

Socio-Psycho-Pedagogical Support of Migrant Children Adjustment in Educational Institutions

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of migration, the formation of cultural identity and the establishment of intercultural dialogue at various levels of adjustive interaction from the perspective of the need to implement the socio-psycho-pedagogical support to migrant children when adjusting in educational institutions. Analysis of foreign and domestic research on the issue of migrant children and their adjustment to the new socio-cultural living environment, as well as identification of cultural identity formation aspects from the perspective of the impact of various environmental factors, led to the formulation of the research goal, namely, the organization of socio-psycho-pedagogical support for adjustment of migrant pre-school-age children. The formulated goal is realized with the help of two interrelated tasks: creating of socio-pedagogical conditions for the successful adjustment of migrant children, as well as the organization of volunteer groups of students, who are able and willing to carry out work on the adjustment of migrant children into the other-cultural environment. According to the authors, the optimal means of solving this problem is project activities that assume getting familiar with the traditions of Russian culture, fostering the skills of constructive engagement, and forming tolerance in migrant children. Means to form cultural identity of migrant children include folktales, games, toys and animated movies, used during the adaptive interaction between a child and an adult. The result of the project implementation has bilateral perspective: it allows solving not only the problem of adjustment of migrant children, but also helps student volunteers in getting hands-on experience of working with children, as well as expanding the ethnic and cultural horizons of future teachers. Presented statistical data reflect the peculiarities of the adjustment process in migrant children in the Russian Federation, including the Orenburg Region, as a border territory.

Keywords: migration, cultural identity, the children of migrants, socio-psycho-pedagogical support, adjustment, maladjustment, intercultural dialogue, social interaction experience, traditions of the Russian culture, educational institutions, the project activities

1. Introduction

One of the priorities of the state migration policy of the Russian Federation is the development and implementation of federal and regional programs aimed at creating favorable conditions for the adjustment and integration of migrants into the Russian society based on respect for Russian culture, religion, customs, traditions and way of life, as well as securing educational and cultural needs of migrants, including those related to the study of Russian language and culture, and the formation of tolerant relationships and mechanisms to prevent ethnic and religious conflicts.

Migration, as a social phenomenon, is characterized by three factors:

- The change by the individual his residency coordinates, i.e. mobility factor;
- The intention of the individual to improve his material and (or) social status, i.e. requirements factor;
- The desire of the individual to grow roots in a new residency and consider it his second homeland, i.e. stability factor (Egorova, 2011; Poletaev, 2012; and Zheleznova, 2012).

Analysis of research on the migration process reveals demographic, ethno-cultural and politological aspects of migration (Ljunge, 2014), as well as the need for socio-psycho-pedagogical support and assistance to migrant children in the new social and cultural living environment (Johnson, 2007; Siahaan, 2014; Kirszbaum, 2014).

The leading role in this system belongs to the psycho-pedagogical support of personal self-determination and social integration of migrant children in the educational institutions of various types (Rprofile-edu, 2011).

In a host society, each migrant child requires to acquire a new experience of social interaction with others in order to establish intercultural dialogue at various levels of adaptive interaction with people, including personal, interpersonal and intergroup levels (Poletaev, 2012).

The analysis of conducted research in terms of determining the adaptation level of migrant children to the conditions of a new native land shows that they are at a nascent stage, do not have significant traditions and characterize by low level of their generalization. Comprehensive socio-psycho-pedagogical approach to the problem will be useful in the work of teachers in different regions of Russia, especially the border territories, such as the Orenburg Region.

2. Research Methodology

The central methodological idea, which has been accepted by authors, is to treat the children of migrants as a special social group, which is in the interaction with parents, relatives, communities, peers and teachers. Describing the migrant children, we rely on one of the social community theories. The generating features of social community include: the relative integrity, person's awareness of his belonging to this integrity (identification and self-identification), similar life and activity conditions, the presence of certain space-time fields of being, awareness of migrants as independent constituents of social action and behavior based on the possession and use of various resources (Zborovski, 2009).

Given these features, we will define a social community of migrant children as the really existing, empirically observable, relatively integrated set (relationship) of preschool and primary school age children, united in terms of socio-cultural, demographic and ethnic grounds.

An important methodological principle of research and generalization of the data obtained is their comparison with materials of similar studies, conducted in several regions of the country in recent years. Among them we may mention, first of all, those carried out in Yekaterinburg (supervisors G. E. Zborowski and E. A. Shuklina), St. Petersburg (supervisor D. Aleksandrov) and Ulyanovsk (supervisor E. Omel'chenko).

Another methodological principle, laid down in the research program, consists in identifying the effectiveness of adjustment of immigrant children, attending secondary school. In this case, the migrant children adjustment model should include socio-psychological and cultural components.

Socio-psychological adjustment reflects the processes of interpersonal interaction with peers, the breadth and depth of relations forming inside the children's community, their harmony and ability to satisfy a child. Cultural adjustment is manifested by the development of creative abilities of children, their knowledge of the history and contemporary life of the host society, willingness to follow the cultural patterns. The other side of this process includes the involvement of a child into a local children's culture.

During the practical studies, authors used information gathering techniques, such as interviews with key informants, including representatives of the administration, teachers, educators, members of the Orenburg Regional Children's Multiethnic Library, which provides the basis for "Russian Lessons" project; questionnaire survey of teachers, including the distance learning students, who were teaching migrant children in educational institutions of various kinds in Orenburg and Orenburg region; semi-formalized interviews with migrant children and their parents; sociometric survey in classes with different percentage of migrant and non-migrant children (including those conducted during the pedagogic practice of full-time students); and the expert survey of the representatives of Ministry of Education of the Orenburg Region.

3. Discussion

Statistics reveals a steady growth in the number of migrant children. In this regard, the primary problem concerns the adjustment of the migrant child to the ordinary Russian school, where absolute priority is given to knowledge of the Russian language, traditions and accepted standards of behavior in the Russian society.

Analysis of foreign studies on problems of migrant children and their adjustment in educational institutions highlights the issues of cultural identity formation from a perspective of the impact of various factors, such as ethnicity, parents class position in the sending society, acquired position in the host society, resettlement of migrants (spatial segregation), specifics of the school system and a variety of school programs (Adepoju, 2008; Kirsbaum, 2009).

Thus, studies by A. Portes revealed that in the United States, child's class origin plays important role in his successful adjustment and animation of educational success is charter schools, while in the weak and troubled

schools child's educational success depends on his ethnic origin. Also, educational aspirations and achievements of children depend on the status, which is occupied by a certain migrant group in the general structure of society. As noted, school performance of children strongly depends on the socio-economic composition of the ethnic community. Ethnic communities with high status involve financial resources to establish organizations that would help the migrant (Portes, 2007).

In recent years, European researchers have taken an active interest in the comparative analysis of the migration issue. Their projects are focused on the comparison of the fates of different migrant groups in the same country (Portes, 2007; Kim et al., 2010).

While the western traditions of studying migrants and their children have gained broad experience, in Russia, the interest of scientists with respect to the problems of migrant children has emerged about ten years ago. Today these studies are conducted in Yekaterinburg, Ulyanovsk, St. Petersburg and Moscow. In the first decade of the XXI century, the interest in the study of migrant children problems has significantly increased not only in Russia, but all over the world. The reasons for this phenomenon are as follows: an increase in the flow of migrants from countries with less developed economies to the more developed countries; increase in a number of migrant children to be educated and adjusted in accordance with the obligations taken by the migrant-receiving countries; increase in social inequalities in education, since children of migrants have lower chances to access the quality education; escalating conflicts between migrants, their children and indigenous (local) population (adults and children), appearing on the labor, ethnic, religious and other grounds, and resulting in ethnic conflicts, etc. (Zborowski & Shuklina, 2013). This issue primarily concerns the adjustment problems of foreign ethnic children, who came to Russia (UN Children's Fund, 2014).

According to the Department of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation, there is a steady increase in the flow of migrants, including gradually growing family migration. In general, no more than a third of migrants depart to other country for job along with their spouses. Among them, no more than 15% take their children along. Here the limiting factor is the low salary, which is not sufficient to support a whole family; poor living conditions; lack of relatives willing to stay and take care of children for the working period, etc. Thus, the burden on the proper public bodies (medical and educational establishments) in Russia is not as large as sometimes is shown in the mass media.

According to researchers, most of those people, who come to Russia with children, differ significantly from all other migrants in terms of their socio-demographic status. As a rule, these are full families; three-quarters of those living in Russia with children have their wife/husband; among them urban residents with higher levels of education are dominant, they are more financially secure, living and working in Russia almost permanently (Zheleznyakova, 2012).

4. Results

Considering detail statistics in the Orenburg Region, we should note that each year about 2.5 million foreign nationals, primarily from the countries of Central Asia, immigrate through our region to the Russian Federation. As a rule, immigrants' final destination cities are Moscow, St. Petersburg, Samara, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Yekaterinburg, and Ufa. No less than 100 thousand foreign citizens choose the Orenburg Region as a place of residence. Depending on seasonal fluctuations, in the region there are from 15 to 30 thousand foreign citizens on a day-to-day basis. During the eleven months of 2013 the Migration Service of the Orenburg Region has registered 100 thousand foreigners. Thus, every 100 natives of the Orenburg Region account for 5 migrants.

At that, an increase in a number of migrant women is noted. These are foreign citizens, who applied to maternity wards of the health care centers and received medical services, related to childbirth. According to the Ministry of Health of the Orenburg Region, during 2012 there were 152 health encounters, while during 10 months of 2013 this number increased up to 264. At that, two mothers abandoned their children.

Statistical data analysis highlights the need to organize socio-psycho-pedagogical support of migrant children, aimed at providing help and protection to them. Within this framework, the basic ideas include the following:

- Justification of a single multicultural educational environment concept as a medium of social and pedagogical support, child's protection and rehabilitation;
- Identification of the problems and causes that hinder adjustment of children in a cultural and educational environment;
- Analysis of the factors influencing the successful adjustment of children: personal traits, knowledge of the language, the status of the parents, the support of the host society and the ethnic Diasporas, as well as age-specific features;

- Implementation of the interaction of psycho-pedagogical services with migrant families, etc.

The Orenburg Region, as a kind of sanitary cordon, restraining penetration into the inner Russian regions of drug, contraband goods and illegal migration, has become a platform for the implementation of a pilot project entitled “Center for Social Adjustment of Migrant Workers”. The results of this project will serve the basis for the establishment of similar centers in other regions of the Russian Federation. Social work with migrants includes a broad range of social technologies, providing the solutions to the issues of labor and professional adjustment, financial compensation for material damage suffered by migrants, psychological adjustment and rehabilitation, and the successful integration of migrants into the new society.

The socio-psychological support in adjustment of migrant children to “host native land”, which can be effective at the current stage, concludes in appeal to a centuries-old Russian culture, which is the most valuable asset of all citizens of our country. The contemporary educational process has faced the challenge of finding ways to form identity in pupils, including migrant children, to determine the most effective methods of this formation (Kleinetal, 2014).

When analyzing the problems of contemporary childhood, we rely on cultural concepts, where this important period of human life is considered in terms of the reproduction of culture. We believe that spiritual values that are imprinted in the traditions and customs, being firmly assimilated by child, will determine his behavior and lifestyle, as well as provide spiritual and moral health of the individual.

How child absorbs and inherits the cultural and spiritual values of society? Anthropological theories of culture have different answers to this question.

From the standpoint of “empiricism”, childhood is interpreted as the time of absorbing the traditions and cultural stereotypes in the process of child’s specific activities (especially gaming). From the most Western psychologists’ point of view, child’s socialization is the main problem during this period of his life.

According to the cultural-historical concept of L. S. Vygotsky and his hypothesis of cultural internalization, the cultural development of a child occurs through transformation of spoken forms of communication between people into the internal plan of individual consciousness and further transformation through an intermediate form of “dialogue with himself” into the proper human forms of mental activity” (Vygotsky, 1982). Here author emphasizes the importance of speech activity in the course of communication and the formation of the sign function of consciousness (Kon’kina, 2013). Thus, a folktale, game or toy, including a doll can serve a unique means of socialization and education of the migrant child in the host society.

Analysis of theoretical sources, empirical observations and opinions of teachers allow us to reveal the following problems peculiar to children, for whom the Russian language is not native:

- Low level of communicative competence, which is manifested in the lack of communication skills, especially for the younger pupils; inability to meet with their peers; ignorance of the etiquette and behavior principles in the community; poor attitude in terms of “my”, “your”, “common”; the use of offensive words and expressions, unusual for a local children’s culture.
- Numerous differences in the non-verbal communication patterns, norms of relations, values, standards and rituals of behavior, specific to children of different ethnicities;
- Difficulties in the absorption of the curriculum, lack in understanding of the teacher’s explanations, the inability to express their thoughts that lowers self-esteem and social status of the migrant child among his classmates and has a negative impact on relationships with others.
- Difficulties in social and health services that lead to troubles when adjusting to the new conditions at school, organization of leisure time, involving the child into the additional education system.
- Insufficient social competence, especially in the early school years, that leads to the inability to resolve the most simple conflicts and shows the actions of aggressive nature;
- Growing effects of loneliness, rejection, manifestations of emotional tension due to the constant feeling of vulnerability, lack of support in the immediate environment and thus the feeling of helplessness, increase in the sensitivity to the alleged offense.

The project, developed in the framework of the socio-psycho-pedagogical support of migrant children on the basis of our higher education institution, targets to address issues of migrant preschool children’ adjustment as one of the stages of preparation for school. Its implementation involves solving the problem of maladjustment of migrant children by searching for effective means of forming the cultural identity in the process of learning the traditions of Russian culture.

This goal is implemented by means of solution of two interrelated tasks:

- Creation of socio-pedagogical conditions for the successful adjustment of migrant children.
- Organization of volunteer student groups, able and willing to carry out work on the adjustment of migrant children to the foreign cultural environment.

Each of these tasks is general in nature and contains a whole range of more specific task-steps.

The project implementation mechanism includes the following measures:

- Organizing extra-curricular activities with migrant children of preschool age, aimed at the identification of the initial level of knowledge of the Russian culture and traditions;
- Carrying out with children developing studies aimed at establishing cooperation and teamwork in the children's group (psycho-pedagogical support);
- Teaching cooperation skills and the ability to resolve conflicts in the children's group, etc.;
- Explaining children the behavior rules in a form, simple and accessible to their age;
- Reading and playing the Russian folk fairy-tales (the organization of theatrical performances, puppet shows, etc.)
- Conducting do-it-yourself master classes on making folk dolls;
- Getting familiar of migrant children with the Russian mentality by watching Russian cartoons ("Gem Mountain", "Masha and the Bear", "Ivan Tsarevich and the Grey Wolf", etc.)
- Getting familiar of migrant children with the Russian folk proverbs and sayings;
- Organizing and conducting various outdoor gaming, mainly folk games, such as a "game of tag", "dodge ball" and others.

Game form allows one to kindle child's interest towards studying Russian cultural traditions, as well as understand and adjust to the environment in a simplified and understandable manner. When playing game situations, a child perceives them as if it happened with him; this resulted in the forming of interaction skills, ability to follow certain rules, etc. In the perception of the artistic text, a child not only imitates the hero, but also empathizes him, overcomes various dangers and trials with him. Value sense with respect to other human, a sense of kinship and immersiveness to him, creates empathy, and at the same time, the responsibility for him. For a child, this identification in the form of sympathy is the most indicative form of authentication with the other person, forming in the mind of a small child the value of empathy for good, reciprocity, forgiveness and understanding of the others (Konkina, 2014).

Analysis of the current situation and the consideration of the ways of getting out of it allowed authors to determine the scope of work that would be possible to implement by the student volunteers. They organize for children psychosocial training courses in communication and interaction skills, place children into the context of the Russian folk traditions, introduce children to the Russian gaming tradition, hold mobile games, and doing much more.

Undoubtedly, the result of such work will be somewhat delayed in time. However, there is no doubt that for the teacher, who will learn the children at the first grade, it will be much easier to interact if the children were prepared in the framework of the current project.

The efficiency of the work conducted can be evaluated at different stages of the project implementation with the aid of psychodiagnostic program, providing comprehensive diagnostic work with children, a survey of their parents, as well as workers of the pre-school educational institutions and elementary school teachers in order to compare the results of the primary investigation with the subsequent results for the purpose of correction further efforts (Lutovina et al., 2014).

Key features that determine the effectiveness of the work performed include the following:

- Level of constructive interaction skills;
- The nature of personal changes;
- The behavioral strategies in various situations (including conflict situations);
- The ability to comprehend various fairy-tale stories and actually happening events;
- The interaction skills with the children of different cultures (in a group of children).

Development of the project has bilateral perspective: it will allow solving not only the problem of migrant children adjustment, but also will help student volunteers in getting hands-on experience on working with children, as well as expand the ethnic and cultural horizons of future teachers.

Long-term goals of the migrant children adjustment project include:

- Mentoring of migrant children towards becoming full-fledged citizens of the Russian society;
- Preparing of highly sought and useful members of society;
- Reducing ethnic tensions;
- Reducing extremism in Russian society.
- Creating community of young teachers and psychologists, who have gained experience in working with migrant children as early as during their student years, and thus having necessary knowledge and skills to build effective interaction with children having other cultural background.

Staffing of the project is implemented at the expense of teachers and student volunteers of Orenburg State Pedagogical University (in the city of Orenburg) and also owing to the involvement of various professionals working with children (Fig. 1). The picture shows the participants of the project “Russian Lessons” - students of Orenburg State Pedagogical University and the children of Tajik migrants.



Figure 1. Participants in the project “Russian Lessons”

The project serves an effective mechanism in the prevention of extremism and xenophobia in children’s groups, formation of tolerance both in children and adults, i.e. future teachers.

5. Final Part

The integration of all kinds of social and pedagogical services efforts, based on humanism and tolerance, is the main mechanism, ensuring the effective implementation of the socio-psycho-pedagogical support of adjustment of migrant children (Florinskaya, 2012; Suprunova, 2013). A positive result can be achieved, provided the integration activities. At the session of the Council for Inter-Ethnic Relations, held in Ufa on October 22, 2013, President Putin outlined the negative trend of recent years, namely, increasing tensions between the local population and migrants, both external and internal. He also stressed that the one-time measures and “crisis management” of the problem to prevent ethnic conflicts are ineffective. We need contemporary systematic methods and approaches. Putin suggested an idea that the comprehensive solution to a problem of migration can be reached through the organization of social adjustment of migrants, providing for this all the necessary conditions.

6. Conclusions

Migration and life in a different socio-cultural environment has a systemic impact on the child’s personality that exacerbates the need to adjust to the new living conditions. The ways to solve the problem, proposed in the article, cannot be considered as exceptional and unique. A feature of the today’s Russian society is the increase in migrants flow, especially in recent times, when due to the events in Ukraine, the flow of refugees from this

country increases. Today society faces new challenges; the efficient response to these challenges depends not only on the successful work of psycho-pedagogical community, but on the joint efforts of the various agencies and organizations, such as the Diaspora, the Department of the Federal Migration Service, NGOs, and others. Specificity of migrant children adjustment to the “host” country requires the development and implementation of a comprehensive program on socio-psycho-pedagogical support, inclusive of the child’s age and individual peculiarities. Practical implementation of the presented project will allow us to implement this idea, thus contributing to the implementation of the Strategy of state national policy until 2025.

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