

LIFE STRATEGIES AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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Modern Ukrainian society is characterized by constant transformations which affect the socio-cultural conditions of people's life: social groups and institutional structures come through various changes, new economic and political institutions appear. A transformational society is characterized by the presence of various social groups that have their own life plans, values and beliefs, which affect the construction of their life strategies. The processes of current transformation in Ukrainian society significantly influenced its social structure, and thus none large social community was left out of attention. Therefore, the needs and priorities of the younger generation are constantly changing, so there is a need to explore their life strategies. The study of human life strategies is complex and multidimensional, as it involves the investigation of various mechanisms for its formation. Researchers distinguish two levels, in the context of which one can consider the development of life strategies, namely the individual level and the level of a society. The concept of self-determination in the first place characterizes the degree of subjectivity of the individual, his/her readiness and ability to independent activity in various spheres of life, namely: economic, political, cultural, educational, family, ideological, religious, etc. The construction of individual's life strategies can be divided into three main periods associated with the process of self-determination: a search period, a period of active integration and a period of productive activity. Polish sociologist P.Shtompka emphasizes above all the dynamic characteristics of the social. The sociologist examines not only social changes, but also the constant phenomena that determine the identity of any society. The transformational processes in Ukrainian society are quite controversial, since the experience of Ukraine shows that the more changes occur in society, the more contradictions appear. It is social transformation that can intensify various manifestations of sociocultural tendencies, particularly the ones that define self-determination of youth in modern society. Younger generation is one of the subjects of this interaction, therefore, it is the youth that become the driving force in the formation of socio-cultural characteristics of the prospective Ukrainian society.

Key words: life strategies, youth, social changes.

Statement of the problem: Modern Ukrainian society is characterized by constant transformations which affect the socio-cultural conditions of people's life: social groups and institutional structures come through various changes, new economic and political institutions appear. These changes often result in promotion of social inequalities which, in turn, influence different spheres of human life and the formation of people's life strategies – their values

and beliefs are changing and the vision of the further life scenario becomes totally different.

Mostly social changes affect the lives of young people, because they are still at the stage of developing their life goals, looking for the ways of their achievement. It is the youth, whose problem of self-determination and self-identification will influence the future of our Ukrainian society, as to a certain extent this future depends on their life strategies development and their fulfillment.

A transformational society is characterized by the presence of various social groups that have their own life plans, values and beliefs, which affect the construction of their life strategies. The issue of youth life strategies development and construction and their influence on the whole society is often underestimated by the research, and therefore the need for further justification of the youth life strategies as a sociocultural phenomenon is essential and timely.

An analysis of the latest scientific research shows that the issue of youth life strategies and their formation in the society of social inequalities became a topic for the research of many Ukrainian scientists. In particular, it is worth mentioning such authors as Y. Holovakha, P. Kudelia, T. Reznik, Y. Reznik, M. Kukhta, S. Babenko, A. Yarema, N. Scotna, and others. The concept of a life strategy as a social phenomenon for the first time was conceptualized by K. Albukhanova-Slavska, who described life strategies as active and passive ones, and identified activity of a person as a leading criterion for achieving a human life strategy.

The purpose of the paper is to conceptualize the life strategies of youth as a sociocultural phenomenon, identify the main tendencies of the contemporary Ukrainian society and justify the influence of the transformational society on the development of the life strategies of modern youth.

Life strategies of people, in particular life strategies of younger generations, their needs, orientations, values and beliefs are studied by the various branches of social sciences. However, the theoretical and empirical foundations of the formation of life strategies are insufficiently investigated. The processes of current transformation in Ukrainian society significantly influenced its social structure, and thus none large social community was left out of attention. Therefore, the needs and priorities of the younger generation are constantly changing, so there is a need to explore their life strategies.

The study of human life strategies is complex and multidimensional, as it involves the investigation of various mechanisms for its formation. Researchers distinguish two levels, in the context of which one can consider the development of life strategies, namely the individual level and the level of a society [1, p.134].

Three main stages, gradually replacing one another, should be mentioned at the societal level. The first stage is called reversal. It occurs when there is a mass sense of the growth of opportunities to influence social transformations and, to some extent, manage or control them. The behavior of destruction, the desire for change, and therefore the predominance of various types of social behavior, easy to manipulate and depending on situation are the main characteristic features of this stage.

The second stage is characterized by the social behavior of mass protests, intergroup conflicts, the crisis of credit in various political institutions and the sense of social insecurity.

The third stage is a stage of development. It includes two types of social behavior related to the search for personal strategies in people's future life: 1) the successful external adaptation

that is an adequate response to external factors with an emphasis on specific pragmatic goals; 2) the adequate internal adaptation, which means the independence from external influences, the desire to reduce one's social uncertainty and build a successful life strategy [2].

The formation of human life strategies at the individual level is considered in the context of self-determination. Self-determination is a process of personal evaluation and perception of the world, definition of one's attitude to some phenomena, facts, certain people or groups of people, and the spheres of people's activity. The concept of life self-determination can also be characterized as a process of choosing one's profession, education, work activity, place of residence, religion and life principles in general. It occurs during a particular period of individual life and in a particular life environment, which depends on many external factors. According to this, every generation develops its own life strategies, which depend on different livelihood spheres of a particular society, trying to contribute its development and formation.

The concept of self-determination in the first place characterizes the degree of subjectivity of the individual, his/her readiness and ability to independent activity in various spheres of life, namely: economic, political, cultural, educational, family, ideological, religious, etc. The notion of readiness we define as the psychological preparedness of the individual to live an active life in a chosen field and environment, while the ability we view as certain skills, knowledge, competence and values of individuals, which enable them to determine and implement their life strategies.

Consequently, when considering the notion of self-determination as individual's knowledge, skills and competence for further formation of his/her life, we should mention and define the driving forces of this process. Driving forces of individual's self-determination process include not only the influence of the external environment, but the first and foremost - the personal internal readiness, which represents individual's goals, orientations and tasks on the way to the further fulfillment of his/her life strategies [3].

The construction of individual's life strategies can be divided into three main periods associated with the process of self-determination: a search period, a period of active integration and a period of productive activity. The search period takes the years of individual's formation and choice of interest, professional field to pursue in the future, their knowledge, skills, talents and competence application.

The period of active integration in the society covers the years of individual's goals and plans implementation, defined and chosen during the preliminary stage.

The third period is defined as a person's creative productive activity, which covers the years of active professional, personal, and leisure life when all main life choices are completed (e.g. when an individual has already gained education in certain field, chose profession, created a family, etc. This productive activity applies to all spheres of human life [1, p.135].

In the study of life strategies P. Kudelia separates objective and subjective conditions that influence the further formation of personal beliefs and values. For example, education, work, leisure, recreation, etc., relate to certain socio-territorial communities, which affect human livelihoods [1, p. 135]. The researcher argues that the influence of a city is an important indicator of the objective conditions for the formation of human life strategies. The influence of a city is noticeable in many areas of human life: historic, economic, social, political,

informational, etc., and remains one of the socio-spatial forms of the existence of a society, its social communities and youth in particular [1, p.135].

Objective conditions include environmental conditions, local space, historical factors, economic factors, political factors, regional factors, and information factors that interact with each other and define a more subjective way of life of young people.

Subjective conditions could be described as the estimation by the youth of various objective factors which help them to characterize the peculiarities of social environment and the opportunities that social environment provides for further existence of the social community. Thus, not only objective conditions, such as a country or a city of residence, but also the subjective ones, connected to the individual social beliefs, influence the formation of life strategies of young people.

In order to examine the concept of social reality in more details, sociologists are trying to find the concepts that characterize the essence of the changes taking place in modern society in the most accurate way. The term “socio-cultural transformation” is the one to be widely used. This concept is characterized by the changes in various spheres of life of a particular society, including the transformational processes in political, economic, legal and social spheres, etc. It is the category of socio-cultural that is characterized by certain processes or phenomena of interaction between people. The vision of the integrity and unity in cultural and social spheres led to the development of a socio-cultural approach to the analysis of a society.

According to this approach, “society” is viewed as a holistic notion of social and cultural that is created, transformed and reproduced in the process of development of people’s interaction [4].

Polish sociologist P.Shtompka emphasizes above all the dynamic characteristics of the social. “Society, is nothing but a change, movement and transformational action and interaction, construction and reconstruction, a constant formation, to a much greater extent than a stable state. Dynamic perspective is the only ontologically justified approach in sociology” [5, p.57]. The sociologist examines not only social changes (because the life of any society is a unity of variability and stability), but also the constant phenomena that determine the identity of any society. Those stable phenomena form the culture [5].

Thus, if we correlate the notions of culture, society and all other phenomena that correspond to them, we come to the conclusion that any social phenomenon cannot occur independently of culture and vice versa. According to P. Shmompka’s definition, without identification and contradiction the concepts of culture and society, we can conclude that no social phenomenon can stand apart from the cultural ones [5, p.57]. This means that any societal changes are accompanied by certain cultural transformations, but, on the other hand, the changes in the cultural environment are necessarily accompanied by social shifts.

T. Zaslavska believes that “approaching post-communist transformation processes as a special type of modernization does not correspond to their actual content. The result analysis of the reforms shows that the vectors of social transformations taking place in different postcommunist countries are directed at different, sometimes opposite sides, and the directions of actual changes very often do not correspond to either the vectors of the desired or declared reforms, or the challenges of the present” [6]. That is why in her recent works T. Zaslavska refers to the notion of “transformation”. She describes social transformation as “due to

external factors and internal necessity, gradual, not related to the change of the ruling elite, but at the same time a radical and relatively rapid change in social nature, or societal type of a society” [6].

The transformational processes in Ukrainian society are quite controversial, since the experience of Ukraine shows that the more changes occur in society, the more contradictions appear. It is social transformation that can intensify various manifestations of sociocultural tendencies, particularly the ones that define self-determination of youth in modern society. Since modern youth is mobile and aimed at search for self-identification, it determines certain characteristics of the social group and their real practices [7].

The mobility of modern youth, which is constantly in search for inner selves, occurs due to certain socio-psychological characteristics, as well as specific social practices. Social processes themselves are dynamic and therefore they somewhat hinder the achievement of life goals by the youth. In most cases, these goals are rather indistinct (for example, a person plans to get a prestigious job, but does not specify its field, or, for example, they want to build a career, and only after that start a family). That is why not only the goals set by young people, but also the strategy itself to achieve one’s goals, are of interest to the researchers [8].

Another important aspect in the process of youth building their life strategies are their value orientations and beliefs, because they characterize the person’s propensity to activity and purposefulness, which influence the further development of a person’s life. Subjective thoughts and beliefs of the youth are considered as an important social phenomenon and as a means to influence the development of modern social life.

Summing up, it is worth saying that the individual life strategy is a kind of complex system which consists of interconnected elements. On the one hand, these elements reflect the content of the future life path. The path is determined by the choice of a life attitude, which is the summation of individual life values and beliefs. They are the foundation for the development of individual’s image of the ideal future and his/her life goals, which characterize the major spheres of individual’s life and determine the ideal image of the future human life. One of the most important indicators in the study of human life strategies is to take into account social mobility and the desire for changes in social status. Modern transformational society is characterized by constant radical changes involving different actors of social activity that interact with each other and in this process of interaction affect the process of transformation in the society. Younger generation is one of the subjects of this interaction, therefore, it is the youth that become the driving force in the formation of socio-cultural characteristics of the prospective Ukrainian society.

The younger generation is constantly evolving, gaining updated professional knowledge and certain socio-cultural characteristics that are valuable to the society. Progressing and developing, young people gradually become leaders in the contemporary Ukrainian society and act as the experts for younger generations and the society as a whole.

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ЖИТТЄВІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ЯК СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНИЙ ФЕНОМЕН

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У сучасному українському суспільстві що трансформується, постійно змінюються соціокультурні умови життя людей: перетворюються соціально-групові структури, формуються нові інституційні структури, економічні та політичні інститути тощо. Все більшого розповсюдження набувають прояви соціальної нерівності, що впливають на різні сфери життя людей, і, як наслідок, проявляються при формуванні життєвих стратегій людей. Відповідно, змінюються й установки, ціннісні орієнтації та уявлення людей, їх бачення подальшого розвитку сценарію життя. Вивчення життєвих стратегій людини має комплексний характер, котрий передбачає дослідження різних механізмів його формування. Вчені виокремлюють два рівні, в контексті яких можна розглядати становлення життєвих стратегій, а саме: на індивідуальному рівні та на рівні соціуму. Поняття самовизначення в першу чергу характеризує міру суб'єктності індивіда та його готовності і здатності до самостійної діяльності в різних сферах життя, а саме: економічній, політичній, культурній, освітній, сімейній, ідеологічній, релігійній тощо. Під поняттям готовності розуміється психологічна установка індивіда на активну діяльність у тій чи іншій сфері життя, під здатністю – наявність певних вмінь, навичок, знань та ціннісних установок індивіда, котрі можуть дозволити йому самостійно визначити та реалізувати свою життєву стратегію. Польський соціолог П.Штомпка, підкреслює перш за все динамічні характеристики соціального. Соціолог досліджує не тільки соціальні зміни, але й сталі феномени, що детермінують ідентичність того або іншого соціуму. Ці сталі феномени і є культурою. Тобто, якщо співвідносити по-

няття культури, суспільства та усіх феноменів, що їх стосуються, робимо висновок, що жодне соціальне явище не може відбуватися незалежно від культури і навпаки. Трансформаційне суспільство передбачає постійні кардинальні зміни, у котрій задіяні різні суб'єкти соціальної діяльності, що взаємодіють між собою та котрі в процесі взаємодії впливають на процес трансформації в суспільстві. Молоді люди є одними із суб'єктів такої взаємодії, відповідно, саме молоде покоління стає рушійною силою, що впливає на формування соціокультурних характеристик майбутнього українського суспільства.

Ключові слова: життєві стратегії, молодь, соціальні зміни.

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