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CONSUMERISM IN STUDENTS' PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

У статті розглянуто проблеми споживчого позиціонування сучасної молоді у сфері освіти. Споживчі практики молоді розглянуто як ефект тотального поширення принципів «суспільства споживання» у всіх соціальних контекстах, а також як результат соціальної інфантилізації молоді, що виявляється в соціальній незрілості й завищених амбіціях.

Ключові слова: *консюмеризм, освітні практики, інфантилізм, комунікативна дія, інструментальна дія.*

The problems of consumer positioning of modern youth in the field of education are considered. Youth consumer practices are seen as the effect of the total spread of the principles of «consumer society» in all social contexts, as well as the result of the social infantilization of youth, manifested in social immaturity and overstated ambitions.

Keywords: *consumerism, educational practices, infantilism, communicative action, instrumental action.*

In modern sociology of education, a problem of consumerism of modern youth in various life contexts, including education, is actively debated. Youth consumerism practices can be regarded, on the one hand, as the effect of total spread of basic principles of the «consumer society» (J. Baudrillard) in all social contexts, and, on the other hand, as a result of social infantilization of youth that is manifested in social immaturity, creative impotence and overstated ambitions. Social infantilism forms a receptive attitude to life and to others, from which not so much a partnership is expected, but patronage and guardianship. Social infants are got used to consuming ready-made foods, intellectual fast-food that one doesn't need to produce by his/her own, one doesn't have to work on it, which one can simply «take» and «swallow» (if parents or teachers didn't have time to «cook», then it remains an opportunity to express dissatisfaction and criticism). Consumerism practices of youth can be seen as a sign or disease of our time, which can be fought (or, conversely, be reconciled with). At the same time, it should be recognized that consumerism is a very common, but still not total behavioral strategy of modern youth, some of which (maybe a small part) is aimed at creativity practices of anti-consumerism.

In modern sociology and philosophy of education, consumerism has traditionally been considered in the context of commercialization of modern universities (analysis of this aspect of the problem is considered in the works of S. Aronovitz, D. Bok, M. Nussbaum, B. Readings). A wider context of discussion of the problem of consumerism in education is in the J. Habermas' conception of «colonization of lifeworld by systems» – colonization of free communicative space of a modern man by consumerism that perpetuates utilitarian and mercantile (or instrumental) life perception. According to J. Habermas, society operates in two modes – the «lifeworld» mode (everyday life of a person whose highest values are

freedom, love, mutual understanding without mercantile overtones) and the «system» mode (the system of power and money that reorients a person to search for benefits and profits, to achieve the status of superiority over other social actors). According to J. Habermas, in the modern world we are witnessing a «colonization» of the lifeworld with a bureaucratic system, the effect of which is the monetization of relationships between people (putting everyday communication into a «sale and purchase» mode) and establishing total control over a person's private life. J. Habermas believed that education, which should be a sphere of the «lifeworld», is attacked by the «system» of bureaucratic supervision, as a result of which the communicative context of education is «colonized» and formalized [8, p. 372]. According to Ted Fleming, in the higher education, one can observe not only the power-political, but also the monetary and economic aspect of the «colonization of the lifeworld»: «Useful knowledge is often framed exclusively as technical and instrumental. The danger is that universities will see students as customers and teachers as service providers. Colonization by the neoliberal economy is the crisis facing universities. Everything is judged by money. Power and money are not the imperatives of the lifeworld whose solidarities can neither be coerced nor bought» [7, p. 116]. Let us analyze the specifics of consumerization of the communicative sphere of modern universities in optics of the theory of «consumer society» by J. Baudrillard, Z. Bauman and in relation to the problem of social infantilism studied by G. Efimova, N. Zhestkova, V. Mogun and others.

The consumer attitude of modern students to education can be seen:

- in their intention to «acquire» easily digestible knowledge, which in the future can be converted into simple functional skills to perform professional tasks;
- in distrust of humanitarian (especially theoretical) knowledge, deprived of an operationalized context and, therefore, perceived as useless;
- in a considerable narrowing of the cognitive horizon, artificially restricted by the limits of practical reason;
- in a superficial acquaintance with a disciplinary context (assessed on a scale of «useful – useless»), the result of which is an extremely fast «weathering» of the acquired knowledge (more correctly, information).

A feature of any consumer practices is their quick passing: the pleasure of the purchased goods, which a person experiences at the time of purchase, is quickly replaced by a keenly felt feeling of boredom and dissatisfaction, requiring new impressions and acquisitions. Similar metamorphoses are observed in the case of consumer assimilation of educational programs: knowledge is consumed at the moment of its perception, after which it is forgotten (being stored only on paper or electronic media). A consumer-minded person chronically experiences a feeling of fatigue, completely unrelated to life activities. As noted by J. Baudrillard, «...fatigue, as a collective syndrome of the post-industrial societies, thus represents one of the profound anomalies, one of the “dysfunctions” of prosperity. ...Fatigue (or “asthenia”) will then be interpreted as a response on the part of modern man – a response in the form of a passive refusal – to his conditions of existence» [6, p. 182–183]. Similarly, students with consumer attitudes are easily identified by chronic boredom in the classroom, by the lack of a lively interest in any disciplinary concepts, by pathological fatigue manifested in their reluctance to study, in the belief that someone else (teachers,

Google or Wikipedia) must decide cognitive problems for them.

According to Z. Bauman, the root of consumerism should be sought in the unreliability of modern life, which is especially painfully felt by social actors in anomy/transforming societies [1, p. 177]. By acquiring the knowledge-product and storing it in electronic storages, a social actor gains the illusion of support and a temporary sense of self-confidence, which quickly disappears (after the end of the act of consumption). The result of such an intention of social actors on perception of the world as a set of goods is mutual alienation and distrust, a tendency to establish short-lived, «one-time» relationships with other people that can also be consumed and evaluated on the principle of «useful – useless». In relations with teachers, consumer students use the «sieve» mechanism described by P. Sorokin, which in this case appears itself in a slightly modified form: consumerists pragmatically «sift» the teaching staff of the department/faculty/university, preferring (hierarchically raising) those in power that are capable to «contribute» to their career growth, relations with which, nevertheless, are also consumed (with the extraction of mandatory benefits). A similar usurious calculation is also manifested in relations with other students who can be perceived and used (or rather, consumed) as a tool to achieve their own utilitarian goals or self-affirmation. Such atomization of consumer contacts is, according to Z. Bauman, a fundamental feature of consumerism: there is a connection between consumerization of an unreliable world and the disintegration of human relations. Unlike production, consumption is essentially an individual activity, even when it is performed in a company with other people [1, p. 178]. The Consumer Man (Homo Consumans) exists in an isolated world of broken relationships with other people, perceiving them as things, as means for successful investment and symbolic exchange.

There is a connection between consumer attitudes of a person and social infantilism noticed by N. Zhestkova and G. Efimova [2; 3]. A social infantile has a consumeristic attitude to life, and, on the contrary, a person's consumer attitudes tell about his/her social immaturity and infantilism; therefore, it will not be a mistake to use these concepts in conjunction: infantilism-consumerism. Social infantilism-consumerism is also associated with externalism, with insecurity in one's own abilities as well as with the search for a Patron who can solve all life problems. A social infantile/consumer is absolutely sure that everything that happens in his/her life is the result of influence (or interference) of other people/organizations, but not the result of his/her personal efforts. This results in poor performance and low probability of achievements in his/her educational activities.

According to N. Zhestkova, a social infantile shows weak results of reflexive activity, not being prone to introspection and, as a result, not having an adequate understanding of his/her own personality. Normally an infantile makes excessive demands on others, which is associated with enhanced rationalization of his/her own behavior and thinking, which he/she tends to ennoble and overestimate. Students with infantile-consumer attitudes are often prone to narcissism and self-exaltation, not being capable of self-criticism and adequate introspection, which can stimulate activity of an individual. «Demonstrating to himself/herself and others only the visibility of success, a social infantile is training more and more the ability *not to notice, not to know and not to understand* anything that really happens» [3, p. 130].

G. Efimova has highlighted sociological indicators of the student's infantile-consumer behavior. «The social infantilism of students is observed in the *academic* (priority of the diploma, not knowledge; cheating; absenteeism, etc.), *research* (plagiarism in work; dishonesty in conducting experimental research, etc.), *professional* (inertia in employment), *public* (lack of a clear civic position), *personal and family contexts*, etc. Also, social infantilism is identified through the unwillingness of an individual to actively participate in the social life of the organization's team, educational institution, in relative indifference to the choice of a job and subsequent career growth, in indifference to academic performance and inability to put the acquired knowledge into practice» [2].

Is it possible to combat the phenomenon of social infantilism and consumerism of modern students? How effective can this fight be? What constructive ways to counteract consumerism and infantilization of students' educational practices can be offered?

Firstly, since the consumeristic practices of students are encouraged and supported by a system of instrumental interactions in universities, it can be assumed that a change in the conceptual foundations of modern education, a shift from instrumental to communicative forms of interaction (described by J. Habermas and M. Horkheimer) can contribute to the formation of non-consumeristic attitudes and discourage the infantilization of students [4; 5]. The instrumental model of teaching at universities presumes the concentration of education agents on knowledge transfer (from teacher to students), the quality of which is controlled through various ratings, tests, and exams. A student in an instrumental dimension turns into a passive object, the task of which is to meekly accept and memorize information presented by teachers, without the right to criticize, doubt or correct what is heard. Such a learning style forms the habitus of intellectual constraint and creative passivity, supporting students' self-perception as infants, young children who eat the foods that adults prepare for them. And vice versa, the creation of a communicative space of mutual learning at universities, in which students and teachers become co-students (P. Freire), interacting and discussing conceptual problems as partners, contributes to the formation of intellectual maturity (versus infantility) of students who have gained experience of working with mature scientists. Live involvement in the communication process, which cannot be «fixed» in ready-made intellectual constructs, the results of which are difficult to consume as a ready product, can contribute to the development of students' anti-consumer settings, their attitudes toward participatory, rather than detached intellectual activity.

Secondly, since one of the main components of consumerism in the field of education is the students' confidence (sometimes supported by teachers) that practical rather than theoretical knowledge is valuable, that usefulness (and not truth) is the highest criterion for the information received, then in order to form anti-consumer educational strategies, the utilitarian educational paradigm that encourages the idea of the consumption and profitability of knowledge should be called into question. One can agree with Z. Bauman that the more perfect and humane knowledge is, the less it is associated with pragmatic attitudes, the more difficult it is to use it as a commodity. As for Z. Bauman, the less thought can be explained in terms that are familiar and understandable to men and women immersed in the daily struggle for survival, the more it meets the standards of human nature; the less it can be justified in terms of material gain and use as a price tag attached to it in a

supermarket, the higher its humanizing value [1, p. 50].

Thirdly, it can be assumed that the model of student-centered education can contribute to the infantilization-consumerization of student educational practices. If one mentally visualizes this model, one can imagine a big child, who is the center of the universe, around which the world of adults (parents, teachers) revolves, in every possible way trying to please their child. Awareness of oneself as a «center» does not form internal confidence, but, on the contrary, can delay a personal development, fueling an inadequate self-esteem. Personal maturity implies the ability to perceive other people not as a blurred «periphery» serving the «center», but as equal (better, different) personalities, each of which occupies his/her own life center. The semantic aspect of the multi-centering (and not single-centering) of the educational sphere is well guessed in the concept of personality-centered (versus student-centered) education, in which the idea of cooperation (rather than subordination) of all educational subjects, both teachers and students, develops. Students existing in a polycentric space occupy the subjective positions of co-authors of the communicative learning process, ready to take responsibility for the results of their own activities or inactions (which, in fact, is the maturity of social actors).

In the future, the topic of educational consumerism can be discussed in several conceptual contexts. One should find out with which value pattern (traditionalist, modernist or postmodern) the students' anti-consumer practices are more correlated. It can be assumed that modernist thinking is more correlated with consumer attitudes in education, while postmodern values of self-realization and freedom correlate with anti-consumer priorities. What level of trust (macro-trust in various institutions and organizations or micro-trust in surrounding people) is typical for students who prefer consumer (or anti-consumer) educational practices? One can put forward the hypothesis that consumer perception of life should correlate with a low level of micro-trust and medium-high level of macro-trust, while anti-consumerism should be associated with a high level of micro-trust in people around and a medium-low level of macro-trust in public institutions. What forms of motivation (achievement, affiliation, avoidance or power motives) are associated with students' consumer or anti-consumer behavior in education? It seems that educational consumerism of students should be associated with motives of avoidance and power to a greater extent than with motives of achievement and affiliation.

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The problems of consumer positioning of modern youth in the field of education are considered. Youth consumerism practices are regarded as both the effect of total spread of basic principles of the «consumer society» in all social contexts and as a result of social infantilization of youth manifested in such social effects as immaturity, creative impotence and overstated ambitions. Social infantilism appears itself in a receptive attitude to life and to others with expected patronage and guardianship.

It is shown that there is a connection between consumerization of an unreliable surrounding and the disintegration of modern human relations. Consumption is essentially an individual activity, even being performed in a company with other humans. The Consumer Man exists in an isolated world of broken relationships with other people, perceiving them as means for symbolic exchange and successful investment.

It is shown that there is a connection between consumer attitudes of a person and social

infantilism. A social infantile has a consumeristic attitude to life, and, on the contrary, a person's consumer attitudes tell about his/her social immaturity and infantilism. Therefore, these concepts are used in conjunction as infantilism-consumerism. Social infantilism-consumerism is associated with externalism, with insecurity in one's own abilities and with the search for a Patron for solving all life problems. In the paper, constructive ways to counteract consumerism and infantilization of students' educational practices are offered.

Firstly, since the consumeristic practices of students are encouraged and supported by a system of instrumental interactions in universities, it is assumed that a change in the conceptual foundations of modern education, a shift from instrumental to communicative forms of interaction can contribute to the formation of non-consumeristic attitudes and discourage the infantilization of students. The instrumental model of teaching at universities is based on the concentration of education agents on knowledge transfer (from teacher to students), the quality of which should be controlled through various ratings, tests, and exams. A student in an instrumental dimension turns into a passive object with the task to meekly accept and memorize information presented by teachers, without the right to criticize, doubt or correct what is perceived. It is demonstrated that such a learning style forms the habitus of intellectual constraint and creative passivity, supporting students' self-perception as infants, young children who eat the foods that adults prepare for them. On the contrary, the creation of a communicative space of mutual learning at universities, in which students and teachers become co-students (P. Freire), interacting and discussing conceptual problems as partners, contributes to the formation of intellectual maturity (versus infantility) of students who have gained experience of working with mature scientists.

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Keywords: *consumerism, educational practices, infantilism, communicative action, instrumental action.*

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КОНСЬЮМЕРИЗМ СТУДЕНТСЬКИХ ПРАКТИК У ВИЩІЙ ОСВІТІ

У статті розглянуто проблеми споживацького позиціонування сучасної молоді в галузі освіти. Консьюмеристські практики молоді розглянуто як ефект тотального розповсюдження основних принципів «суспільства споживання» в усіх соціальних контекстах і як наслідок соціальної інфантилізації молоді. Соціальний інфантилізм формує рецептивне ставлення до оточення, від якого очікують не стільки стосунки партнерства, скільки патронаж та опіку. Споживче ставлення студентів до освіти проявляється в намірі «купувати» поверхневі знання, які в подальшому можна буде конвертувати в найпростіші функціональні навички виробничої діяльності; у недовірі до гуманітарного (особливо теоретичного) знання, позбавленого операціоналізованого контексту; у значному звуженні пізнавального горизонту, штучно обмеженого практичним розумом; у поверховому знайомстві зі дисциплінарним контекстом, наслідком чого стає вкрай швидке «вивітрювання» отриманих знань.

У статті запропоновані способи протидії консьюмеризації й інфантилізації навчальних практик студентів. По-перше, оскільки споживчі практики студентів підтримує система інструментальної взаємодії в університетах, слід передбачити, що зміна концептуальних засад сучасної освіти, перехід від інструментальної до комунікативної моделі взаємодії може сприяти формуванню неспоживчих настроїв і протидіяти інфантилізації студентів. Інструментальна модель викладання ґрунтується на концентрації агентів освіти на трансляції знань, якість яких контролювана тестуванням та іспитами. Студент в інструментальному вимірі перетворюється на пасивний об'єкт, який має сприймати й запам'ятовувати інформацію без права на критику та сумніви в її якості. Продемонстровано, що створення в університетах комунікативного простору взаємного навчання, у якому студенти та викладачі стають співучнями (П. Фрейре), взаємодіючи й обговорюючи концептуальні проблеми як партнери, сприяє формуванню інтелектуальної зрілості студентів. По-друге, оскільки однією з основних складових споживацтва в галузі освіти є впевненість студентів, що саме практичні, а не теоретичні знання є цінними, що корисливість (а не істина) є найвищим критерієм отриманої інформації, то для формування неконсьюмеристських освітніх стратегій слід деконструювати утилітарну освітню парадигму, яка заохочує ідею рентабельності знань. По-третє, інфантилізації / консьюмеризації студентських освітніх практик може сприяти модель студентоцентрованої освіти. Змістовний аспект багатоцентричності освітнього простору надано в концепції особистісно-орієнтованої освіти, у якій викладено ідею співпраці (а не субординації) усіх суб'єктів освітнього процесу. У поліцентричному просторі студенти мають суб'єктні позиції співавторів комунікативного процесу навчання, які готові взяти на себе відповідальність за результати власної діяльності або бездіяльності.

Ключові слова: консьюмеризм, освітні практики, інфантилізм, комунікативна

дія, інструментальна дія.

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