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PARENTAL COMPETENCIES' DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Modern society imposes high requirements to human capital. The analysis of the modern young parents need for parenthood knowledge and justification of the key role of education social institution in the parental competencies' development is the paper objective. The Russian higher education standards were analyzed and the content analysis of social media (parents' thematic communities) and parents' web requests concerning parenting and children development was carried out. On the basis of performed studies the following conclusions were drawn: 1) a number of social institutions is responsible for the human capital formation; 2) competencies' formation is not an objective of the education social institution; 3) an efficiency of social institutions of the family, the culture, the religion and the state dealing with the parental competencies' formation is poor – it is evidenced by the fact that nowadays the young people feel the lack of knowledge concerning parenthood and parental functions implementation methods. The authors suggest to include the parental competencies' development problem in the education system. The development of an educational environment with flexible modules for the formation of parental competencies can be a solution. Strategically, it will allow for human capital improvement, which in its turn will help to solve a number of population and economic Russian problems.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays the national human capital has become the key resource. Consequently, with increasing frequency there arises a problem of mental training, education and reproduction of the “knowledge-based economy” experts. It is known that the human capital formation system is related to “parenting results”. As for today the family is still crucial in the human capital reproduction process. A social institution of the family in its turn is included in the other institutional society systems. For instance, the family upbringing culture is contingent on traditions, religion, and values system of society (Austin 2007; Betzig, Borgerhoff, & Turke, 1988) the family planning policy depend on the public health and social safety systems (Hannah 1972; Bartley 2003), the system of social and legal relations between the family members is conditioned by the current legislation system of the country (Diduck, Peleg, & Reece, 2015; Brennan & Mahon, 2011; Esping-Andersen 1999) etc. Therefore, the human capital quality is determined by the total impact of existing social institutions of the family, the state, the education, the religion, the mass media etc.

However, regardless of the considerable impact of social institutions on the human capital formation, these social institutions do not take responsibility for systematic support of population in reproduction problems. Consequently, the family is forced to train children for living in the information society. The problem becomes complicated due to the fact that the nuclear family is the most common family form in the developed countries (Social Trends Institute 2017; United Nations 2019). Therefore, the parenthood experience transfer and systematic support by the previous generations (grandmothers and grandfathers) is rather difficult. It bears definite social and demographic impacts and risks.

The lack of parenthood knowledge makes parents refer to the public information sources in the Internet, which creates a demand for different experts on psychology of family relations, education, medicine etc. It results in a wide range of proposals from the family relations coaches, opinion leaders, bloggers/vloggers and other “parenthood experts” with purely financial incentives (Russia 24 Official Channel, 2019).

Moreover, there appears a growing number of media platforms for intercommunication and mutual assistance (forums, social networks communities, websites etc.), where a person can get a free advice from more experienced parents or people faced with the same problem. Unfortunately, this “expert” help holds considerable risks, especially concerning the health problems. However, there are few alternative reliable information sources for modern parents. There exist separate elements of parenthood support under certain conditions (perinatal nursing, trainings for adoptive parents, social work with troubled families etc.), however, the systematic measures for information distribution among the common families with children, are not taken.

2. Problem Statement

Modern society imposes high requirements to parents concerning a child development level. Consequently, the parental labour has become more difficult and cost-intensive, requiring special training. However, none of social institutions takes on responsibility for parenthood training. Therefore, the adequate parenthood training measures based on the survey of real needs are necessary.

3. Research Questions

The following research issues have been raised by the authors:

What social institutions are responsible for human capital formation?

Is there a purposeful parental competencies' formation problem set in the social institution of the education?

Of what knowledge the modern parents feel the lack?

4. Purpose of the Study

Analysis of modern parents needs for parenthood knowledge and justification of the key role of the education social institution in the parental competencies' development is the purpose of the study.

5. Research Methods

We used the following methods:

- 5.1 Theoretical analysis of functions of social institutions, responsible for human capital formation.
- 5.2 Content analysis of the higher education standards. We have studied the federal higher education standards by 54 undergraduate education specialties in the Russian higher education system. The research purpose was in discovering the existing competencies associated with parenthood in the education results.
- 5.3 Content-analysis of "Vkontakte" social network parental communities. The authors have analyzed six communities with more than one million members in 2015–2016. The parental competencies' gaps and the most common parenthood problems have been studied. The age core of this social network audience is presented by people at the ages from 16 to 28 ("We are social" analytics, 2017).
- 5.4 Quantity and content analysis of search requests associated with children, received in the "Yandex" system over a period of March-May 2017. According to "Yandex-analytics" (Yandex-analytics 2017) there arrive approximately 60 million search requests, anyhow associated with children, per month. The majority of search requests have the same structure – they comprise a child age and key words associated with the problem.

6. Findings

- 6.1. A number of social institutions is responsible for human capital formation. Interaction of social institutions as well as full implementation of their functions should lead to the parental competencies' formation and development among the young society members for whom these competences are a part of human capital.

It is commonly known, that the social institutions' structures comprise norms, values, rules regulating the conduct, roles, sanctions, rewards, organized patterns of belief, their justification (theoretical, ideological, religious, mythological) and social experience translation measures (material, idealized and symbolic) (Miller, 2019).

Social institutions reflect social practices and relations intended to social needs' satisfaction (Miller 2019). Consequently, from the one hand social institutions are fundamental society constructs; from the other hand social institutions are well positioned to control society.

The institutions comprise all constraints forms, created by people for structure formation of human relations (North, 1990). The institutions lower uncertainty in society, creating stable (but not necessarily efficient) social interaction.

We have analyzed the functions of the key social institutions responsible for human capital formation. These institutions comprise the family, the education, the culture, the religion.

The key functions of these social institutions are presented in Table 01.

Table 01. Social institutions responsible for human capital formation

| Social institutions | Key functions | Scientists, who defined these functions |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family | Reproductive, economic, educational, recreative and social control functions | Bagirova and Shubat (Bagirova & Shubat 2018), Becker (Becker, 1930), Berger (Berger, 2002), Bossard (Bossard, 1935), Gurko and Orlova (Gurko & Orlova 2011), Healey with co-authors (Healey et. al 2010), Horwitz (Horwitz, 2015), Scott with co-authors (Scott et. al. 2004), Sinelnikov (Sinelnikov, 2018) |
| Education | Humanistic, socializing, informative, regulative, integrative, communicative and social selection functions | Andres (Andres, 2016), Bauman (Bauman, 2000), Bourdieu and Passeron (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977), Clark (Clark, 1994), Collins (Collins, 1971), Gumpert (Gumpert, 2007), Karabel (Karabel, 2005), Meyer (Meyer, 1977), Parsons (Parsons, 1959), Tinto and Pusser (Tinto & Pusser 2006) |
| Culture | Informative, socializing, communicative and regulative functions | Becker (Becker, 1982), Griswold (Griswold, 2012), Hans and Knobl (Hans & Knobl 2010), Jenkins (Jenkins, 1992), Munch and Smelser (Munch & Smelser 1993), Burns and Dietz (Burns & Dietz 1992) |
| Religion | Worldview, compensative and regulative functions | Barkan and Greenwood (Barkan & Greenwood 2003), Bryan (Bryan, 2016), Casanova (Casanova, 2006), Durkheim (Durkheim 1947), Semenenko and Galgash (Semenenko & Galgash 2014), Greeley (Greeley, 1989), Johnson and Jang (Johnson & Jang 2010), Nath (Nath, 2015), Stoops (Stoops, 1913), Weber (Weber, 1958) |
| State | Integrative, regulation and distribution functions, social control and state functions (economic and legal functions etc.) | Guala (Guala, 2016), Marx (Marx, 1867), Merton (Merton, 1968), North (North, 1990), Parsons (Parsons, 1952), Powell and DiMaggio (Powell & DiMaggio 1991), Swedberg (Swedberg, 2005), Weber (Weber, 1978) |

It is obvious that the activities of these social institutions should facilitate the parental competencies formation as a human capital element. Among other things, in fulfilling upbringing function parents can lay the foundation in the children consciousness concerning the family way of life and the necessity of children for the life strategy implementation. During the humanistic function implementation, social institution of education should cultivate understanding that children play a facilitating role in moral, esthetic, intellectual and physical development of the personality and that during children rearing parents develop themselves. With the help of informative function social institution of culture forms values,

practices and traditions of the family-with-children way of life. The religion serves to form the family and the personality images and meanings as well as moral and spiritual principles of the family intercommunication. The state institution controls the family members' interrelations and interactions with other institutions by legal mechanisms' implementation. The state also forms the infrastructure for the family, establishing conditions for family life.

Thus, the results of theoretical analysis of functions of five social institutions, responsible for human capital formation, show that these functions are complementary. Their interaction should create conditions for successful development of the parental competencies as a crucial element of human capital.

6.2. The parental competencies' formation problem is not included in the Russian higher education problems' list.

The results of the higher education standards' content analysis have shown that all competencies of graduates can be divided into three groups:

- common cultural
- general professional
- professional.

We have supposed that the problem of the parenthood culture mastering by the young people should be set among the other common cultural competencies, as far as the parenthood is a complex and multi-faceted activity and preparation for parenthood cannot be reduced to a social institution of the family. A list of common cultural competencies and their applicability during parenthood are presented in Table 02.

Table 02. Common cultural competencies in the Russian higher education standards and their potential application during parenthood

| Common cultural competencies | Potential field/fields of application | Potential application during parenthood |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The ability to use basics of philosophy for worldview attitudes' formation | Personal | The ability to accept parenthood as an opportunity for procreation |
| The ability to analyze the key stages of historical social development for citizenship formation | Personal | This competence use during parenthood is unobvious |
| The ability to use the basics of economic knowledge in various areas of activity | Personal, professional etc. | The ability to evaluate and predict material costs, associated with parenthood |
| The ability to use the basics of legal knowledge in various areas of activity | Personal, professional etc. | The ability to understand possible legal problems, associated with separate parenthood aspects |
| The ability to communicate orally or in writing in Russian or in a foreign language to solve problems of interpersonal and inter-cultural interaction | Personal, professional etc. | The ability to communicate with a child, relatives participating in a child upbringing and specialists from different institutions associated with children development (health centers, child care centers, schools, supplementary education establishments etc.) |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The ability for teamworking with tolerant acceptance of social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences | Professional | The ability for tolerance in the family, and the ability to avoid and resolve domestic conflicts |
| The ability for self-organization and self-education | Personal, professional etc. | The ability to become an adequate parent |
| The ability to use physical training to ensure social and professional activities to a full extent | Personal, professional etc. | The ability for physical development of yourself and your children |
| The ability to take first aid measures and protection measures in case of emergency | Personal, professional etc. | The ability to give medical treatment to yourself and your children |

Thus, it can be said that the Russian higher education standards can indirectly help in formation of some competencies necessary for parenthood. However, the meaning given in the educational standards does not involve their application during the child’s human capital formation. In the existing formulations these competencies are separated, they do not form an integrated system and in general they do not focus on students’ preparation to parenthood.

6.3. The results of the content analysis of search requests and topics for discussion of the internet-audience show that there is a content request of modern parents concerning problems associated with the family and the parenthood.

The distribution of the problems discussed in the Internet among the young parents is as follows:

- Health care issues – 70 % (child health – 60 %, mother health - 10 %);
- Other parenthood issues - parenting, leisure, relations, daily life etc. - 30 %.

Let us characterize the structure of each topic in detail.

6.3.1. The issues associated with a child health

The issues comprise preventive measures (67% of the issues) and treatment measures (33% of the issues). The structure of the users’ questions concerning child’s health is presented in Figure 01.

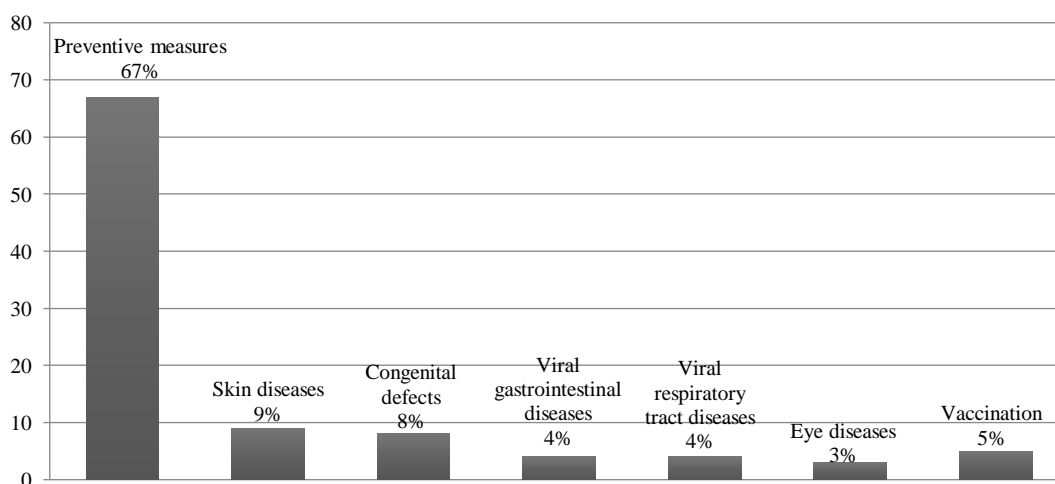


Figure 01. Topics discussed by the parents within “A child health” subject category

6.3.2. The issues associated with a mother health

The following issues are discussed in this subject category: a lactating woman health and breastfeeding problems (43 %); pregnancy and preparation for childbirth (35 %); health condition in the postnatal period (recovery from childbirth, hormonal diseases and psychoemotional state etc.) (22 %). Discussion of these topics is based on approaches traditional for online medium – transfer of experience from people who faced with such problems, comparison of different recommendations, providing references to specialists etc.

6.3.3. The issues associated with the other parenthood aspects

The structure of the discussed topics is presented in Figure 02.

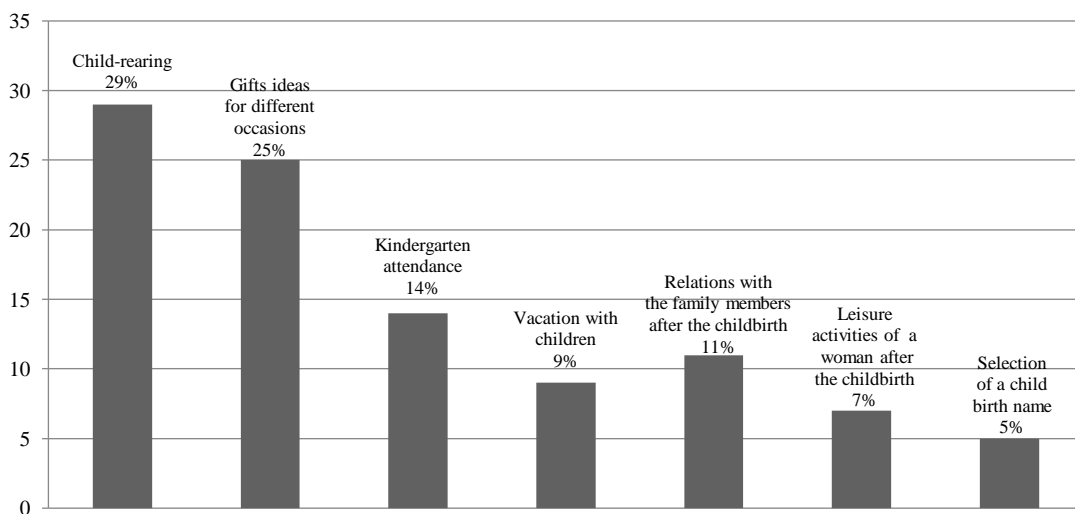
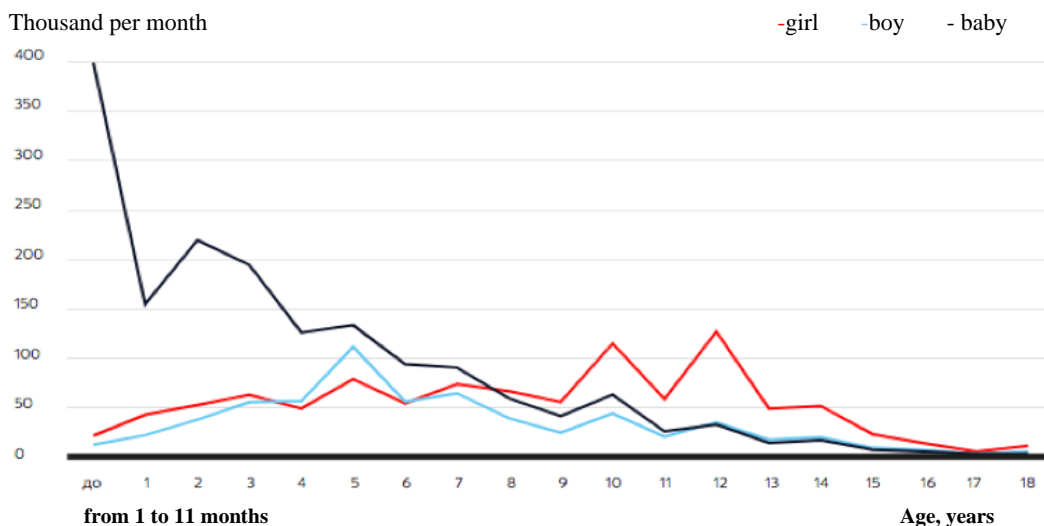


Figure 02. Topics discussed by the parents within “Other” subject category

It can be noted that the topic associated with challenges of parenthood, constraints in professional development, leisure and life in general arises in discussion often enough. The young parents note that they could not imagine how fundamental could be the changes in their life after the children birth. The young mothers discuss their attempts to include their ordinary activities in the new lifestyle (work, study etc.) while maintaining their professional skills. People also discuss the issues of family recreation, in particular, the level of recreation areas adaptation for children, the prices and possible dangers.

6.4. As the children grew older the parents send the Internet requests less frequently, and in this case the requests content changes significantly.

The distribution of the search requests concerning children of varied age is presented in Figure 03.



*According to the “Yandex” search (March-May 2017)

Figure 03. The number of the search requests in the “Yandex” system with words “boy”, “girl” and “baby” with references to age

Among the key problems the parents are concerned about are the issues associated with children health regardless of their age. Parents of young children are also concerned about nutritional issues. Nutritional issues become irrelevant for parents of children over three years of age. The parents of two-year-old children address questions about the indexes of psychophysical development, as well as the tantrum problems. Parents of three-year-old children are most concerned about problems associated with a child obedience. The educational approaches, such as reading, multiplication tables etc. (for 5-8-year old children), the issues concerning the ways to earn pocket money (for 10-year old children) as well as the motivation problems (for 12-year old children) are among the most common questions addressed by the older children parents. Topics, discussed by social networks’ users, show the lack of professional, reliable and objective knowledge concerning parenthood under the information chaos conditions. Social networking is the most available “mutual assistance channel” for the young parents. In this case social network members act as the experts. It is hard to predict the impact of such mutual assistance, as far as generally recommendations are associated with children health issues.

6.5. According to the analysis results, the modern parenthood has a number of “problem issues”, which comprise:

6.5.1. The lack of knowledge concerning implementation of parental functions associated with child care.

The young people feel the lack of knowledge of medicine and hygiene. They need at least a fundamental understanding of childhood diseases and methods of the young babies’ first aid treatment. Moreover, the young people have no skills to form the culture of their own reproductive health as well as a child health; there is a lack of trust in the “conventional medicine” and professional medical community. Formation of quasi-scientific movements such as “Anti-Vaccination”, “Vegetarian” and “HIV denialism” has become increasingly frequent among the young people, which can have drastic social consequences. According to the educational standards’ analysis results the modern higher education system provides knowledge only of the first aid treatment and the application of the physical culture methods necessary for social and professional activity. In this case the systematic culture of health, family planning and child care

is not formed. The emergency assistance skills can be helpful in case of emergency, while the medicine knowledge and the knowledge concerning hygiene and healthy lifestyle will be necessary in the common use. It should be mentioned that the health culture (especially reproductive health culture) should be formed during the whole life, but it should not finish at the student course level.

6.5.2. The lack of competencies for making organizational decisions, associated with parenthood; low level of juridical and financial awareness in the family sphere.

The higher education graduates have practically no competencies, associated with the family budget planning, calculation of child allowance amount and determination of materials costs for children. The lack of legal competencies results in inability to make weighted decisions in the event of a crisis (parental separation, incapacitation etc.).

6.5.3. The lack of competencies for psychological and communication problems solving.

This problem is based on the lack of skills of efficient communication between husband and wife, between parents and children and also between parents, children and the older generation. According to the analysis results, among the list of common cultural competencies of the higher education graduates the emphasize is placed on the ability for teamworking with tolerant acceptance of social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences, while building the relationships between parents and children is not considered as a separate competence. The latter competence should be also developed in due course as it is evidenced by the data on the divorce rate.

7. Conclusion

Thus, the analysis results have shown the following: 1. a number of social institutions is responsible for human capital formation; 2. the social institution of education is not aimed for parental competencies' formation; 3. an efficiency of social institutions of family, culture, religion and state dealing with the parental competencies' formation is poor – it is evidenced by the fact that nowadays the young people feel the lack of knowledge concerning parenthood and parental functions implementation methods. Of course, the foundation for parenthood knowledge should be given in the family. However, the further education is focused only on professional knowledge development. It causes disagreement between the objectives of professional activities and the parenthood. We are convinced that the interaction of these two basic human activities should be included the Russian higher education system content. The education social institution should prepare not only the labour market professional, but also a full-fledged parent. It is in the authors' opinion that training for parenthood should be included in a real educational process, but it should not present a separate additional activity. The introduction of training for parenthood in the universities' educational programs will allow for education attractiveness enhancement for prospective university students and their parents, and, strategically, it will allow for the human capital improvement in the country.

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