

Personal Psychology

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Preventive adaptiveness as a new formation of a personality

Preventive adaptation is a process of intrinsic changes, self-development and active extrinsic subjective accommodation to new conditions of existence, which originates in the anticipation of these conditions and equally to subjective potentiation, force and quality of protection of nature, what lead to subjective and objective positive results in the wide view of analogical situations. Preventive adaptiveness is a cognitive, affective personal new formation which develops in preventive adaptation's process and has definite structure. The authors analyze place of preventive adaptiveness among other psychological appearances. Authors finish that knowledge of dynamic regularities and adaptation's indicators in different social groups which provides ability of personal new formation's development and person adapts to change conditions of individual and social life.

Key words: *preventive adaptation, preventive adaptiveness, reshaping of personality.*

The formation of a new field – social pedagogical psychology, as well as the analysis and collection of experimental data, describing the processes of socialization, upbringing and development, allowed us to point out that there is a continuous link between adaptation and development [7]. If sociality is considered an inherent feature of an individual, the process of social adaptation should be defined as both an actively-developing and actively-adaptive process. In this sense the phenomena of adaptation and personal development supplement each other, forming various options for self-actualisation.

In spite of the fact that processual and productive aspects are still considered to be the key elements of adaptation, in recent years a lot of

attention has been paid to personality reshaping – developing a complex of actively forming personality features. Forming inside the first two elements of adaptation (processual and productive ones), these newly developed features form their own dimension of adaptation.

In accordance with our approach (method), fully-fledged adaptation always includes a whole spectrum of self-changes and the elaboration of new personality features. And as we are talking about an active adaptation of an individual, it also involves an active self-change, self-correction caused by the demands of environment. One of the most important factors in the process of adjustment to the environment is anticipation of certain conditions and changes which may lead to the necessity of adaptation.

On the threshold of certain changes in the living and social conditions, the first things to be activated are some unconscious regulators of activity which are driven by a subconsciously anticipated image of events and gained experience [6]. In spite of its evident biological determination, involuntary control of behaviour originally has potential for selectivity. This control limits possible variants of preparation for changes to socially and culturally acceptable behaviour, and also to some personal dynamic stereotypes and sets the mechanisms of adaptation going, even before the changes in the environment occur.

Following this, subconscious reasoning starts making a prognosis of possible consequences of events, and the person involuntarily begins to prepare for action on the basis of a certain anticipating scheme. This scheme is there only in case some precedents for adaptation to similar changes or to their elements took place in the past. However, it is not the memory about the events, as there was a change in the structure of the image of the stimulus influencing the person. This change is accompanied by generalisation and planning, providing an opportunity for “going out” of the present (actual) position [5]. That is, generalised image of further changes activates certain preparatory processes.

It is important to mention, that probabilistic prognosis made already on this level allows to use generalised self-change methods for adaptation to similar situations (extreme situations, stress, conflict, etc.). At the same time, the absence of precedents entails the inaction of unconscious regulators, as unconscious control doesn't catch signals-indicators of further changes in the environment, and

anticipation doesn't activate anticipatory preparation to adaptation to them. Here the anticipation of rational (verbal-logical) level of adaptation relieves: moving the frames of the individual experience, it makes the subject operate notions and logical methods, processing the information about forthcoming changes of external conditions, social environment, one's own mental state and condition, etc. Rational anticipation is not only asking: «What will happen?», but it also provides prevention – planning in general, the creation of a system of measures of preparation for possible changes, a modification of methods and means of adaptation long before the forthcoming changes. Rational anticipation also gives freedom to pass freely from present to future and past in the process of creating an adaptive resource. A. Bodalev pointed to the importance of anticipation (foresight), writing about preventing undesirable, cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions in communication [3].

Preventive internal and external (behavioural) changes of the personality, described in the papers of P. Anokhin [2], B. Lomov and E. Surkov [5], U. Niesser [6], E. Sokolov [16], prove that adaptation begins already in the period prior to the impact, attracting attention of the subject. Here, the specificity of adaptation increases as the probationers get more information about possible development of a situation. This specificity corresponds to the expected conditions of action.

The famous formula of P. Simonov, determining the strength and quality of the emotion that the person develops, also takes into account the assessment of probability of needs satisfaction on the basis of experience and the information about the means predictably necessary for the satisfaction of current needs [15].

So, activation of adaptive schemes relevant to the changes in living or other conditions may already start in the process of receiving information about the first signs of forthcoming changes. And, if on the physiological level the dynamic of daylight hours, the temperature of the environment and other factors formed as a result of evolution, play the role of indicators of approaching changes, then on the level of imagination and abstract logical level of adaptation, the information gathered as personal experience of the individual or a social group may act as an indicator. According to the theory offered by N. Veaner, lack of information complicates anticipation of changes which a

person will have to adapt to, and it slows the process of adaptation [17].

As for the mechanism of social adaptation, i.e. the ability of the individual to anticipate changes in the society, then it is based on functional systems involving many factors, including abilities to shape social environment on the basis of both independent and, at the same time, integrated variables, as well as on the basis of identification of the individual with a certain extraindividual system positively evaluated by the person himself [1], on the ability to use the knowledge of historic and cultural regularities of the development of society for making prognosis of social life and social changes.

As social anticipation is ensured not only by information, but also by psychological conditions, the information blockade or distortion of the information influences the adaptation to the social changes in the same way psychological factors do, i.e. causing a change in activity and a growth of psychological and emotional tension, non-constructive reactions of adaptation and neurotic conditions experienced by social groups.

To summarise, active anticipation of events on the basis of the existing anticipation schemes, and a subsequent modification of these schemes in the process of data collection, the knowledge of the regularities of adaptation dynamic and the indicators of adaptation in the various social groups, provide an opportunity for timely internal and external changes, allowing the individual to adapt to the changing conditions of his/her personal or public life.

It is necessary to introduce a new notion, determining the contents of the above described process of adaptation.

Proceeding from the term prevention [< Lat. *praeventio* advance, prevention – prevention, preventive actions; and preventive that is a derivative from it [фр. *preventif* < Lat. *praevetus*] – precautionary, preventive, keeping ahead the actions of the opposite side, the notion of preventive adaptation is introduced.

Preventive adaptation is a process of preparatory internal changes, self-changes and active external adaptation of the individual to new constantly changing conditions. Preventive adaptation occurs on the basis of anticipation of these conditions, relevant to the potential of the individual, to the strength and quality of the

environment's impact, leading to subjectively and objectively positive evaluation of the results in many analogous situations.

The introduced notion differs considerably from the notion of adaptation that was used at the beginning of the article:

- Time frames of preventive adaptation are not limited by the actual/current conditions, they combine present and future, and that, in its turn, allows to have a preventive impact on social experience;
- The trigger of preventive adaptation is not a disparity of the individual and surrounding reality, stimulating action, but a sensible initiation of "the zone of the nearest development", i.e. the formation of a certain new cluster of features (reshaping of personality) of the individual, that will play a role in future;
- By virtue of this, preventive adaptation may be initiated both by the person himself and by others (for example, parents, pedagogues, social officials) - the people, who in this case, act as agents of adaptation;
- Preventive adaptation may be naturally involved in the process of rehabilitation, training and upbringing;
- Productivity of preventive adaptation should undergo two stages of evaluation: a) advance evaluation, i.e. according to the level of development of preventive adaptation and b) according to external and internal criteria of adaptation of the person to the changes, when they become acute.

Preventive adaptiveness as a cognitive-affective-personal reshaping is a result of this process. This adaptiveness comprises the following components:

1. Constantly altering adequate ideas about the coming changes in private and public life, that is the anticipation of life events taking into consideration the experience of adaptation (incorporation into new social groups, a change in working conditions, studies and other life changes);
2. Understanding the meaning of the forthcoming events;
3. Readiness for internal and (or) external actions to adapt to changes, and take on responsibilities;
4. Considering changes in private life and possible stressful situations as something temporary or necessary for achieving the aim;
5. Developing an attitude to adaptation as to an activity necessary for achieving certain results;

6. Transparency, flexibility and tolerance to the new;
7. Adequate evaluation of one's own actual and potential opportunities and understanding the significance of life events;
8. Communicative competence;
9. Social experience relevant to the situations predicted for the future.

Let us consider the above mentioned components of preventive adaptiveness in detail.

Ideas about future are formed as a result of a large variety of cognitive processes, image memory and imagination being the most important ones. They create an opportunity for abstraction, for identifying core goals as well as for setting tasks and performing conceptual operations. In spite of possible errors in abstract thinking, when some essential characteristics are not taken into account, the qualities of a future activity, a new social group, changing conditions and etc., allow not only "to see" the future, but extrapolate generalised methods of responsiveness on a large category of analogous situations, e.g. handling extreme situations, stress, conflict and etc.

It is impossible not to mention the fact, that the image unconsciously actualized by the person and enriched by individually determined meanings, may play a representation role. Such an image may contradict the actual information, rational logic, experience and knowledge. It may be built on both individual and collective myths, but it is extremely important for preventive adaptation because of its emotional intensity, personal significance and its connection with vital needs of the individual (self-image, that of an unlucky person, winner, leader, etc.). Illogicality and axiomatics of such representation may lead to inadequacy of ideas, aspirations, and self-evaluation of the individual, it may entail a break-down of adaptation. That's why, anticipation is among the primary objectives of prevention. Anticipation is forestalling of life events that will require adaptation in the form of supraliminal adequate representation, a reflexive model of the desired future, and also adequate estimation of the actual and potential opportunities of the person.

Anticipation provides aim setting, planning and programming of behaviour, as it implies, firstly, the anticipation of some events. And secondly, readiness to face these events and advance them by undertaking actions (cognitive and behavioural components of mindset).

Schematic generalised ideas about future constitute a “line map” of adaptation, the content of which is provided by the understanding of the meaning and significance of future events, i.e. the meaning for the society in general as well as for the individual undergoing adaptation. Herewith, the individual doesn't only reflect the objective content of the coming events and phenomena, but also forms a certain attitude to them, experiencing emotions.

Positive emotional background of preventive, and also daily adaptation, is formed by means of experiencing personal changes and handling stressful situations, considering them as temporary or necessary for pursuing a goal of difficulty. Here, the cognitive affective mechanism of subjective evaluation of forthcoming stressful or frustrating situation comes into action. Rationalization changes the assessment of the situation, shifting it from negative, threatening and infringing upon the main needs, to useful, for example, from the point of view of gained experience, or the elaboration of new strategies of behaviour, incorporation into new social groups, etc. Significant contribution is made by an emotional component of mindset, an evaluating and expressive function of which may strengthen or, vice versa, weaken the emotional perception of the forthcoming adaptation.

As a result, preventive adaptation begins in rather safe conditions (before the situations, causing stress or frustration, occur). The above described evaluation and assessment processes help to form a mindset to adaptation as an activity, necessary for achieving certain results, as to a peculiar “game” (the trial) testing the development of personal features and life values. It helps the individual feel involvement in the process of adaptation and even enjoy it.

As it is apparent, that disposition to preventive adaptation is an important component of preventive adaptation. In this context it is also important to mention the readiness to take responsibility for internal and external actions of adaptation to changes, namely in locus of control under significant events in one's life [10]. However, preference of internality, as it has been already stated in our papers, is not so one-valued, as it seems to be at first sight, as it is subject to the influence of other factors. It gives an additional specificity to this attributive pattern. Two of these factors are of particular importance for preventive adaptation. The first one is the link between internality

and existence: the more the subject believes that everything in life depends upon his own efforts and abilities, the more sense and aims he finds in life and it has positive influence. Attribution of responsibility will inevitably lead the individual to increasing his activity and developing a willingness to prevent threatening situations or their negative consequences. Taking into account the autonomy, pro-sociality and freedom of decision making process, peculiar to internals, the link between internality and understanding (imparting) of sense of adaptation as a part of the meaning of life creates a good psychological basis for preventive adaptation.

The orientation to total control over a situation, that is subsistent to internals, is the second factor. Under the conditions of uncertainty of the forthcoming changes, peculiar to prevention, the danger of psychological overstrain, growth of psycho-emotional “price” of adaptation, and refusal of adaptation, arises. A solution to this contradiction may be found in the structure of the model of “good internal control”, where internality of achievements and failures combines with externality of reasons for failures. Such a pattern of responsibility will not provoke increased anxiety, disquietude, low tolerance to others, dependence on external circumstances and inability to regulate one’s own business, thus making elaboration of anticipation programme of adaptation more complicated. But nevertheless, to our mind, internality-externality of control in itself does not testify to adaptiveness or non-adaptiveness. It just points out who will initiate preventive programme for adaptation to difficulties: the individual himself or an external factor/source.

At the same time, the following components of preventive adaptiveness – transparency, flexibility and tolerance of the new – are key elements its structure. As an indicator of the low degree of rigidity, the transparency of new information and flexibility of response to it allow for easier formation of new notions, reduce restrictions, set by social attitudes, habits and inertness of the judgments and thus, broaden the range of methods of adaptation to external impacts and changing life conditions (plasticity). This psychodynamic quality is in close connection with interpersonal factors of cognition, particularly, social-perceptive stereotypes: anthropological, ethnic and national ones, social and status, social and role, expressive-esthetical and verbal-behavioural. The impact of

stereotypes is particularly strong under conditions of information deficit, which could lead to the anticipation of internal and external transformation of the personality to the forthcoming new conditions of activity, inclusion into new social groups, etc.

As for tolerance as a phenomenon of preventive adaptiveness, it is dispositional tolerance of personality during social interactions based on altruistic egoism, a positive attitude towards life/surrounding environment, positive vision of reality. The formation of the socio-psychological tolerance of a person is connected with the formation of corresponding attitudes and dispositions of the personality.

Using the above mentioned characteristics for preparation of adaptation to environment or efforts to adapt the environment to oneself is possible only under the condition of communicative competence – appropriate pragmatic use of social knowledge and social practice in context of relations with surrounding people [4, 18].

Social experience is understood in this case as a set of scenarios of reaction in standard situations and a set of methods of self-regulation in such situations.

The above mentioned components of the cognitive affective personality reshaping, i.e. preventive adaptiveness, indicate that preventive adaptiveness is one of the integral characteristics of the personality, as soon as it is created and displayed in various psychological spheres in certain social contexts. Differentiation was introduced artificially with a scientific purpose in order to simplify the psychological diagnostics and evaluation of the programmes for personality reshaping as a characteristics of personality and success of the preventive adaptation in general.

Position of preventive adaptiveness among other psychological phenomena.

Firstly, we should identify the difference between preventive adaptiveness and adaptiveness in its common interpretation. Adaptiveness is understood as a cognitive affective personal correlate of the generalized adaptability and represents an integral characteristics of the subject formed under real conditions and displayed in its effective adaptation to the occurring “here and now” changes in life and social environment. It does not require

reinforcement and can be activated in case of occurrence of standard situations, which require adaptation.

While preventive adaptiveness is the potential of the subject developed as a result of special preventive actions under relatively safe conditions of training and upbringing. This potential could be not activated in real life. If this is not a result of the natural development of personality and the anticipated changes are distant, then it will require regular reinforcement to preserve the unity and integrity of its components.

Analyzing the place of preventive adaptiveness among other psychological phenomena we should mention the obviousness of its connection with social competence. In general, they have the following features in common:

- both provide an opportunity for adequate adaptation under conditions of social changes;
- communicative competence, the capability to foresee consequences, the ability to choose social reference points and to organize one's activity in accordance with these points are structural parts of both phenomena;
- as the person becomes older, both phenomena become more complex in their cognitive aspect, more verbalized and more easily forecast;
- both have qualitative characteristics and levels, and can be measured.

Some scientists even consider social competence to be adaptation based on social and psychological readiness and communicational competence [8]. The difference is in informative characteristics, functions, mechanisms and ways of perfection.

Social competence in general is used as an operative definition, forming a system of social knowledge, skills, experiences and behaviour scenarios in typical situations, which provide an opportunity to adapt quickly "here and now". At the same time preventive adaptiveness corresponds to a systematic cognitive affective personality reshaping, the components of which are penetrated by emergent connections and are oriented to the future.

It is considered that such personality reshaping results from the crisis in the personality development. In this sense preventive adaptiveness in its ideal variant could be considered as product as personality reshaping which took place in early adulthood. But the analysis of the preventive adaptiveness components shows that it is better to considered it as a characteristic of the psychological and social age of the person, because

some components could be formed earlier and the chronological age is not determinative in the development of preventive adaptiveness.

Principal differences in the functions of social competence and preventive adaptiveness are conditioned by the differences between the processes of socialization and adaptability:

- a variety of functions of social competence is wide - social orientation, adaptation, integration of general social and personal experience, while the function of preventive adaptiveness is more concrete and consists of adaptation to the future, the creation of potential for adaptation to future changes of social and individual levels;
- social competence as an operative characteristic is a part of the universal adaptation mechanism to the new conditions “here and now”, while preventive adaptiveness is a prospective characteristic and allows to spread the influence of this mechanism to the future, constructed in the individual’s mind.

To sum up, it should be mentioned that preventive adaptiveness characterizes the personality as capable, on the basis of knowledge about social reality and the future, as well as on the basis of behaviour experience in typical situations and the anticipation of forthcoming changes and the individual’s ability to adapt to new conditions of existence *in advance*. In other words, on the basis of anticipatory (preventive) adaptation.

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