Specificity of foreign cadets adaptation to the conditions of studying at a military higher educational institution

Abstract: In the field of higher education, the process of globalization is manifested in increasing the number of foreign students in higher educational institutions in different countries. The initial stage of foreign students learning at a higher educational institution involves a complex process of adaptation. The complexity of this process is aggravated in the conditions of a military higher educational institution. The degree of successful adaptation of cadets of a military higher educational institution and the ability to survive and resolve the difficulties depend on a number of both external and internal conditions. This article discusses the components of the process of adaptation of foreign cadets of a military higher educational institution, analyzes the reasons for the different speed of adaptation in new conditions. The factors that are the most difficult for foreign cadets in the process of adaptation are revealed and confirmed by the results of the research. The parameters that influence the success of adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of studying in a military higher educational institution are described.

Keywords: adaptation, social adaptation, cultural adaptation, academic adaptation, foreign cadets, conditions of a military higher educational institution.

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Introduction

The current stage of the world community development is characterized by a number of features, one of which is the ever-expanding processes of globalization. In the field of higher education, these processes are manifested, in particular, in increase in the number of foreign students in the higher educational institutions of various countries. The beginning of living and studying in another country involves a complex process of adaptation, on the one hand, to social, climatic, academic conditions, and on the other hand, to intercultural interaction with representatives of other countries. It creates a certain psychological burden for foreign students (Apasova, Kulagina, 2020). The effectiveness of adaptation largely determines the success of the professional training of future officers.

The problem of human adaptation to the conditions of the living environment has long been one of the areas of theoretical and applied research in many sciences, including various branches of pedagogy. The beginning of the studying adaptation was laid back in ancient times, when the ancient thinkers (Aristotle, Empedocles, Democritus) tried to determine the essence of this phenomenon in their works. The study of the phenomenon was then continued by German philosophers G. W. F. Hegel, I. Kant and French materialists J. B. Lamarck, V. I. Schelling, L. O. Ken, J. L. Buffon.

Currently, the phenomenon of adaptation is the object of interdisciplinary research: biological, psychological, social ones. Thus, the philosophical-sociological analysis of adaptation processes is presented in the works of A. I. Berg, T. G. Dichev, V. Z. Kogan and others; the issues of social adaptation and socialization are presented in the works of A. N. Zhirmyrikov, O. I. Zotova, I. S. Kon, I. K. Kryazheva, L. M. Rastova, T. Shibutani and others; the works of L. S. Vygotsky, B. Z. Vulfov, A. V. Mudrik, A. V. Petrovsky, A. A. Rean and others are devoted to the social activity of the individual and his role in social adaptation. The content aspect of students’ adaptation was investigated in the works of L. I. Bozhovich, A. F. Lazursky, A. B. Mudrik, A. B. Petrovsky, Yu. A. Samarin, P. Shchedrovitsky and others.

Studies of the problems of interethnic and intercultural interaction and social transformations are presented in the works of G. M. Andreeva, P. M. Baevsky, F. E. Vasilyuk, V. V. Gritsenko, N. M. Lebedeva, B. D. Parygin, V. A. Smirnov, A. N. Tatarko, G. Triandis and others.

Thus, the adaptation problems of foreign students of civilian and military higher educational institutions have been studied quite extensively. They are covered in the dissertations M. G. Volkova, A. V. Kravets, L. Thierry, L. T. Mazitova, M. V. Chemodurov and others.

Problem and aim. However, our monitoring of the adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of study at the National Guard Academy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (on the basis of which this research was conducted) and the analysis of the degree of study of the problem allow us to conclude that, despite the obvious interest to the problem of adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of study at a military higher educational institution, there is still a significant number of issues that need to be studied, including the search for a specific effective algorithm for adapting foreign cadets to the conditions of studying at a military higher educational institution.

Before developing this algorithm, it is necessary to determine the specifics of the adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of studying at a military higher educational institution, namely:
- to determine the features of studying at a military higher educational institution,
- to describe the components of the process of adaptation of foreign cadets,
- to identify the factors that represent the greatest difficulty for foreign cadets and affect the success of their adaptation.

Methods

To achieve this aim, we used the following research methods: theoretical analysis of philosophical, psychological-pedagogical, military and methodological literature on the research problem; general scientific methods of cognition (analysis, comparison, synthesis, generalization, systematization, forecasting), sociological methods (conversation, interviewing, questioning, testing), empirical (pedagogical observation; experimental work, generalization of independent characteristics, analysis of activities results). When processing the data obtained in the course of experimental work, statistical methods and methods of mathematical data processing were used.
Results

Having considered the various interpretations of the definition of the term “adaptation”, we were convinced of its polysemantic nature; in the most generalized form, it can be represented, following A. A. Rean, A. R. Kudashev and A. A. Baranov as a process and result of internal changes, external active adaptation and self-change of an individual to the new conditions of existence (Rean, Kudashev, Baranov, 2008, p. 17).

Taking into account the researches of foreign and domestic scientists on the problem of adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of a military higher educational institution, O. A. Voskrekasenko and O. A. Buchnev consider adaptation of an individual in the conditions of a military higher educational institution as a process of active development of a new social environment by a cadet. In this area he acts not only as an object of adaptation, but also as its subject, and the military team is not only an adapting, but also an adaptable side (Voskrekasenko, Buchneva, 2013).

Thus, the process of adaptation of foreign cadets of a military higher educational institution includes such components as psychological, social, professional and organizational adaptation. Let’s consider each component of adaptation in detail.

The psychological component of the adaptation of a foreign cadet of a military higher educational institution involves restructuring of the cadet’s thinking and speech in new conditions, including professional ones; increase emotional tension, the role of attention, perception and memory.

The social component includes adaptation to a new social role performed by a cadet of a military higher educational institution to a change in the circle and content of communication, the assimilation of norms and traditions that have developed not only in a military higher educational institution, but also in the host country as a whole, and, finally, the emergence of a need for self-affirmation in the emerging multicultural team.

The professional component includes the mastering the goals and norms of the future military profession, the formation of a system of professional knowledge and skills.

The organizational component includes adaptation to the new conditions of life and studies at a military higher educational institution, a new rhythm of life. Studying at a military higher educational institution has its own specific features, such as:

1. Restriction of freedom. Cadets of military higher educational institution are forced to live on the territory of an educational organization and do not have the right to leave it without special permission. The restriction of freedom is also manifested in the need to live according to a special daily routine, which includes a number of actions that are unusual for civilians.

2. Living in barracks in a large team. The private-room residence system has not been introduced in all military higher educational institutions. Thus, cadets have to spend their free time and sleep in rooms designed for 100–120 cadets.

3. The need to live according to order. The whole life of cadets within the walls of a military higher educational institution is subject to orders that they do not have the right to reject or discuss.

4. Physical activity combined with mental work. Cadets of a military higher educational institution are forced to perform heavy physical activities: physical exercises, training, PE classes, sports events, cleaning the assigned territory, etc. All this is combined with mental stress. Every day the studying process covers at least seven hours. It requires a sufficiently high tension of the psycho-emotional and physical capabilities of the cadets.

5. The absence of relatives and friends nearby and the inability to communicate with them at any time, since cadets can use phones at a certain time and only in accordance with established rules. Besides using the Internet is forbidden at the military higher educational institutions.

6. Unusual food. Meals and eating in the cadet canteen causes some stress even for local cadets. Firstly, the very fact that cadets have meals at the time strictly allotted for this by the daily routine. Secondly, there is no opportunity to have a snack as the feeling of hunger arises. Thirdly, the diet of cadets’ canteen dishes differs to a large extent from homemade food. For foreign cadets, all this is further complicated by the unusual national cuisine of the host country and the lack of their own national dishes.
7. Unusual climatic conditions in which foreign cadets often have to live during their studying. For example, the National Guard Academy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is located in the north of the country. The climate of this region is quite severe: long cold winter (average temperature –19°C), snow cover for about five months, short summer (average temperature +19°C). The lowest recorded air temperatures in this region are –48°C, and the highest are about +41°C. These climatic conditions are more familiar to foreign cadets from the Eastern Pamirs (Republic of Tajikistan) and the highlands of Kyrgyzstan, but for most cadets – citizens of Tajikistan, where the frost-free period lasts from 195 (north of the republic) to 242 (south) days, and snowfalls are rare, and for the citizens of Kyrgyzstan – the climate of northern Kazakhstan is quite unusual.

8. Difficulties in studying. Studying at any higher educational institution is significantly different from studying at school, as new requirements, new principles of education and an assessment system are imposed on students. Students are faced with a large amount of new, not always clear information. However, studying at a military higher educational institution often causes particular difficulties for foreign cadets, caused by limited access to the Internet resources and the inability to devote additional time to the process of preparing for classes due to the strict daily routine.

9. Life in a military team, difficult due to its heterogeneity: cadets of different ages (after school, after graduation from various colleges and universities, including the military ones, after the army service), different characters, different nationalities, from different regions, countries, etc.

10. Life in a multicultural team. The process of adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of a military higher educational institution is aggravated by another problem – living in an environment alien to them. If, for example, the mentality of the peoples of Kazakhstan is quite close to the mentality of the inhabitants of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, then the mentality of the Russians is somewhat different from them. This is manifested mainly in the religious sphere, family values, attitudes towards the traditions of their people.

11. Communication difficulties associated with a different language environment. Practice shows that foreign cadets can be divided into three categories:

1) foreign cadets who speak fluently the language in which teaching is conducted (the levels B2 (Upper Intermediate) – C2 (Proficient);

2) foreign cadets who begin studying the language in which teaching is conducted (the levels A1 (Elementary) – A2 (Pre Intermediate);

3) foreign cadets who begin studying in an intermediary language (for example, English or Russian). All three categories of cadets have different rates of adaptation to new conditions, since for some of them (cadets of the first category) the language of studying is already a tool, for others (cadets of the second category) the language of studying is a subject of studying, and for the third category of cadets, the way to survive at first is an intermediary language (but sometimes they, other cadets or their teachers and commanders don’t speak it fluently for free communication) (Ivanova, 2001).

It should also be noted that according to the annual surveys of foreign cadets of the National Guard Academy of the Republic of Kazakhstan (cadets from the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), it is precisely their poor Russian language, which is the language of teaching in most groups, and ignorance of the Kazakh language (the state language of the country) that represents for cadets one of the main difficulties and, in their opinion, exacerbates the difficulties in the educational process, the process of communication within the military team in which foreign cadets live, and in the process of adaptation, in general.

The opinion of foreign cadets regarding the factors that are the most difficult for them in the process of adaptation has changed by the end of the academic year in relation to its beginning (Table).

So, as can be seen from Table, if at the beginning of the academic year the greatest difficulty for them was life away from home (77.8% and 70.0% of cadets in 2019 and 2020, respectively) and living conditions in the barracks (66.7% and 80.0% of cadets in 2019 and 2020, respectively), then by the end of the year, the distribution of free time came to the fore (55.6% and 60.0% of cadets in 2019 and 2020, respectively) and the education system at the higher educational institution (55.6% and 40.0% of cadets in 2019 and 2020, respectively).
Factors that represent the greatest difficulties for foreign cadets in the process of adaptation

Факторы, представляющие для иностранных курсантов наибольшую сложность в процессе адаптации

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>2019 year of admission</th>
<th>2020 year of admission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>start of the acad. year</td>
<td>end of the acad. year</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(%)</td>
<td>N(%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>start of the acad. year</td>
<td>end of the acad. year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N(%)</td>
<td>N(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life away from home</td>
<td>7(77,8 %)</td>
<td>3(33,3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living conditions in the barracks</td>
<td>6(66,7 %)</td>
<td>2(22,2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The language barrier</td>
<td>4(44,4 %)</td>
<td>2(22,2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms of behavior in the educational group</td>
<td>4(44,4 %)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution of free time</td>
<td>3(33,3 %)</td>
<td>5(55,6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System of education</td>
<td>3(33,3 %)</td>
<td>5(55,6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying disciplines that you have not studied before</td>
<td>2(22,2 %)</td>
<td>1(11,1 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climatic conditions</td>
<td>1(11,1 %)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In our opinion, this circumstance is explained, firstly, by the fact that the vast majority of foreign cadets entered a military higher educational institution immediately after graduating from secondary school, had no experience of living away from their parents, and even less experience of living in barracks; secondly, by the fact that in a military higher educational institution they were faced with an army life unfamiliar to them: a restriction of freedom, the need to “live by order”, etc. All of the above and many other factors quite naturally influenced the state and attitude of foreign cadets.

Thus, the process of adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of living and studying at a military higher educational institution is quite complicated. It includes three main components: general studying, vocational studying and consolidation of acquired knowledge in practice, in the form of patrol-sentry service, firing practice on shooting ranges, field tactical exercises, combined arms training. For many, it is also complicated by the fact that first-year cadets are often in search of themselves, not everyone is satisfied with their choice, and not everyone is ready to overcome the difficulties that have arisen before them.

Therefore, the whole process of adaptation of first-year foreign cadets may look like this:

1. Social adaptation: at the beginning of the academic year – the establishment of informal social communications, mainly with representatives of their country, culture; at the end of the academic year – building up formal and informal social communications with representatives of other cultures and the host community.

2. Cultural adaptation: at the beginning of the academic year – the formal assimilation of new cultural patterns; at the end of the academic year – understanding of the lifestyle and main life priorities, as well as traditions, forms of leisure activities in the host society.

3. Academic adaptation: at the beginning of the academic year – following the formal requirements of the educational process; at the end of the academic year – increasing the role of the content side of education; formation of communicative competence in the educational and professional sphere, which ensures the successful entry of foreign cadets into the academic environment.

In general, the analysis of scientific literature and monitoring the foreign cadets of the National Guard Academy of the Republic of Kazakhstan allow us to identify a number of factors that affect the success of adaptation of foreign cadets of a military higher educational institution, namely:

- the level of preparation before entering the higher educational institution. An important role is played not only by the volume and level of knowledge acquired earlier, but also by the motivation for choosing a future profession, to form general educational skills;
- personal characteristics of a cadet (health status, communication skills, adaptive abilities, level of social maturity, etc.);
- family and living conditions before entering the higher educational institution (emotional microclimate in the family, features of family upbringing, sanitary and hygienic conditions and self-service skills, financial situation of the family, etc.).
The effective adaptation of first-year cadets to the conditions of a military higher educational institution will largely be facilitated by the approach used at the educational institution (competence-based, activity-based, personality-oriented), the moral and psychological climate in the group and at the educational institution as a whole, the willingness of the teaching staff to take into account the socio-psychological characteristics of first-year students, as well as content and forms of organization of the educational process. An important role in this will be played by the active involvement of senior cadets in the process of adaptation by newly arrived cadets (Korolinskaya, 2011).

Conclusions
Thus, the degree of success in the adaptation of cadets of a military higher educational institution and the ability to survive and resolve the difficulties that arise depend on a number of both external and internal conditions. External conditions in the scientific literature include the specifics of educational and everyday difficulties, the establishment of social contacts with representatives of the host country and involvement in various events. Motivation, self-assessment and communicative competence are considered as internal conditions of adaptation (Kamrul, Teleuova, 2002).

An important role in the successful course of the process of adaptation of foreign cadets is played by all subjects of interaction in a military higher educational institution: the command and teaching staff, members of the cadet team and the foreign cadets themselves. The task of teachers and commanders is to create such pedagogical conditions that would contribute to the successful adaptation of foreign cadets to the conditions of a military higher educational institution and would encourage foreign cadets not only to successfully overcome the difficulties that arise, but also to extract mutually benefits from multicultural interaction.

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Анализируется влияние социально-психологического фактора на адаптацию иностранцев к образованию в военном вузе.

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