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## **Socio-Economic Development and the Next Generation: Five Transitions**

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*The article deals with the features of a contemporary transition of generation to adulthood. Such issues and problems as the contribution of young people in socio-economic development are considered. The data is given in the article that the transition to adulthood, according to its structure consists of five transitions: a transition to life learning, a transition to the world of work, a transition to the creation of the family or attachment to the family life, a transition from private life to public and civilian life, and a transition from carelessness to health care. A presumption of three approaches for further work in this subject is given. Firstly, it is an accurate analysis of the situation and youth policy in Russia. Secondly, it is a question of a person's driving forces in these transitions. What causes him to support the objective processes, or to resist them? Thirdly, it's reassessment of the problem of education in the context of the present scheme. What potential is given to the person, who will enter the labor market, create a family and participate in politics?*

*Keywords: education, age transition, the world of work, process maturity, resource people, development.*

### **Introduction.**

#### **Why are exactly the young people?**

It is remarkable that we have been talking about a few “eternal” questions for a long time at the conferences on development pedagogy. There is a question among them whether school is responsible for the formation of long-term results, such as a person's success in life, the way he will have been living in ten years after graduation, and later on in fifteen years.

I intend to return to the question of the effects of school education and try to define more

precisely the borders of the frame where one could assess the progress and achievement of a person. For us, as those who work in the field of education, it's essential to estimate the outcomes of this growing and developing person, which we set in terms of his future and socio-economic development of society he lives in.

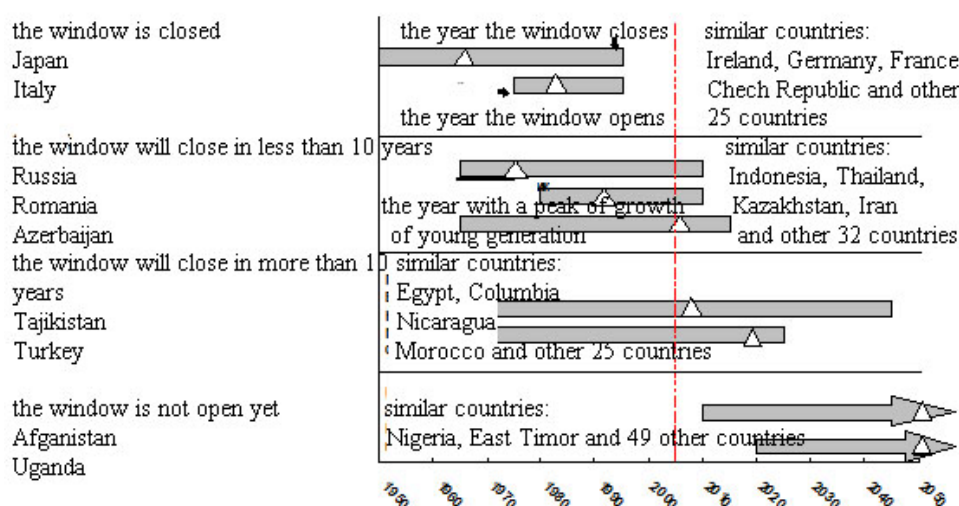
And it turned out so well that the report concerning the world development, which had been prepared by the World Bank, helped me much in these reflections. In 2006 it was dedicated to young people. It's called “Socio-economic

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development and the next generation". Here one should say why the leaders of the economic and social ideas turned to the problems of young people in connection with the problems of socio-economic development. The fact of the matter is that humanity has the time now when there are much more young people than it used to be before and most likely, will be in the nearest future. It is believed that in the next 20 years the humanity will have already reached the peak of population growth and will start decreasing. It can be traced in the picture.

because they get a huge human resource which is in general characterized by better health and higher qualifications. Young people in developed countries are also becoming an important resource, because in ten years an able-bodied person will have to support two members of the family who do not work: a child and an elderly person. Perhaps it's not as dramatic in its way, but this process is going on in Russia. In this sense, the issues of productivity of young generation and its role in the socio-economic development plays a huge role.



A number of countries which include Russia have already been on this peak. The figure also shows that there are countries where the growth continues, and the peak will be reached within ten or twenty years. In any case, the humanity is going through a period in which there is a huge increase in young people. The question what to do with it is not just a question of the youth policy, but it's also the question of socio-economic policy.

However, this issue is different for developed and developing countries. In the picture we observe the rise in the number of young people and working-age population in developing countries, which opens up unprecedented prospects for these countries

Thus, today, economists, sociologists, cultural anthropologists refer to the problems of young people due to some reasons. Firstly, the increased number of the youth groups in developing countries is both an enormous risk and a great opportunity for the sudden growth in development, and, secondly, the lack of youth in developed countries makes this resource really valuable.

Why have I jumped from the question of the role of education in socio-economic development to the issue of youth? That's because the production of the younger generation is a major contribution to education in the socio-economic development. Of course, there are

other contributions: schools collect waste paper, elections are held there, and there are scientific researches in universities. But education is exactly the area that affects the majority of young people. Besides, the number of years young people study and spend in education in developed and developing countries is increasing. Thus, a potentially important resource of socio-economic development is created (or can be created) in the education system.

Then, a question is bound to arise for us as employees of the system: how are young people turning from a potentially valuable resource into a real force in the development and what makes its contribution positive and significant.

To answer this question, we must answer the question posed in the title of the 13th conference on pedagogy development: “What is the youth? Is it the peak of childhood or early adulthood?” And here I join the opinion of the authors of the World Development Report, who, in fact, give a completely unambiguous answer: the youth is the transition to adulthood. In a good way, it is a transition to a productive and happy adult life<sup>1</sup>. Then, in fact, a fundamental issue of social and economic policy is managing this transition. It’s managing the transition of a huge mass of people from childhood to adulthood.

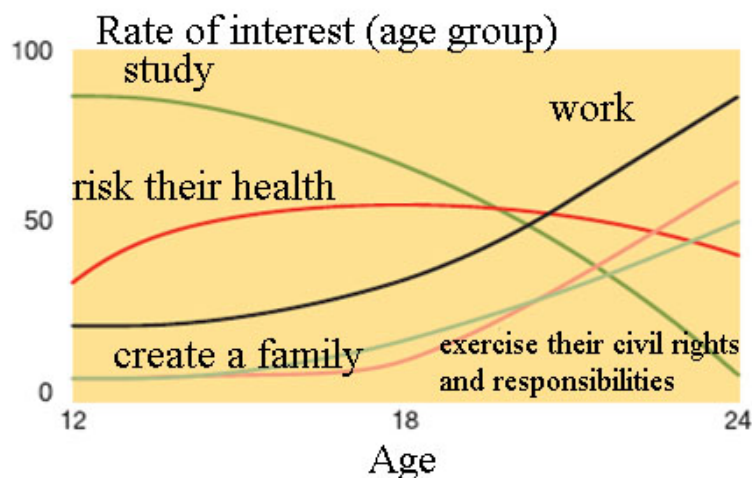
For us, it helps to raise the question of the role of education in this transition. In this case the structure of this transition sets the frame of the analysis of its remote consequences. That is, roughly speaking, if there is the transition to adulthood, the content of this transition allows us to say whether we have worked well in education.

### Transition to adulthood – five steps

Then we make the next conceptual step that is not based on any strict theoretical reasoning, and is largely a judgment of common sense, which is not alien to economists and sociologists. This judgment is based on the observations and, in general, a normal (i.e., “right”) transition to adulthood, according to its structure, consists of five steps. They are given below.

First step is a transition to lifetime learning. It is not the development within school but it’s a transition to learning, to be exact, learning not within school environment. We emphasize that this is a step away from externally imposed and self-organized learning in the construction of educational paths to develop new skills and knowledge.

The second obvious transition is a transition into the world of work. Indeed, most people start



their career and are either employed or unemployed at the age of 24.

The next major step is a transition to the creation of a family or attachment to the family life, however teachers do not treat it serious.

The fourth step is a transition from private life to public and civilian life. Deputy A.M.Kleshko in the position of the external customer talked about it at the conference mentioned above. At the other conferences, we also discussed this transition often as a matter of internal training and education, as a matter of equipping the civil competence. Indeed, this age shows whether a person will be an active citizen, indifferent man in the street, or political extremist.

And finally, the last transition, which appearance in the World Development Report took me by surprise and seemed not very important and is equal to other key transitions at first. It can be formulated like this: a transition from carelessness to health care or from ruining your health to recovery. This is the period when the person begins to feel that he has the heart and other internal organs. At this age, the foundations for future health are laid down, as well as person's attitude to health. In the transition the loss of health determines the whole future life of a person to a large extent.

Thus, we deal with objective five transitions, which seem to pull along a person.

#### **External transitions and internal development**

At our conferences we are constantly discussing the inner development of a person: his abilities, interests, energy and intellectual development (as the conferences are held by psychologists to a large extent). At the same time, we often create artificial external context in which these internal changes happen or even ignore it. The reality is much more complicated because, while we help the child develop, his external

situation (so far not yet a social situation of development, but simply a social situation) pulls him along these five transitions. But, again, one cannot escape from these subjective psychological processes, as their reality is objective.

Thus, a complete picture of socialization in the broadest sense will be formed by meeting and correlation of external and internal processes. A list of the latter can be quite long. Theoretically, it seems to me that here one can write down all the processes described by different age periodizations. The basic processes of periodization by E. Erikson have a particularly vital context (especially the search for identity is important). The process of initiative development and one's independence is extremely important for us in terms of our understanding of maturation. Certainly, a key role in these transitions has the process of acquiring human sexuality.

And this raises an important question, and I will not give any definite answers to it, but only raise a question of the relationship of these processes. It seems to me that this is where psychologists can find a field for serious cooperation with economists and sociologists, because they, in turn, often ignore these internal processes. They do not consider the behavior of the person itself as an important resource of transition management.

#### **Transition management**

What does it mean to manage these transitions? After all, they are made objectively, and our activity (or activity of a young person) cannot cancel them as a rule. But we want to ensure that these transitions take place in a good way (here I use worldly terms). The transitions are like to be at the crossroads: which way you choose and turn that place you will find yourself. We want our children and young people to live through these five transitions so that they experience lifelong learning, find a good job,

be good citizens, have a good family and be healthy. Therefore, the issue of management is formulated as follows: how to influence these transitions so that they took place optimally. Traditionally, the only method of managing these transitions, which was considered appropriate, was to provide opportunities for young people. In addition, the authors of the report on world development suggest two more methods. I would add one more. But let's start with the expansion of the real possibilities. This policy means that a person is simply provided with a large number of possibilities in a respective field. This is clearly understood in terms of the transition to work. For instance, a young man enters the labor market with some skill, and fifty jobs are offered to him. This example shows that this mechanism is a basic one to ensure a smooth transition. After all, if a young man is not able to find work, the transition has a negative scenario. The key principles in the implementation of this management mechanism are the equality and ease of use. The second most important method to ensure the transition is actually the development of human potential of these possibilities in every person. If you are faced with hundreds of ways but your legs can't walk, these roads will not lead you anywhere. Next, let's have a look at an example of specific transitions, how to build the capacity of implementing these features in different spheres. We can see the simplest example when we create opportunities for specialized education and children have no means of making decisions about their own path in life. This is a vivid example when there are opportunities with no potential for implementation.

Where does the potential for implementation come from? As teachers we mainly consider child's awareness in the field of school subjects as the main potential. It is clear that we need not only such awareness for life transitions, but also awareness of those spheres of life where these

transitions are take place. It is necessary to have knowledge of how to apply academic knowledge that is what we call competence.

For economists, the most important and obvious element of the implementation capacity is financial resources of the person. Teachers usually turn a blind eye. Recently I was struck by the sociological studies of youth in the North Caucasus that indicate tight recourses in families as the main obstacle in getting higher education. Therefore, the construction of socio-economic policy without understanding that the younger generation needs resources to realize their potential will always be wrong.

There are also important components of the potential. They are linked with each other: motivation, energy and success in the previous stages. Their role is confirmed by the findings of a recent British study. They show that the enormous investment in the so-called "bad schools" (they are schools in depressed areas) in the equipment and training of teachers do not give effect, if the families and children have no motivation for a further transition and no high expectations. This aspect of the realization of potential is extremely important for me.

It should be noted that the relationship of these two management mechanisms is not as trivial as it may seem from a simple scheme: more opportunities leads to more the rights of young people. This is illustrated by the transition to the labor market. Recently, for example, the French government tried to deprive young people of more labor rights, the protection of first employment, etc. However, faced with the protests of young people, the government reversed the reform. After that the magazine "Time" published an amusing article, the meaning of which was that that it would be useful to sent the French leaders of the movement, who protect the labor rights of young people, to Yekaterinburg (for some reason this city was taken as an example the situation

in Russia) where the young people in general do not have any labor rights. They can be fired the next day. But in general the article was very positive with regard to Russia as it said there that such a tough situation for the Russian does not form dependency (in contrast to the Frenchman) among Russian young generation but a positive aggressiveness in the sense of looking for work and activity. I think this comparison shows the complexity of the problem. Perhaps, the traditional conservative strategy that we have built since school can be very dangerous in the long run in conditions of a serious competition in the labor market.

The third important principle of management transitions is practical too. This is a principle of a second chance. Indeed, our teaching strategies, as well as youth policy as a whole, do not very often suggest a second chance for a person when he has got lost or came to a dead end of the transitions. In this case, the person is actually thrown from further productive life. Especially it's typical for young people who have been in prison and cannot return to normal life afterwards. But only in Russia these young people outnumber millions. People who have not got education are in a similar situation. Those children, who dropped out of school, cannot go back into the education system as a rule. And, therefore, the principle of second chances is crucial. But it should not be a second chance in a Soviet-style way, when a person is kept down to repeat a year. Children need to be able to find a bypass and catch up with their own generation.

The issue of a second chance is closely related to the issue of the risks at the transition because the person usually needs a second chance as his behavior on these transitions is risky. And it is important to understand that risk-taking behavior as a result of which a person gets into a situation that requires a second chance, cannot and should not be regarded as entirely negative.

For no particular reason did Rousseau write that someone who was not a street kid would not grow up a decent man. But the question is how to let someone who took a risk, made a mistake and took hard knocks (including negative experience as well) continue to move forward. Risks and a second chance are still being discussed in the special schools in our educational policy but not in the national curriculum.

And, of course, a key step in managing transitions is the regulation of the interaction of the most objective transitions and subjective processes.

The interaction between the five objective transitions mentioned above and psychological processes of formation can occur in two ways. On the one hand, the content of these transitions helps designers of educational space set the image of adulthood (here I refer to a model of educational space, proposed by B.D. Elkonin in 1993), which, from our point of view, is the major driving force of age development. Such a formulation of the problem has serious implications for gaining experience and the selection of educational content.

On the other hand, the processes of maturation, as described in the different age periodizations, allow the developers of educational policy to see and understand a "small" dynamics of transitions and to estimate the internal factors of development.

### **Transitions of cohorts and individual transitions**

In the building educational and youth policy a special difficulty lies in the making such massive solutions that take into account the diversity and inner complexity of the younger generation. As different groups of young people move into these transitions in different ways, when we discuss the strategies, we needed to treat them accordingly. There are several such

groups, which move in the transitions in a special way and concerning which we require different management strategies. First of all, they are boys and girls. Obviously, they move quite different in these transitions, especially in the transition associated with the creation of the family. In all market economies, including Russia, transitions significantly depend on the social situation (including the educational path). Young people from different ethnic groups or from migrants also have different paths of transitions. It makes a task of social and educational design extremely complicated.

### **Transition to adulthood – Agenda for Education**

From my point of view, there are three areas for further work in this subject. Firstly, it is an accurate analysis of the situation and youth policy in Russia. It is shown in World Development Report how the three major social mechanism of maturation management (ability, creating the potential and a second chance) are realized for the different transitions on a global scale. It is obvious that in order to show the whole picture for Russia, we need additional research in sufficient detail. No doubt Russian youth situation has its own specifics. Secondly, it seems to me that the conceptual issues of the scheme as a whole are not completely clarified. First of all, it's a question whether the transitions were singled out correctly. Another interesting question is whether there is a hierarchy within these transitions and which one is most important. After all, economists firmly believe that the transition to work is the most important. And what do we think? Questions, related to the opportunities and risks for various transitions, are interesting as well. And, of course, the question what are the driving forces

of a person in these transitions. What causes him to support the objective processes, or to resist them?

Thirdly, I think that we can and should overestimate the problem of education in the context of the present scheme. What potential is given to the person, who will enter the labor market, create a family and participate in politics?

Here I have to share a personal experience. Last time I visited Krasnoyarsk, I met with several school-leavers of gymnasium "Univers". I know exactly that most of them regulate their lives well. But among those school-leavers there were two guys who used to be bright at school and studied well while getting higher education. But they seem to have left school and university with high expectations, with unrealistic ideas about what would be requested in the job market. One of them is almost 30 now and the second is 26. And they lounge about here and there and don't have a proper job or aim. They work in a shop of spare parts, assemble rides then sit in the office and are bored. They can't stop whining. Both of them were divorced and have not created a new family. And frankly speaking, I feel lousy as well. All I think what we have done wrong, creating the potential for these very able-bodied and not foolish young men, so that they made the right decision regarding employment. I would be harsh to say here that the whole discussion about the development of thinking, creativity and education, etc. is not worth a dime if the person ends up with no job, no family, and is sick. Our internal discussions seem to be small without this large outer frame. Serious attitude to ensure a smooth transition by means of education can be a challenge that galvanizes pupated pedagogical thought.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted there, that in the work of reference the age group is from 13 to 24.

## **Социально-экономическое развитие и следующее поколение: пять переходов**

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*Обсуждаются особенности современного поколенческого перехода к взрослости. Исследуются вопросы вклада молодого поколения в социально-экономическое развитие. Приводятся данные о том, что переход к взрослости по своей структуре состоит из пяти переходов: переход к учению в течение всей жизни; переход в мир труда, работы; переход к созданию семьи или к семейности; от частной жизни к жизни общественной и гражданской; переход от беззаботности к заботе о здоровье. Выдвигается предположение, о трех направлениях дальнейшей работы в этой тематике. Во-первых, это точный анализ ситуации и молодежной политики в России. Во-вторых, вопрос о том, каковы собственные движущие силы человека в этих переходах. Что заставляет его поддерживать объективные процессы или сопротивляться им. В-третьих, переоценка задачи образования в контексте представленной схемы. Какой потенциал дается человеку, который выйдет на рынок труда, начнет создавать семью и участвовать в политике.*

*Ключевые слова: образование, возрастной переход, мир труда, процессы взросления, ресурсы человека, развитие.*

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