

# Problems of Students Identity Development in the Educational Environment of the University for Humanities

Rashida G. Gabdrakhmanova  
*Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, RUSSIA*  
Elena A. Khodyreva  
*Vyatka State University of Humanities, RUSSIA*  
Biyanka L. Tornyova  
*Medical University of Plovdiv, BULGARIA*

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The objective of the article is to determine the importance of students' identity development and self-development in the course of vocational training and identification of opportunities that the educational environment of a university for humanities may provide to develop the identity of subjects of vocational training. The leading methods of the research were: retrospective analysis, pedagogical modeling and projecting, study and synthesis of pedagogical experience in students' identity development in the educational environment, observation, interviewing, questioning, study of documentation. The role of educational environment provided by the university for humanities for students' identity development has been revealed; its structure that includes subject, spiritual, content-methodical, spatial-subject components the integrity and interrelation of which may have essential impact on students' identity development have been presented; problems connected with the creating of favorable conditions for students' identity development and self-development have been brought out; dependence of individual, personal and subject components of identity development on characteristics of subject, spiritual, content-methodical, spatial-subject components of the environment has been proved.

*Keywords:* students' identity, identity development, individuum, individualization, socialization, readiness for self-determination, educational environment

## INTRODUCTION

### Research relevance

The relevance of the problem is substantiated by the need to provide humanistic character of higher education defined as the basic principle of public policy and legal regulation of relations in education (System Garant:[http://base.garant.ru/70291362/1/#block\\_1000#ixzz3dgER9mg5](http://base.garant.ru/70291362/1/#block_1000#ixzz3dgER9mg5)). The implementation of this task

Correspondence: Elena A. Khodyreva,  
Vyatka State University of Humanities, 26 Krasnoarmejskaya Street, 610002, Kirov,  
RUSSIA  
E-mail: [hum@vshu.kirov.ru](mailto:hum@vshu.kirov.ru)  
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requires the consideration of students' individual demands and personal abilities, increase of their interest in self-revealization, self-assertiveness and self-realization in the course of training in a higher education institution. In this regard, the research of educational environment opportunities in a higher education institution as the space of identity development in the context of federal state educational standards implementation seem significant.

### **The essence of the category "students' identity development "**

Theories of integrated identity which are connected with its consideration as integrity are dominant in psychology and pedagogical researches. In this case the analysis of an identity phenomenon is realized through dialectics of the general and special; social and original (Rezvitsky, 1973). The characteristic of identity is carried out through the definition of a social and cultural context of its development and self-development at three interconnected levels: as integrated manifestation of individual properties, personality, and subject of the activity (Ananyev, 1969; Slobodchikov, 1998). We consider student's identity as a unique set of their properties and qualities which manifest at the level of the individuum, personality and subject of the activity; this unique set characterizes students' identity internal integrity, relative independence, and originality in the system of social interactions and relationships.

Considering the identity development, it is necessary to focus special attention on its characteristic as the process of person's social and existential integrity transformation. In this connection it is appropriate to speak about the interrelation of personality development processes and identity formation having defined the ratio of socialization to individualization. Characterizing the interrelation of these processes, it should be noted that in the course of socialization along with mastering public experience there occurs the formation of an individual picture of the world; person's uniqueness, identity, in its turn, enriches the content of socialization and give it individual sense (Grebenyuk, 2002, Feldstein, 1995; Gromova & Alimbekov, 2015; Khuziakhmetov, Shafikova & Kapranova, 2015; Zakirova, Gaysina & Zhumabaeva, 2015; Levina *et al.*, 2015; Cheverikina *et al.*, 2014). At the individual level, the formation of identity is characterized in vocational training by the consideration of students' specific biopsychic features, their identification, evaluation, and updating. Identity development at the personality level reflects the development of socially and professionally significant demanded by modern, including professional society, qualities and properties. Student's identity development at the level of the subject of the activity is connected with the realization of different activity types of own creative potential. Interaction and development of all components of the identity structure take place if socialization process is harmoniously combined with individual development, and individual development takes place on the basis of social values.

Within the frames of this approach it is possible to define student's identity development as a complete system process to transform creatively their experience of socialization into individual, unique specific by means of self-determination, creativity and reflexivity. We will present this process in the form of an identity pyramid (Khodyreva, 2006), (Figure 1).

Reflexivity characterizes student's demand for self-understanding, identity; it helps to define own original features, and to assess own identity.

The readiness for self-determination is connected with students' ability to realize the identity in various spheres of action on the basis of an individual choice. It is the

most important indicator of identity development in general. The student performs different functions, kinds of activity various in content, realizing certain social roles in the course of vocational training. That is why it is important to be able to make the right choice taking into account their individual characteristics.

Creativity is considered as the most important indicator of identity in general, as a measure of creativity. Therefore, studying the predisposition to this level of activity (focus on creativity), ability to create a new original product, to critically estimate the process and result of ideas production, gives essential information to evaluate identity in general (Valeev & Baranova, 2013).

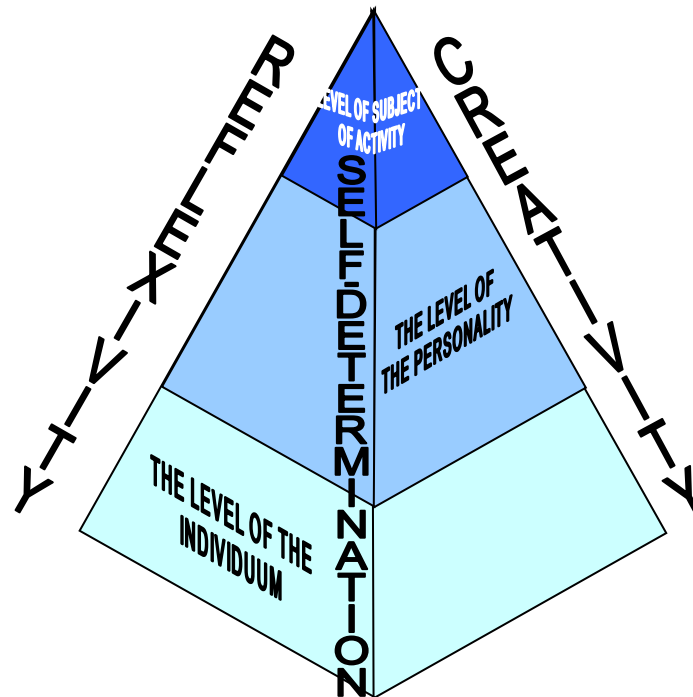


Figure 1. Identity pyramid

### The essence of the educational environment in a university for humanities as space for students' identity development

The educational environment of a university for humanities is understood as the system of vocational training external conditions providing integration of student's sociocultural and individual experience. It is projected and created by subjects of education as the area of their joint activity where links and relations promoting the implementation of both individual and social goals of education are created between them and components of the educational system (Manuylov, 1996; Mudrik, 1991; Slobodchikov, 1997; Yasvin, 2001; Gutman et al., 2014).

The complex of educational environment opportunities to develop identity as an integrated characteristic of the individual, personality and subject of the activity is singled out in psychology and pedagogical literature (Khodyreva, 2006). Let us demonstrate this proceeding from intrinsic characteristics of identity and features of its development at the levels of individuuum, personality and subject of the activity (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The characteristic of educational environment opportunities in a university for humanities for students' identity development

Identity levels	Opportunities of educational environment in a university for humanities to develop identity
Individual level	Functioning of the educational environment as comfortable for a body, characterized by an appropriate level of sanitary and hygienic norms; environment amenities for each student; availability of ecological niches, "environment for me"; ensuring environment availability to all categories of learners
Personality level	Opportunities of educational environment as the space of personal identity development. Humanization of the content and technologies of vocational training; development of group norms, values, ideals basic for a university for humanities; students' pedagogical support plays an essential role in their mastering of new social roles. The openness of the educational environment of a higher education institution is also of great importance to extend social contacts
Level of the subject of the activity	The educational environment of a university for humanities as the space in which each learner can realize their abilities. The subjects of the educational process participate in educational and vocational, research, scientific, innovative, project and other types of creative activity corresponding to their inclinations and requirements and which provide the creation of a situation of success for everyone

The educational environment provides identity development through realization of the set of functions: adaptive, self-realization, syndictive and creative.

The structure of the educational environment includes subject, spiritual, content-methodical, spatial-subject components, the integrity and interrelation of which may have essential impact on students' identity development.

The spiritual component includes traditions, norms, rules, style of life in the environment, and is its backbone component. The atmosphere, "spirit" of a higher education institution is what is named "hidden education" today; it defines the rights and duties of team members as a certain community, forms traditions, a special way of high school life. The values declared in the educational environment find their reflection, first of all, in Concepts of education, Ethical codes, Programs of university strategic development. The improvement of a spiritual component of the educational environment is provided through the observance of the following pedagogical conditions:

- students' comprehension of their role in the environment through studying history, positive perception of traditions and norms of life in a higher education institution;
- formation of value-meaning unity of subjects of vocational training;
- maintenance of "axiological determinism" that implies the determining role of basic universal values;
- valuable-meaning equality of members of a higher education institution community based on mutual trust and respect.

The subject component includes subjects of the educational environment (individual features, distribution of statuses and roles, gender, age and national characteristics of students and teachers); their communicative characteristics (style of communication, level of activity and interactivity of applied methods and forms of education); organizational conditions (features of administrative and corporate culture, availability of teachers' creative groups, students' initiative groups, students' self-government, students' associations).

The improvement of a subject component of the educational environment is provided through the observance of the following pedagogical conditions:

- granting opportunity to all members of a higher education institution community to be bearers of significant experience and information;
- application of a dialogue as a leading form of valuable self-determination of subjects of vocational training;
- realization of own creative potential in the environment, extension of the environment mastering through individual self-determination;

- formation of readiness to overcome difficulties arising in vocational training, application of individual advantages and preferences to form an individual educational trajectory;

- selection of the content and technologies of vocational training proceeding from educational environment opportunities and student's individual needs.

The content-methodical component of the educational environment is an important resource providing student's identity development. It is specified by the requirements of federal state educational standards, features of main vocational and supplement educational programs formed by higher education institutions, their methodological support.

The content-methodical component improvement in the educational environment is provided through the observance of the following pedagogical conditions:

- development of vocational and life position in the course of vocational training
- focus on students' basic vocational and special competences of their vocational activity to provide successful professional adaptation
- assistance to develop learners' individual style of vocational activity;
- focus on the development of reflexive abilities,
- assistance to develop abilities of self-control, need for self-improvement.

The spatial-subject component includes the architectural-esthetic organization of the life space of a higher education institution (architecture of buildings and interior design, spatial structure of educational and recreational rooms, possibility of spatial transformation of rooms if necessary, etc.); and symbolical space of a higher education institution (emblem, anthem, traditions, wall information, etc.) which provide the development of the motivational sphere, influence the development of students' valuable orientations.

The spatial-subject component improvement of the educational environment is provided through the observance of the following pedagogical conditions:

- adaptability of the environment to various categories of learners;
- requirements satisfaction of individual space, "environment for me";
- assistance to develop symbolical space of a higher education institution;
- resources - possibility to implement various types of educational vocational activity, the system of professional tests in the educational environment of a higher education institution.

Thus, the educational environment as the space for students' identity development specifies the necessity to design value, subject, content-methodical and subject-spatial components. Such educational environment provides not only mastering of common cultural values, but the formation of each student's own system of values; perception of oneself as an individual takes an important place. The values declared in the educational environment, the content and technologies of education provide system development and self-development of identity intrinsic characteristics - reflexivity, self-determination and creativity.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research objectives**

The following tasks were solved in the course of the research:

1. to assess students' identity on the basis of studying reflexivity, readiness for self-determination;
2. to evaluate educational environment opportunities in a university for humanities to develop students' identity;
3. to elaborate recommendations on updating educational environment potential to develop students' identity.

## **Theoretical and empirical methods**

The leading methods of the research are:

- theoretical methods to conduct retrospective analysis to reveal educational environment opportunities to develop students' identity; pedagogical modeling and projecting to elaborate pedagogical conditions of identity development;
- empirical methods to study and generalize pedagogical experience of students' identity development in the educational environment, observation, interviewing, questioning, study of documentation, stating pedagogical experiment, and methods of mathematical statistics.

## **The research base**

Vyatka state university for humanities was the basis of the research.

## **Research stages**

The research was conducted in three stages:

At the first stage, there was carried out the substantiation of the research methodological basis, the determination of the main features, and identification of pedagogical conditions aimed to develop students' identity in the educational environment of a university for humanities.

At the second stage, there was arranged the work on the analysis and approbation of pedagogical conditions of students' identity development in the educational environment of Vyatka state university for humanities.

At the third stage, features of students' identity development and evaluation of educational environment resources in a higher education institution to provide the productivity of this process were analyzed; problems connected with the creation of favorable conditions for students' identity development and self-development were formulated.

## **Evaluation criteria**

Students' identity was evaluated on the basis of studying reflexivity, readiness for self-determination, learners' creativity. To reveal educational environment opportunities, the subjects of vocational training estimated the educational environment of the university for humanities on the basis of studying its components: spiritual, subject, content-methodical, subject-spatial.

## **RESULTS**

The evaluation of students' identity was carried out on the basis of studying reflexivity, readiness for self-determination, creativity. The sample made 225 people.

On the basis of reflexivity diagnostics it was asserted that the level of students' self-estimation, self-knowledge and self-control cannot be unfortunately recognized sufficient. So, when defining signs which are significant for individual evaluation, 11% of students note mainly external characteristics: uniqueness, belonging to a specific person: "I am a personality", "My uniqueness is in my originality" "Identity is person's features", "It is originality of thinking, behavior, consciousness of a specific person".

Students also pay attention to intrinsic manifestations of identity connected with the ability to choose kinds of activity independently (8% of respondents), to show

creativity ("it is a set of creative abilities") - (18% of respondents) to use peculiar ways of activity performance (16% of respondents).

In a number of answers (20% of respondents) it is fairly noted that identity is shown only in the interaction with others: "It is ability to consider interests of surrounding people when defending the opinion", "It is the opportunity to prove oneself among others", "Identity can be shown in the group when performing some task or project", "Identity is manifested in the attitude towards teachers, friends, family". It should be noted that 7% of respondents could not define what their uniqueness and originality consists in.

So, it is apparent, students have a certain experience of the reflexive activity connected with the evaluation of own identity, though, their readiness to build their vocational training with own "strong points" taken into account is obviously insufficient, as the research showed; this is confirmed by the results given below.

Estimating the level of readiness for self-determination, it should be noted that it is connected with student's ability to show the identity in various spheres of activity. The following vital spheres are most typical for the majority: 1 training and education, 2 - family, 3 - public life, 4 - hobbies, 5 - communication. Individual values are to some extent shown in all vital spheres, each of which due to its objective conditionality promotes identity realization to a various degree, therefore, spheres promoting this realization to the most gain the greatest importance for a specific student. Obviously, the need for vital and professional self-determination, self-realization is the desired goal for modern students. However many of them insufficiently adequately estimate forthcoming difficulties and obstacles on the way to achieve the objectives; they are not always ready to rely on their forces, support and help of people around as they are not sure that they will be understood and will be accepted as they are. Evaluating their own identity, students connect possibilities of its realization mainly with educational activity (46% of respondents), art and creative activity (40% of respondents), communication (73% of respondents). Though it may seem strange but professional activity (31% of respondents), and scientific-innovative activity (2% of respondents) have the lowest values. Possibilities of professional and scientific-innovative activity in the manifestation of own identity are mainly specified by senior students.

The level of activity preferred by students (reproductive, searching in part, creative) should be specified to characterize the level of students' creativity. The total of the students preferring the creative level of activity makes 68%, and reproductive activity makes 28% of respondents; however, according to students' opinion, these preferences in educational process are realized only partially and students show insufficient readiness to realize their creative potential. So, defining the activity which brings them the greatest satisfaction, they name those kinds of activity in which it is possible to test their abilities - 61%; which have a practical focus - 53%. Such kinds of activity that are demanded in future profession, require essential tension and connected with difficulties overcoming are characterized by low results - 33% and 26% respectively.

When it comes to students' preferences in the choice of specific tasks types, we can state the importance of tasks for them; they are connected not only with information reproduction, application of knowledge in a standard situation, but with material interpretation as well. Students' preferences are distributed as follows: a demand for tasks of a reproductive character in which it is possible to learn and tell - 4%; performance of standard tasks - 13%; implementation of projects - 33%; selection of material to a seminar and preparation of the report - 44%; performance of a task at own choice - 64%. Therefore, rather a large number of students are focused on constructive and creative mastering of educational information; however, in the educational process, according to students' opinion, there are more "unpopular" types of tasks when information is acquired without sufficient

awareness of its individual importance and possibilities of its application in the creative activity. It allows to draw a conclusion that respondents seizing certain, logically built content of the material, do not always have opportunity to differentiate their individual attitude to training information, and to apply it afterwards in creative, scientific-innovative and project activity, including professional orientation.

Thus, diagnostics of student's identity showed that their development and self-development of unique properties and qualities characterizing their internal integrity, relative independence, and originality in the system of social interactions and relationship requires system activity connected, first of all, with competent use of external conditions of vocational training assigned by the educational environment.

To bring out a set of significant pedagogical conditions aimed to develop students' identity in the educational environment of a university for humanities, we used a questionnaire "Student's identity and educational environment"; it supposed the evaluation of educational environment and its components – spiritual, subject, content-methodical, subject-spatial.

Questioning showed that the main guideline of spiritual component development of the educational environment in a university for humanities is specified as the focus on the individual but not an abstract student; identity is considered the major value. When estimating the recognition of identity value according to a 5-grade scale, students give this indicator 3,7 points (out of 5 possible) in average. Speaking about an ideal higher education institution, students, first of all, single out such distinctive values as the value of a dialogue - open discussion of the main aspects of educational institution life; the necessity for joint work to develop criteria to evaluate the learners' achievements; fairness, correctness, teachers' benevolence; respect of students' demands, interests, their aspirations to self-expression. These expectations may be realized only in the context of an appropriately arranged life in a higher education institution. Respondents specified that the development of "cultural way of life of a higher education institution" is impossible without traditions. So, students gave 2,8 points out of 5 when they defined the availability of significant for them traditions in a higher education institution. The emotional appeal of a higher education institution got the highest point (4,2) when students characterized the spiritual component. Thus, the impact of a spiritual component may be estimated as average; it corresponds to 3,56 points.

According to the questioning, the most important sign of a good higher education institution that characterize, first of all, a subject component of the educational environment are good relations between subjects of the educational process. When students estimated teachers' pedagogical support they did not express unanimity – indicators in different groups fluctuated from 0 to 5 on average, and made 3,6 points on a 5-grade scale. According to students it is rather problematic for them to express their opinion. This indicator is estimated at the level of 3,3 points.

The content-methodical component of the educational environment was studied on the basis of its adaptive-developing potential evaluation and determination of the educational environment emotional appeal to a specific learner. On the basis of questioning, it was revealed that the level of a content- methodical component, from the point of view of its individual appeal, is at the insufficient level. Its average assessment made 3,2 points. The level of environment adaptability was 3,2 points. The level of openness of the educational environment in a higher education institution made 2,9 of point. The level of variability of the educational environment in a higher education institution was 3,5 points

The study of a spatial-subject component of the educational environment in a higher education institution showed that the level of amenities of this component is at the average level and makes, according to respondents, 3,8 points. According to



students, the equipment of a higher education institution was estimated, on average, at the level of 4 points; there are elements of a corporate style in a higher education institution, in their opinion, (3,8 points); buildings promote their esthetic taste development (3,1 points).

So, the creation of the educational environment as a space for students' identity development specifies the necessity of variable projecting of its value, subject, content-methodical and subject-spatial components. Such educational environment provides not only mastering of common cultural values, but also the formation of each student's own system of values among which the understanding of identity takes the most important place. The values declared in the educational environment, content and technologies of education in it provide system development and self-development of intrinsic characteristics of identity - reflexivity, self-determination and creativity.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The problem of identity development in the educational environment of a higher education institution is elaborated within the frames of personal focused (Bondarevskaya, 2000; Dautova, 2010; Serikov, 2005; Yakimanskaya, 1996), environmental (Manuylov, 1996; Mudrik, 1991; Slobodchikov, 1997; Yasvin, 2001) and competence-based (Zimnyay, 2004, Zeer, Pavlova, & Symanyuk 2005, Khodyreva, 2011) approaches which provide theoretical foundations of the proposed integrative approach to the evaluation of educational environment potential in a university for humanities for students' identity development.

Despite the fact that the importance of identity development in the educational environment of a higher education institution has been investigated in the conducted researches, its opportunities have not been revealed from the point of view of the integrative approach that takes into account the requirements of federal state educational standards of higher education, in particular, regarding projecting a variable component of a curriculum; student's development of individual educational trajectories; development of sociocultural potential of the educational environment as spaces for students' self-realization.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conducted research allowed to reveal two groups of problems connected with the creation of favorable conditions for students' identity development and self-development. External problems are connected with the fact that possibilities of value, subject, content-methodical and subject-spatial components of the educational environment in a university for humanities are not fully used. Internal problems are connected with the insufficient level of students' readiness for identity development and self-development when, on the one hand, they need to develop the uniqueness and originality, on the other hand, they display insufficient experience of reflection, when they do not completely realize the possibilities to choose the content and technologies of educational professional activity, manifestation of their creative potential.

"The program of strategic development of FGBEU HVE "Vyatka state university for humanities" for 2012-2016" as an innovative center of education, culture and science of the northeast of European Russia is aimed to solve these problems. The university preserves and develops traditions of Russian academic higher education and fundamental science and acts as a factor of social-economic relations humanization and formations of new vital settings of the personality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The materials of the article are of value for authorities and teachers of higher education institutions – developers of the main and supplement vocational curricula; educational programs; educational, social, scientific and innovative projects.

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