещены недостаточно, в особенности психологической помощи студентам, обучающимся из других стран, пребывающими в инокультурной среде. Проведен анализ специфики процесса адаптации в вузах в современных условиях развития образования, а также методы обучения и его организации. Главной задачей при анализе зарубежного опыта адаптации студентов является интеграция методов, положительно влияющих на адаптацию, а также активно рассматриваются проблемы психолого-педагогической адаптации личности в образовательном пространстве. Успешность адаптации иностранных студентов к обучению в вузе в значительной мере обусловлена ценностными ориентациями как фактором, обеспечивающим эффективную организацию учебного процесса.

Ключевые слова: ВУЗ, адаптация, иностранные студенты, межкультурная адаптация, психолого-педагогическая адаптация, академическая успеваемость.