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## **SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF STUDENTS IN SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION**

Actual problems of modern theory of social activity of students are considered using trans-action concept of activity. Social activity is viewed as an integrated characteristic of personality that appears itself in reflection, communication, cognition and activity, conditioned by a person's internal need for self-actualization, manifested in creation of socially valuable artifacts/projects.

The heuristic value of the concept of multiple forms of social activity of students is revealed. We have demonstrated the advantages of qualitative approach to distinguishing high-low levels of students' social activity, which includes four parameters: value, motivation, initiative-performance and sustainability-situation parameters of social activity that complement and correct each other. The features of the manifestation of social activity of students in the current situation, such as the predominance of reactivity over activity, the prevalence of medium-low levels of social activity and low levels of community-oriented activity, are stressed.

«Soft» methods of development of social activity are proposed: the method of creating problem situations, the project method (involving the student's own formulation of a problem, goals and objectives of research, the choice of methodology, conducting the study, which may contribute to the development of cognitive activity and independence of thinking), the method of participatory teaching and the method of creating a situation of trust between all subjects of the educational process (the main parameters of which are communicative security, absence of over-control from educational agents, confidentiality and non-disclosure of private information about subjects of education process, a guarantee of help and support in difficult educational and communicative contexts).

**Key words:** social activity; reactivity; pro-sociality; trans-action approach; qualitative criterion for distinguishing between levels of social activity.

### ***Батаєва К. В. Проблема соціальної активності студентів в соціології освіти***

Розглянуті актуальні проблеми сучасної теорії соціальної активності студентів. Акцентовано, що соціальну активність студентів необхідно вивчати в контексті концепції множинних форм активності (пізнавальної, трудової,

комунікаційної, громадської, проектної, культурної, творчої, політичної, громадянської активності студентів). Виявлені відмінності між кількісним та якісним підходами до розрізнення високого-середнього-низького рівнів соціальної активності. Проаналізовано проблему переважання реактивності над активністю, поширеності середньо-низьких рівнів соціальної активності і низьких рівнів суспільно зорієнтованої активності серед сучасних студентів.

**Ключові слова:** соціальна активність; реактивність; просоціальність; транс-діяльнісний підхід; якісний критерій розрізнення рівнів соціальної активності.

### **Батаева Е. В. Проблема социальной активности студентов в социологии образования**

Рассмотрены актуальные проблемы современной теории социальной активности студентов. Акцентируется, что социальную активность студентов необходимо изучать в контексте концепции множественных форм активности (познавательной, трудовой, коммуникационной, общественной, проектной, культурной, творческой, политической, гражданской активности обучающихся). Выявлены отличия количественного и качественного подходов к различению высокого-среднего-низкого уровня социальной активности. Проанализирована проблема преобладания реактивности над активностью, распространенности средне-низких уровней социальной активности и низких уровней общественно сориентированной активности среди современных студентов.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная активность; реактивность; просоциальность; транс-деятельностный подход; качественный критерий различения уровней социальной активности.

In modern theory of social activity, a lot of attention is paid to identifying essential characteristics of this category, to formulating correct definitions and analyzing the specifics of various forms of social activity, to studying methods of forming and managing the activity of students and schoolchildren. The theme of social activity is interdisciplinary: psychologists (A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, A. Burshlinsky, A. Leontyev, S. Rubinstein, E. Fromm, R. Shamionov, and others), philosophers (S. Abachiev, B. Ageev, G. Batishchev, S. Ivanenkov, and others), sociologists (O. Aseeva, E. Bakharovskaya, Yu. Mangutova, G. Novikova, E. Kharlanova, E. Yakuba, and others), representatives of pedagogical sciences (N. Zenko,

Y. Kustikova, V. Maralov, A. Mudrik, N. Pilipchevskaya, V. Sitarov, K. Yamkova, and others) have dealt with this topic. Many researchers (for example, A. Mudrik, K. Yamkova) use an extended interpretation of the concept of «activity», which implies not only activity (understood as actions aimed at solving an objective problem and having the creation of a material or virtual/intellectual product as its result), but also reflection, cognition, communication, sport, game [1, p. 314–315].

Below we use the following edited definition of G. Novikova and G. Mal' [2, p. 124]: social activity is an integrative characteristic of an individual that finds its expression in reflection, communication, cognition and activity, determined by internal need of a person for self-actualization, manifested in the creation of socially valuable artifacts/projects, as well as in conscious help to other people. The paper discusses the most topical and debatable problems of the modern theory of students' social activity, presents the main aspects of a qualitative approach to distinguishing high-low levels of students' social activity, analyzes the characteristics of students' social activity in modern society.

Let us consider the essential characteristics of «social activity» identified by E. Kharlanova, such as «self-determinism», «involvement in social interaction» and «prosociality» [3, p. 184]. The «self-determination» of social activity should be understood as spontaneous and free manifestation of certain vital potencies of a social subject, not imposed by anyone from outside; as a spontaneous human activity (both contemplative and carried out at the behavioral level), giving the opportunity to manifest the deep abilities of the individual, based on freedom and independence.

The concept of activity is in contradictory relations with the concept of reactivity, discussed by V. Sitarov and V. Maralov, the essential feature of which is not self-determinism of reflection, not communication or human activity, but their generation from outside, under the influence of external factors. V. Sitarov and V. Maralov identified several characteristics of reactivity: first, reactivity performs an adaptive function, being (literally) a form of reaction to certain stimuli offered by external environment; secondly, the reactivity is determined by the system of attitudes, by experience in performing past activities, it is focused on the past [4, p. 165]; thirdly, reactivity is inherently stereotypical, since it reproduces the already existing,

generally accepted patterns of behavior and thinking. On the contrary, activity presumes not adapting to the already existing cognitive and social contexts but their transformation and improvement; it is focused not on the past, but on the present and the future, stimulating the creation of «redundancy» of meanings; activity is non-stereotypical and suggests the creation of unique projects.

Reactivity, as a rule, is a situational, unstable and the forms of human activity not conserved in time that can disappear outside the situation of external stimulation, whereas activity is determined by the supra-situational human need for self-expression and self-actualization, which is consistently reproduced over time. Activity is always subjective – it correlates with the developed subjectivity of a person who is the author of his life and freely chooses life goals and means to achieve them, who independently makes vital decisions and accepts responsibility for any results of his/her own activity. On the contrary, reactivity is always «objective», suggesting the possibility of manipulating a person as an object in order to implement decisions of external actors.

The second essential characteristic of social activity – «involvement in social interaction» – suggests the possibility of different modes of social interaction (in real or delayed time, in real or virtual space). For example, an intellectual project that is ahead of its time, which is the fruit of a person's scientific activity, will be appreciated not by contemporaries, but by descendants in another temporal and spatial dimension, having entered into delayed social interaction with its author. In the third important characteristic of social activity – «prosociality» – the correlation of social activity with the positive transformation of the person himself or the society is fixed. It deals with the creation of socially valuable and useful intellectual/social projects.

*One versus many forms of social activity.* In the Soviet scientific literature, social activity was considered in one single sense – as a socially oriented activity, manifested in participation in public organizations and in off-hour work. This identification of social and public activity can sometimes be found in modern scientific literature. For example, S. Ivanenkov and A. Kostrikin argue that «the European tradition connects the social activity of young people, first of all, with mobility and participation of young citizens

in public life at local and regional level» [5]. E. Yakuba believes that «the most important signs of a person's social activity are a strong, stable, rather than situational intention to influence social processes and to participate in public affairs, dictated by a desire to change, transform or preserve the existing social order» [6]. However, the concept of multiple forms of social activity of students (namely, cognitive, labor, communication, social, project, cultural, creative, political, civic activity of students) should be recognized as more actual nowadays. The theoretical basis of the concept of plural forms of social activity is G. Gardner's theory of plural intelligence, according to which there are seven modules of the mind (or intelligences in plural): linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and two forms of personal intelligence – the intelligence oriented to people around and the intelligence oriented to an individual [7]. Everyone is gifted differently, each has certain abilities in different life contexts, and therefore everyone is active differently. For example, if a student has developed linguistic intelligence and not developed intelligence oriented to surrounding people, it is difficult to expect public activity from him, although, at the same time, he/she can be extremely active in scientific, educational, communication, musical contexts. If a student who does not have appropriate abilities and does not possess a developed intellect oriented to other people is forced to participate in public organizations, social/volunteer projects or student self-government structures, then, with high probability, he/she will perform such a work un-creatively, with low level of effectiveness. Conversely, a student who has a disposition to social activities and enjoys the performance of public assignments, freely and without external coercion, will wish to participate in projects aimed at solving certain social problems. Due to the dissimilarity and incommensurability of various forms of social activity, these forms cannot be compared on a better-worse scale, revealing more relevant or demanded ones.

*Quantitative versus qualitative criterion for distinguishing high-medium-low social activity.* Earlier in the literature, authors have quite often referred to the quantitative criterion for distinguishing high-low levels of social activity (according to which «social activity is higher among people involved in a greater number of public relations and communities» [8, p.3]). However, it is difficult to be sure that a person who often appears in public

sphere and performs many actions is indeed active (and not just reacting to external stimuli). Therefore, in modern theory, one should prefer the qualitative criterion for distinguishing between high and low levels of social activity, in which several aspects can be considered. First, balanced ratio of initiative and diligence of a person indicates high level of human activity. «The general term «initiative» is understood as the self-participation of a person in various spheres of social life, in which he/she takes upon himself/herself a certain degree of responsibility when solving social tasks. Diligence is manifested in the ability of an individual to perform a particular activity at a high level» [4, p.169-170]. If a person is not initiative or is inclined to carry out projects proposed by other social actors or, on the contrary, a person produces ideas, but is not inclined to implement them transferring their performance to other people, then one can talk about low (or not high enough) levels of social activity of the individual.

Second, it is possible to talk about quality of social activity of an individual using the axiological approach proposed by E. Yakuba. According to it, only if a person acts in the name of higher universal human values (freedom, justice, democracy, truth, development of science), he/she can be called truly active [6]. Vice versa, if a person performs a multitude of actions and interactions, pursuing selfish goals of reaching personal gain or realizing his own ambitions, if he/she is initiative and diligent, but his/her initiative and diligence are determined by careerist motives or desire to receive material rewards, it is more correct to talk about medium-low levels of human social activity.

Third, high-medium-low levels of social activity can be distinguished using a motivational approach. Depending on which motives govern a person's behavior, one can consider different characteristics of social activity. Using the terminology of D. McClelland and D. Rotter, it can be assumed that the achievement/internality of a person (manifested in systematic actions performed in order to achieve a certain goal) should be correlated with high levels of social activity; on the contrary, avoidance of failure/externality should be correlated with low levels of social activity, when the student acts being afraid of punishment or wishing to accumulate more bonuses.

Fourth, we are talking about the sustainability-situation social activity

of students, studied by the majority of modern theorists. If a student consistently performs social actions and interactions that have characteristics of self-determination and pro-sociality, then we can talk about high level of his/her activity; on the contrary, if a student situationally, sometimes or rarely performs certain socially oriented actions, one can talk about low level of social activity.

The above four aspects of the qualitative criterion for distinguishing between high-medium-low levels of student social activity complement and correct each other; therefore, their simultaneous use is preferable.

*The problem of the predominance of reactivity over activity, the prevalence of medium-low levels of social activity and low levels of socially oriented activity.* In the modern theory of social activity of students, a lot of attention is paid to analyzing the current situation in the modern educational space and clarifying the reasons for low social activity of modern students. First, we are talking about the predominance of reactivity over activity of students: modern teachers increasingly complain that there are few initiative and diligent students who would independently produce scientific and cognitive ideas and try to implement them independently and creatively. It becomes more and more necessary to stimulate/force students to participate in various competitions and conferences, to write research papers, to take part in social and volunteer projects, while the initiative and creative ideas come, as a rule, from teachers (obviously, this is reactivity rather than self-generating activity of students). Second, if we use the qualitative criterion for distinguishing levels of social activity, then we can talk about medium-low activity of modern students, who more often act not for the sake of higher spiritual values, but under the influence of pragmatic, utilitarian attitudes, for the sake of career, personal success, for the sake of grades or scholarships, guided not by the motive of achievement, but by the desire to avoid failure. For example, according to the results of a study by E. Bakharovskaya, «among the promising motives for the development of political activity of student youth, respondents name: 1) awareness of personal benefits of participating in political activities (33%); 2) the presence of career prospects (30%); 3) the possibility of establishing communications with deputies of the region (29%); 4) financial incentives (27%); 5) 9% of students found it difficult to

answer» [9, p. 158]. According to I. Dzyaloshinsky and Y. Masterova, «the younger generation more often than the generation of fathers perceives social work in a pragmatic way – as a way to improve their financial situation, make useful contacts and acquaintances, as an opportunity for professional growth and advanced training (15–19% vs. 4–9% among 55-year-olds and older)» [8]. Third, modern researchers in post-Soviet countries record low socially-oriented activity of modern students, who take part in public actions 5-6 times less than Western students or students of the Soviet era.

Despite some pessimism of the described situation, modern theorists ponder a lot on how to change this situation for the better, what needs to be done to intensify and improve the quality of social activity of modern students.

*Conclusions.* In this paper, the heuristic value of the concept of multiple forms of social activity of students manifested in real and virtual contexts is revealed. We have demonstrated the advantages of qualitative approach to distinguishing high-low levels of students' social activity, which includes four parameters: value, motivation, initiative-performance and sustainability-situation parameters of social activity that complement and correct each other. The features of the manifestation of social activity of students in the current situation, such as the predominance of reactivity over activity, the prevalence of medium-low levels of social activity and low levels of community-oriented activity, are stressed.

It is worth proposing «soft» methods of development of social activity, excluding coercion to certain types of activities: the method of creating problem situations (the essence of which lies in teacher or student posing a specific problem, the solution of which has not yet been formulated); the project method (involving the student's own formulation of a problem, goals and objectives of research, the choice of methodology, conducting the study, which may contribute to the development of cognitive activity and independence of thinking); the method of participatory teaching (assuming the possibility of inversion of teacher's and student's positions with the goal of establishing cognitive and communicative parity between all participants of the educational process) and creating a situation of trust between all subjects of the educational process (the main parameters of



which are communicative security, absence of over-control from educational agents, confidentiality and non-disclosure of private information about subjects of education process, a guarantee of help and support in difficult educational and communicative contexts).

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