MANAGING THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF A MODERN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: The present publication examines the possibilities for more effective implementation of the existing models of the Bulgarian educational system through more active coordination. Emphasis is placed on the need for reform of the institutional framework, the realization of which is possible through the involvement of independent, competent and prepared individuals in the preschool, elementary and lower secondary stage of the educational institutions. Without these specialists, an institutional system would not be able by itself to guarantee the required efficiency. A set of measures has been proposed in this respect to ensure the implementation of the necessary change. The problem of human adaptation to the rapidly changing conditions of modern life is particularly important for modern children who from an early age are raised under conditions of frequent adaptation and re-adaptation to new environments. Each period of transition to a new environment is associated with stress and number of difficulties for the child.

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Introduction

The child's development is a complex and diverse process, which occurs in continuous interactions between the child's personality and the environment. The mental development occurs in a process of active assimilation, which is the optimal adaptation of the child to the environmental requirements in which they live. This determines the importance and significance of the problem for the child's adaptation to different conditions and environments.

Modern living conditions characterized by the rapid pace and scale of environmental transformations with constantly increasing demands on productive scientific and technological progress and with an increasing amount of information and a variety of psycho-emotional workload place the problem of adaptation of man to the changing environment among the most important general theoretical problems in modern science. The urgency of this issue is clearly expressed by its consideration in many scientific and practical fields from various aspects: biological, medical, social, psychological, pedagogical and others.

The problem of human adaptation to the rapidly changing conditions of modern life is particularly important for modern children who from an early age are raised under conditions of frequent adaptation and re-adaptation to new environments. Each period of transition to a new environment is associated with stress and number of difficulties for the child (Terziev, Bankova, Dacheva, 2019-a).

The goal of the present publication is to study the possibilities for a more effective implementation of the existing models of the Bulgarian educational system through more active coordination.

Theoretical study

To achieve the objective, complex methods were pursued. For the purposes of the research different information sources were used - scientific journals, publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors, on-line (electronic) periodicals, as well as the author's own research.

Family's role in the adaptation of children in school

The contemporary literature and pedagogical practice very often discuss children's maladjustment, the deviations and difficulties in their upbringing. Facilitating adaptation and shortening adaptation time is a particularly urgent problem and a successful solution to it can and should lead to a reduction of the number of children who failed to adapt, who are difficult to be educated and of the deviations in their behavior and health.

It is well known that the more psychologically and pedagogically focused the adaptation is, the faster and easier the child relates and assimilates new circumstances and requirements, the greater their opportunities for development and formation of right attitude are.

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Continuity between family and kindergartens and between them and primary schools should be addressed as a particular issue in the problem of children's adaptation to different living conditions, i.e. moving from one environment to another. The full implementation of such continuity gives opportunities for optimal adaptation of the child to the environment, prevents "stresses", "crises", traumas, retention in their development and enables a continuous process of development of knowledge, skills, abilities and skills of an individual.

In this regard, among the other goals for the upbringing of children, a new one should be set, namely, to provide conditions for the adaptation of modern children to the conditions of the new environment in an easier and faster way.

The term "adaptation" (from Latin adaptio - to adapt) has a wide application in the natural, social and technical sciences. Sociology, psychology and pedagogy make extensive use of "adaptation" to indicate a state of equilibrium in the relationship between the individual and the social environment. The term "adaptation" in the broad sense of the word is based on a historical (evolutionary) principle and denotes the whole system of reactions of living systems (individual, species) that have an active, guiding character. In a narrow sense, the term "adaptation" reflects only the ontogenetic aspect, i.e. process of interaction, equilibration of the living organism with the environment in its individual life.

The universal nature of adaptation is strongly emphasized by I.P. Pavlov (Pavlov, 1951). His concept of adaptation is about the unity of environment and the organism, "the most common characteristic of a living being is that it responds with the help of its defined specific activity not only to the external stimuli to which they have been exposed since birth, but also to other irritants that appear over the course of existence; in other words, a living organism has the ability to adapt" (Sechenov, 1952).

Adaptation, as a necessary condition for the existence of the organism, includes the interaction of the organism with the environment. In this case, adaptation is an expression of the unity of internal (organism) and external (environment) conditions. Adaptation is the ability of the organism to adjust its activity to the needs of the internal and external environment.

Human development naturally requires maintaining a continuous interaction with environment and constant adaption to it. A person is adapted to an environment when it can meet its requirements or when it responds adequately to the effects of the environment (Pavlov, 1951).

The human-environment interaction is accomplished not only by the physiological activity of man as a biological being, but through the path of material and spiritual production, through the forms of their social activity. A.D. Andreeva (Andreeva, 1973) describes human adaptation in three directions:

- The set of adaptive responses of human society as a whole to its natural environment.
- The adaptive reactions of an individual to changes in the surrounding social and natural environment.
- Entry of individuals into different social roles, i.e. in the sense of social adaptation.

From a philosophical point of view G.T. Dichev (Dichev, 1973a) defines the adaptation of man as "a complex process of the emergence, development and preservation of the state of physical, spiritual and social well-being by changing the organism according to the requirements of the present state of nature and society or the changing social conditions of people's lives to the needs and living conditions of each individual, or both at the same time".

A person's ability to communicate, socialize and to be able to absorb social experiences in the form of knowledge through language as a means of communication provide thoughtful anticipation and preparation for environmental change, which are specific to humans only. Through their activity they not only realize but also regulate and control their relations with the environment, influencing it according to their needs. On the basis of this, G. Dichev (Dichev, 1973a) points out that the ability to participate in socially useful work, creative activity and to engage in certain adequate interactions with other members of the society in which people live is the main factor for the adaptation of the person and the preservation of their social functions.

Creating the ability to adapt to the complex of social relations in different social microgroups is an increasingly crucial component in the development of an individual. Therefore, in modern conditions, the society and nature have the greatest opportunity for optimal adaptation to the needs and capabilities of every person (Dichev, 1973a).

Our neuroplasticity provides us with too many opportunities and flexibility in adapting to various conditions and environmental influences.

When it comes to adaptation, contemporary literature discusses the adaptive capabilities of the higher nervous activity in relation to biological or mental "stressors" (substance, agent, irritant, stress-induced effect).

The way and the basis on which adaptation takes place is an issue that has received much attention. Solving it has become the focus of numerous theories and concepts.

The physiological side of human adaptation to conditions of a certain environment is synthesized in I.P. Pavlov`s theory of the dynamic stereotype. Normally, there are numerous irritants on the cerebral cortex, both from the outside world and from the internal environment of the body itself. "Some of them", according to Pavlov, "are being investigated (orienting reflex), while others have a variety of conditional and unconditional effects" (Sechenov, 1952). They all meet, collide, interact and have to be systematized and balanced in a dynamic stereotype. The dynamic stereotype supports the person in their activity, saves the consumptions of energy of the nervous system when they respond to the surrounding external conditions.

Throughout our lives under both bioclimate and social conditions, people create a relatively stable dynamic stereotype that reflects their certain adaptability.

Some authors view adaptation as a compensation process when environmental connectivity is lacking or insufficient, i.e. when the environment changes - H. Selye. The process of human adaptation involves psychological mechanisms that are not yet well studied.

In biomedical and philosophical literature various theories have emerged that explain the course (stages) of adaptation. The concept of the Canadian scientist H. Selye is widely known and spread. According to him, different irritants (stressors) cause stress. He defines the set of general protective reactions that help restore the equilibrium as adaptive. He also defines three stages in the activity of the adaptation mechanisms. It is noteworthy that in both theories the adaptation period is rather difficult and stressful, which keeps our nervous system in tension. Such a condition has a negative influence on the functions of the whole organism (Pavlov, 1951a).

All this indicates that the human adaptation to nature and the social environment cannot be accomplished only on the basis of ready (innate) mechanisms. Based on this, it can be stated that the process of adaptation can be governed and coded throughout the process of learning. Consequently, a little child can be assisted during the difficult and sometimes painful process of adaptation. Applying appropriate methods and forms of education ensure the readiness of children and create favorable conditions for facilitating adaptation as they move from one environment to another. Thus, education and upbringing purposefully guide the quick and easy connection of the child to the new environment, which increases their opportunities for fuller adaptation, for a more effective and correct development and upbringing. This is precisely what sets the scientific and practical solution to the problem of continuity in the upbringing between the family, the kindergartens and the school. The realization and effectiveness of continuity requires that it is based on the knowledge of the mechanisms that make a fuller, more complete adaptation to an environment.

Parents' responsibility for upbringing

Parent and community involvement in upbringing are closely connected and complement each other (Table 1). We cannot deprive ourselves of parental upbringing if we want our children to grow up with strong personalities, abilities and knowledge.

Do parents always see their children the way they really are? Do we pay enough attention to them? Do they provide enough help for children to enter all the 'miracles' of their world? Most parents have the best wishes and intentions to raise their child. They should become good and hardworking people, graduate from school, take up a profession, have a fulfilling life and find their place in life and society. They have to be honest and diligent, respect their parents and treat the loved ones with care. However, every child develops in a different way. We cannot always be satisfied with the upbringing results. We do not always fully realize the extent to which the behaviour and character of the child are determined by parental upbringing. In the beginning we do not see what is wrong with their development, so we tend to think that there are no problems. However, the primary school teacher clearly recognizes the

impact of family upbringing and its role in the quick adaptation of children to the school environment. There are children in the classroom who feel comfortable among their classmates. They work calmly, they are responsive, know how to engage others in their games. But there are also children who are complicated and behave boldly, whimsically, willfully, and rudely. Differences in family upbringing are also noticeable in the child's attitude toward classmates, teachers and teaching process. For the proper start of the child in school and for their success, the particular upbringing in the family is of utmost importance (Zdravkova, 1978). And this means that the child should understand the organization of life and relationships in the family from the example of parents' behavior and from their upbringing ability in a broad sense. This includes the knowledge that parents have about the upbringing and development of the child, careful monitoring of the child and the conscious attitude to their problems. Last but not least, the rapid adaptation of children is also influenced by the growth of the child and what knowledge and abilities they gain.

Table 1: Main guideline of teacher-parents collaboration

Main directions of teacher-parents collaboration		
Psychological welcoming of parents	Involvement of parents in the educational process	Participation of parents in controlling the upbringing process
Lectures for parents; conferences; individual thematic consultations; parent meetings	Open days; open lessons and extracurricular activities; Assistance in the organization and carrying out of extracurricular activities, development of the school's technical facilities	Participation of parents in the work of the school board, participation of parents in the work of school management, etc.

Source: Author

What children learn, whether physically, spiritually or morally during the first seven years of their lives, what they develop, and shape will remain as a foundation for their later lives. Primarily, parents play a decisive role in creating prerequisites for the character of the child, in developing their willpower and their feelings and so on (Table 2).

Table 2: Types of school-family relations

Types of school-family relations.		
Individual	Group	Collective
Home visiting	Lectures for parents	Parent meetings
Invitations to school	Thematic consultations	General school parent meetings
Individual and pedagogical consultations	Classroom activities	Open days
Correspondence	Parent evenings	Holidays

Source: Author

Very often parents use such phrases as “Do not act silly”, “There is nothing you are good at” and so on. This poor upbringing style, if it happens more often, has extremely negative consequences for the development of the child's personality. The consequences are known. Such children become timid, reserved and quiet. Constantly criticizing and emphasizing dissatisfaction, stopping a child's initiative lead to thoughts such as:

- “I am not as smart and skillful as others!”;
- “I better look at how others do it”.

“A person is not born with fully developed self-consciousness”, writes psychologist Lyublinskaya (Popov, 2000). “They see themselves as a mirror reflection in opinions of other people”. Children start seeing themselves the way adults see them. Parents need to be aware of this in order to contribute to painless transition from kindergarten to first grade. Adaptation to the new school conditions and requirements should rely on the positivity of the child, on what they can do even when we are not satisfied with their handiness or certain behavior. Only in this way can they develop, perceive and learn quickly. Parents need to be very familiar with the individual peculiarities of their children so that through their attitude towards them parents could contribute to the peace of the child to the fullest extent so that they are not afraid to be involved in class activities during lessons and extracurricular activities.

Creative work is possible only when one loves their job, when they consciously experience joy and see the benefit and need of it, when the work becomes the most important expression of their personality and talent.

The need for meaningful and useful work is an important quality of man. There are many opportunities in the family's responsibilities to develop this quality in the child. The joy of something being accomplished is the beginning for developing active and strong characters (Popov, 2000). Thinking process of a person always starts with the questions: 'What is this?'; 'What is it made of?'; "Why is it made this way?" etc. Children try to answer these questions with action. They try and experiment in order to find out what is behind the secrets. Therefore, through their activity they gain valuable knowledge and life experience. Children learn in action. They soon start to realize that work is something different from game. They recognize and feel the value of their own selves. Work in the family becomes an important educational means for building the persistence, diligence, conscientiousness and other valuable traits needed at school. Life in the family offers favourable conditions for the creation of a valuable moral attitude in children. Through individual actions and reflections, children acquire knowledge and skills that gradually become their life experience and an acquisition that is important for the success of children in school. The child feels proud of being involved with adults when he or she successfully participates in various activities. It is important for every family to develop in children a proper attitude towards work. Children need to be aware that work is rewarding, learn to enjoy the successes and experience them. Only in this way will young first-graders have a desire for work, perseverance and enthusiasm for coping with school difficulties.

Before children can perform their work properly, they must learn to be independent. Independence provokes consciousness, gives the child security and raises self-esteem. In school they will experience what it means to study and work independently.

Proper daily organization, followed consistently, contributes significantly to the formation of certain habits, i.e. the child will get used to order and will develop time perception. Day mode is also significant for shaping the right behaviour. Order and discipline are key factors in overcoming school difficulties. Parents need to be interested in their child`s school life (Popov, 2000). They need to find time to ask how their child's day went, what happened at school, whether they were tested or assessed, what the child's behavior was during the class and breaks, as well as what their attitude towards the actions of others is. At such moments, parents are obliged to lecture their children, make them think and show them the right way of doing things. Parents` assistance in the preparation of lessons and homework is particularly helpful for the adaptation of their children in first grade. If the child due to the influence of the whole family pre-school upbringing is able to cope with the educational activity independently, has good discipline and relationships, there is no need for parental guidance and instructions. But if there is no pre-school preparation, they feel unnatural, the school environment is still alien to them, their parents are obliged to help their children, to work with them and to prove to them that they can also achieve good results. Such children are timid and shy, and they have a harder time getting used to school order and, therefore, it is more difficult for them to embrace the role of a student. However, with the right attitude of family and with the teacher's assistance, children quickly understand what they need to do and with more work and persistence, they quickly absorb and catch up with others.

The attitude of adults towards the child as a future individual, considering the high level of education of the older generation and other conditions, influences first-graders and makes them much more alert today and contributes much to richer prior knowledge. Training and educational work of pre-school institutions and the upbringing of the family contribute significantly to this.

School attitudes are determined both by the student's character, by their requirements and capabilities and by the level of development in a given age range. Family is particularly responsible because it has to prepare the child for school and, of course, support their successful start. In any case, through communicating and raising their child, parents strive to reach such level of the child's capabilities that will largely ensure successful performance of school requirements.

Ensuring good physical development and health of children is a particularly important and responsible task for the family (Popov, 2000). Going to school is a huge change for a child. They must have grown physically for many new demands and relative changes in the rhythm of their lives. Objective

evidence of the stress caused to the child's body by the school environment is that most children lose weight. But with a healthy diet, the meaningful organization of total leisure time, by filling it with sufficient activities in fresh air, games, sports and with the help of an established daily regime, parents will contribute to the training of the physical functions of their child's body. However, physical changes are not the most important signs of school readiness. It is more vital whether their capabilities, skills, habits and attitudes needed for learning in school are properly developed.

Although the goal of a first-grade teacher is to develop students' readiness to learn and their general attitude towards the tasks, these qualities must to some extent be acquired before going to school. This means that children need to take on appropriate tasks and solve them even when those tasks are difficult and whether they give them joy or not. More self-determination, persistence and a sense of obligation rather than a game are needed. The child should not be guided by their impulsive ideas and needs but be able to control them and complete the task. The attitude towards the tasks includes the voluntary acceptance and diligent fulfillment of the goals set by the teacher. Small, regularly assigned tasks by the parents, as well as different ways of learning, memorizing and doing exercises willingly are important for building a conscious attitude towards the tasks. Such tasks help train a conscious deliberate memorizing form of learning that is important for the child's adaptation to school (Popov, 2000; Rossiyskaya pedagogicheskaya entsiklopediya, 1993).

An important task for parents in order for their children to have a successful start at school is to awaken the joy for school and learning. The attention given to the older siblings' educational work, the curiosity of what is experienced at school, the superiority of school friends, these and other moments contribute to developing children' s readiness and joyful expectation of learning at school. Parents should encourage the child's joy of school, reading and writing, as well as strengthen it and make it deeper. The child must already possess diligence, patience, order, discipline and other positive qualities if we want them to be good students.

Parents need to help the child find their place in the team and learn to adapt to it. The teacher addresses the whole class and the child should feel part of it. However, often very few students get the chance to speak, thus self-control and modesty are required in such cases. In order to develop these qualities, parents must provide their children with sufficient opportunities to communicate with children of the same age outside of school.

Admission to school is prepared through developing a number of skills and competences that need to be strengthened during the last pre-school year.

The children should be relatively independent, get dressed by themselves, keep things in order, be organized and responsible when performing certain tasks given by parents.

Proper speech is of great importance in order to be able to ask and answer questions in the class comprehensibly. The child must have acquired a basic knowledge of life, nature, society and some objective human relationships. Of particular importance is their shared spiritual responsibility and life as a prerequisite for future success and for the further development of their personality (Terziev, Stoilova, 2019b-c).

Conclusion

This work emphasizes on the relevance of the studied topic in the field of education management, highlighting the need of better efficiency and coordination among the existing models of the Bulgarian education system. It suggests reformation of the institutional frame, which implementation is possible through the engagement of independent, competent and prepared individuals in pre-school, primary and secondary levels of education institutions, without which no institutional system itself would be able to guarantee the needed efficiency. The suggested measures in this direction are ambitious, but realistic – feasible to implement in near future through constitutional change.

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