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## CULTURAL CENTER AS A FORM OF FOREIGN STUDENTS` CULTURAL ADAPTATION: EXPERIENCE OF H.S. SKOVORODA KHNP

*Today with the rapid increase of students that go abroad for education (by the means of grants and other state programs as well as at own expense) both host universities and students face the problem of cultural adaptation.*

*The **aim of the article** is to describe the experience of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National pedagogical University which among the wide range of foreign students` cultural adaptation methods traditionally used (educational work, students` mentoring, active inclusion into the University life etc.) uses such a unique agent of cultural adaptation as Cultural Center. Such **methods** of empirical research as observation, researching, as well as generalization, classification and description were used to describe and present the experience of H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU. Cultural adaptation as a process aims to help foreign students accept values of the country where they came to study, and promote friendly relations between countries.*

***Conclusion:** Educating in the other-cultural educational environment (that differs from the cultural environment native for a particular student) puts abroad students in need to understand the specifics of this environment, learn how to navigate in various situations arising in the educational process (as well as in everyday life) and master forms of behavior and interaction (or behavior patterns) appropriate for the host culture in such situations. In other words, the problem of cultural adaptation of abroad students arises. Cultural Center as a form of educational, scientific and research work organization (and, in the case of foreign students, also contributes to solving the problem of their cultural adaptation) is a special form of a University-students` cooperation. The positive features of this work are informality, aesthetic appeal, reliance on the interests and social experience of a foreign student himself. The Research does not contain Literature Review as it is the first time in the Ukrainian professional literature this unique form of social and cultural adaptation work with students is described – it`s a **scientific novelty**.*

***Key words:** Cultural Center; cultural adaptation; Cossack; foreign students; host/local culture.*

**Постановка проблеми.** Strengthening of education integration processes due to the economic globalization, «supranational» nature of knowledge and implementation of the «open society» strategy today can be seen as one of main trends. As to higher education, this social phenomena is reflected in practical implementation of multilevel education concept, standardization of content and level/grade systems, unification of educational programs, convertibility of diplomas etc. as well as in the practice of exchange of students and teachers between universities of different countries.

However, educating in the other-cultural educational environment (that differs from the cultural environment native for a particular student) puts abroad students in need to understand the specifics of this environment, learn how to navigate in various situations arising in the educational process (as well as in everyday life) and master forms of behavior and interaction (or behavior patterns) appropriate for the host culture in such situations. In other words, the problem of cultural adaptation of abroad students arises. And it is precisely the success, comfort, quality and speed of this process that determines not only the education of a foreign student in particular in Ukraine, but also his/her attitude to this country, its people, culture, etc.

The Research does not contain Literature Review as it is the first time in the Ukrainian professional literature this unique form of social and cultural adaptation work with students is described – it`s *the scientific novelty*.

The research uses the whole range of empirical research *methods* to describe and present the experience of H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU. Such methods as observation, researching, as well as generalization, classification and description were used to share the experience of this method of foreign students' cultural adaptation.

**Мета.** The aim of the article is to describe the experience of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National pedagogical University which among the wide range of foreign students' cultural adaptation methods traditionally used (educational work, students' mentoring, active inclusion into the University life etc.) uses such a unique agent of cultural adaptation as Cultural Center.

**Результати дослідження.** **University as the main agent of cultural adaptation of foreign students.** From the very first days of their stay at an abroad university, foreign students find themselves in an unfamiliar sociocultural, linguistic and national environment which they have to adapt to as soon as possible. Therefore, successful and focused management of the educational process for foreign students is an integral part of solving the problem of cultural adaptation in general.

When just come foreign students experience difficulties that are significantly different from the ones of local students. First of all, this is insufficient local language knowledge. As a rule, only by the end of the third year of their stay foreign students achieve success in the language, gain sufficient vocabulary and begin to use their knowledge actively [1]. In other words, a low level of language proficiency leads to a certain information vacuum and does not allow a foreign student to obtain a sufficient amount of knowledge about local culture in particular. In most cases, it means that obtaining information from personal and non-verbal communication, coloristics and symbolism (which form a large layer of the culture of the people and society) remain unattainable for a foreign student or he/she receives information in a distorted form as he/she makes all the conclusions only based on his own thoughts, which are formed on a different type of culture.

The next problem is socio-psychological adaptation of the student as his/her entry into the system of interpersonal relations in new cultural environment, his/her adaptation to the group with other cultural patterns, to relationships within it, search and manifestation of his/her own style of behavior in the new cultural environment. Another problem associated with the stay of foreign students abroad is household and housekeeping problems: unusual food and food mixes, smells and tastes, differences in housekeeping styles (this problem is especially relevant for university hostels and dorms), unusual climate conditions and the inability to choose clothes, the difference in the concept of dress code, etc. [3, 34-38]. Religious differences, ideas about masculinity and femininity in different types of cultures, behavioral algorithms native to students (which mainly manifest themselves at the level of mechanical memory and stereotypes), etc. are also of a big problem.

The following institutions traditionally take part in the process of socialization and cultural adaptation (both primary and subsequent) as agents: family, society as a whole, friends and environment, religious community, mass media, etc. In this case, educational institutions are only «one of» [7]. As to cultural adaptation of foreign students, the dominant role in this process belongs to the educational system represented by universities. It is Universities that are to quickly and efficiently introduce a foreign student into a new cultural environment, to make his/her stay here comfortable (as a «maximum program»), or at least safe both for the student and the host society [4, 204]. And mainly all the problems (including the above mentioned) associated with the stay of a foreign student not only at the University, but also in the country as a whole should also be solved by the university.

Over many years of accepting foreign students practice, University as an educational institution and social agent has developed a number of practical actions aimed at solving the problems of cultural adaptation of foreign students, reducing the problematic level of their stay abroad (both for the students themselves and for the host university and society). Such practices are almost identical at universities around the world and are aimed at the speedy introduction of a foreign student into a new cultural environment and his/her high-quality cultural adaptation. Such practices include mentoring by classmates and teachers, organization of joint study groups for foreign and local students, inclusion of foreign students into the cultural and sports life of the University, etc. [2, 76].

Since the mid-90s of the XX century, H.S. Skovoroda Kharkov National Pedagogical University (H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU) started to practice a unique form of work with foreign students (as well as with the local ones) – a cultural center. In our article, we attempt to present this unique experience as one more form of foreign students' cultural adaptation. Due to the fact that the most active and vivid experience is this field the University gained particularly with the Chinese students, the experience of H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU will be presented precisely by the example of Chinese Cultural Center and Autonomous Scientific and Educational Center of the Ukrainian Cossacks attached to H.S. Skovoroda Kharkov National Pedagogical University.

#### **Chinese students at H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Chinese Cultural Center**

The Chinese Cultural Center was conceived and initially formed as a center of educational and cultural work with Ukrainian students who studied Chinese at H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU. Chinese students (originally the ones of technical universities of Kharkov) were invited to take parts in events and celebrations held by the Center. They came, brought their friends and acquaintances, began to present initiatives, which were supported by teachers of the Oriental Languages Department and the university administration. Thus appeared the speaking club, conversational club, a club of Chinese cinema admirers, classes in drawing and writing hieroglyphs in ink, etc. When Chinese students, masters and post-graduate students came for study to H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU, they

also found themselves in the Chinese Cultural Center. Traditionally, the Chinese are very creative people. They have many interesting hobbies, and the format of informal communication that prevails in the Chinese Cultural Center gives them the opportunity not only to share their hobbies with Ukrainian students, but also to find out their relationship to such an activity, form a company with the Ukrainians based on common interest. They share their hobbies, help teachers to organize extra-curriculum activities for the Center visitors, organize holidays' celebrations, give lectures on their majors etc. Also today Ukrainian visitors of the Chinese cultural center either study Chinese language and culture, or speak this language at a fairly high level and have experience of living in China (mainly – working at higher educational institutions of China by the state teachers exchange programs). Thus, on the one hand, the Chinese do not experience difficulties in communication (they speak their native language), have no problems with the incorrect interpretation of their actions from the point of view of culture and traditional Chinese behavioral algorithms (by learning the language, Ukrainians also study Chinese culture), in other hand they also expand their knowledge in the field of culture and everyday life of Ukraine (they have a circle of communication, which in an accessible for the Chinese form introduces them into Ukrainian realities).

Giving lectures on their majors for Oriental Languages Department students is a quite interesting experience that as a form of cultural adaptation of the Chinese students appeared occasionally. Mainly MA and PhD program students from China that study at H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU work in a college or University in China. Here in Ukraine according to their educational programs they have to make 2 to 6 open classes for the Ukrainian students of the same major they teach in China. But the so-called «draft lectures» (just to train themselves) they teach in the Center for the Chinese major students. There they have an opportunity not only to practice the language, but also get to know does the auditorium react, is the material interesting for the students etc. [5]. According to the foregoing H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Chinese Cultural Center considers to have a great potential as to cultural adaptation of the Chinese students.

#### **H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Cossacks Center as a Separate Educational and Scientific Institute**

As a part of the program on patriotic education of students since 2002 on the basis of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University was founded the Institute of Ukrainian Cossacks and a separate research and educational center of the Ukrainian Cossacks named after H.S. Skovoroda, headed by the rector of the University, Ataman General of the Ukrainian Cossacks, Academician Ivan Prokopenko. The Institute mentioned is the only one that on the state level defines the strategy of Ukraine on Cossack-patriotic education of youth, has the right to conduct research in the field of Cossacks and, unlike many organizations, does not limit its activities to one or more areas (sports, history, art, etc.), but conducts comprehensive research and intelligence.

The H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Cossack Center aims at developing the best progressive customs and reviving the historical, patriotic and cultural traditions of Ukrainian Cossacks. The main tasks of the Center can be determined as following:

- working out programs of national-patriotic, physical culture and sports education taking into consideration achievements of Ukrainian Cossacks on local and state levels;
- on the basis of existing military camps and boarding schools participation in creation of Cossack Towns for adolescents and homeless children;
- promoting establishment of Cossack educational institutions (lyceums, schools, etc.);
- participation in holding all-Ukrainian and international scientific-practical conferences on the problems of Ukrainian Cossacks;
- providing scientific and methodological assistance to museums and reservations as to improving promotion of history, culture and traditions of Ukrainian Cossacks;
- participation in research on genealogy and biography of hetmans (Cossack state leaders), officers and nowadays Ukrainian Cossacks;
- promoting the development of sports based on Cossack traditions, participation in sports competitions in various countries;
- development of Cossack routes tourism;
- promoting the development of international tourism, cultural exchange, cooperation with international public and education organizations to promote modern development and history of Ukrainian Cossacks;
- participation in implementation of humanitarian programs connected with history and nowadays of Ukrainian Cossacks in the countries where Ukrainian diaspora locates.

H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University Cossack Center comprehensively promotes formation of a future teacher, who correlates his/her work not only with newest pedagogical trends and techniques, but also with national ideas and traditions. Graduates of the Cossack Center and the Institute of Ukrainian Cossacks have the right to organize and lead Cossack Centers in schools and other educational institutions both in Ukraine and abroad [6].

#### **H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Cossacks Center and its role in cultural adaptation of the Chinese Students**

On October 14 of each year in Ukraine is a Cossacks Day, which is also widely celebrated at H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU. This day, a large Cossack festival is held, in which both teachers and students of the University and official guests from Embassies, foreign universities, city and state administrations take part. Students from China always take part in this festival. There they have the opportunity to see the traditions of

Cossacks by themselves, to join this culture. At the festival, they learn and sing Cossack songs, take part in creative workshops on embroidery, can try on Cossack costumes, and learn how to dance Cossack dances.

Especially popular among festival guests (including the Chinese students) is the kulesh (traditional Cossack wheat porridge) contest, which is cooked on open fire by university students. As there are students from different regions of Ukraine study at the University, they prepare kulesh according to traditions of their native region. The Chinese students are usually happy to try all the variants of kulesh and sometimes even ask the organizers to allocate their own place and prepare their own version of this dish. To do this, returning from their summer holidays in China, they bring cereals and dried / canned meat, which is cooked according to their local traditions.

One tradition of H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Cossack festival formed spontaneously and was initiated by the Chinese students themselves. In 2017, a famous in the PRC wushu trainer Mr. Han Zhangliang entered the University for a PhD program. A bright part of the festival is the performance of university students who are engaged in the martial arts of Cossacks. Seeing their performance, Mr. Han Zhangliang proposed a friendly duel with them which ended by «friendship victory». Since then, such friendly martial competitors in which fighters from China and the Cossack ones take part (each uses his own martial system) have become traditional. Today this part of the festival has received the status of an international competition and athletes from all over the world (mainly China, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Turkmenistan) come to take part in.

The final part of the festival is the initiation in Cossacks (for boys) and Berehinas (for girls). According to the Ukrainian traditions, a man can become a Cossack only after ignition. As to women, if they marry a Cossack, but her father was not a Cossack, after marriage she was called Berehinia (an independent noble woman who takes care). If a girl is from a Cossack family, then she was considered to be Cossachka (a female Cossack) b her birth. Cossacks as a socio-cultural phenomenon of Ukraine arose not on an ethnic but on a moral and psychological basis. People were united not because of state power, a common ethnic group, religion or territory of residence, but by spiritual kinship. Belonging to a different culture, nationality or religion has therefore never been a reason for a person to be refused to become a Cossack. Thanks to this all the students of H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU (including those that came from other countries) during this festival have an opportunity to become a Cossack or Berehinia. After the initiation each student gets a Certificate which is recognized by all Cossack local communities all over the world. usually the Chinese students are very responsible and solemn as to this initiation.

As a rule a student can be ignited into a Cossack/Berehinia only on their second year of education at H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU. If they were an active member of a Cossack Center at school, they can be initiated at the first year of education. Others are to visit the H.S. Skovoroda KhNPU Cossack Center for a yer to study there, to get to know about Cossacks, their principles of life and moral values. Usually students (including the Chinese and Turkmenistan ones) come to the Center after classes. There in a non-formal atmosphere they can communicate with their classmates who, as future Cossacks, are already considered to be «sworn brothers» and help each other as «brothers in spirit and activity». They learn songs (which help the foreign students to study Ukrainian language faster), take part in exhibitions, ethnographic excursions and trips, national holidays. Also if they wish and have the opportunity they make research work on the history and current situation of the Cossacks in their countries. As the H.S. Skovoroda Cossack Center has strong ties with Ukrainian Diaspora abroad, they can find out a lot of interesting for them and even learn something new about their own countries.

The main forms of culture adaptation work with foreign students that the Kossack Center uses actively are: visualization and aesthetic appeal of Kossacks life, goodwill and informality in communication among Kossacks (regardless of their age, nationality, academic or social success, etc.) and all kinds of support from the University.

**Висновки.** Cultural adaptation as a process aims to help foreign students accept values of the country where they came to study, and promote friendly relations between countries. Today, the issues of forms and methods of foreign students' cultural adaptation are under consideration and are shaped only in general terms. With a clear set of the final result, which is determined methodically and at the scientific level, each institution of higher education solves this problem on the basis of its own strategy, choosing those practices that are closer to it, tested in it and bring results. Cultural Center as a form of educational, scientific and research work organization (and, in the case of foreign students, also contributes to solving the problem of their cultural adaptation) is a special form of a University-students' cooperation. The positive features of this work are informality, aesthetic appeal, reliance on the interests and social experience of a foreign student himself. We hope that the positive experience of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University will be interesting and useful for other higher educational institutions as to cultural adaptation of foreign students.

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### КУЛЬТУРНИЙ ЦЕНТР ЯК ФОРМА КУЛЬТУРНОЇ АДАПТАЦІЇ ІНОЗЕМНИХ СТУДЕНТІВ: ДОСВІД ХНПУ ІМЕНІ Г.С. СКОВОРОДИ

Сьогодні, коли стрімко збільшується кількість студентів, які виїжджають на навчання за кордон (за допомогою грантів та інших державних програм, а також за власні кошти), як приймаючі університети, так і студенти стикаються з проблемою культурної адаптації.

**Метою статті** є опис досвіду Харківського національного педагогічного університету імені Г.С. Сковороди, який серед широкого кола традиційних методів культурної адаптації іноземних студентів (освітня робота, наставництво студентів, активне включення до університетського життя тощо) використовує можливості такого унікального агента культурної адаптації як Культурний центр. Такі **методи** емпіричного дослідження, як спостереження, дослідження, а також узагальнення, класифікація та опис були використані для опису та представлення досвіду ХНПУ імені Г.С. Сковороди. Культурна адаптація як процес має на меті допомогти іноземним студентам прийняти цінності країни, куди вони приїхали вчитися, та сприяти дружнім стосункам між країнами. Виховання в іншому культурному освітньому середовищі (яке відрізняється від культурного середовища, рідного для конкретного студента) створює ситуації, які потребують розуміння специфіки цього середовища, вміння орієнтуватися в різних ситуаціях, що виникають у навчальному процесі (а також у повсякденному житті) та опанування форм поведінки та взаємодії (або моделі поведінки), які відповідають панівній культурі в таких ситуаціях. Іншими словами, виникає проблема культурної адаптації іноземних студентів.

**Висновки:** Культурний центр як форма організації навчальної, наукової та дослідницької роботи (і, якщо мова йде про іноземних студентів, також сприяє вирішенню проблеми їхньої культурної адаптації), є особливою формою співпраці університету та студентів. Позитивними рисами цієї роботи є неформальність, естетична привабливість, опора на інтереси та соціальний досвід самого іноземного студента. Дослідження не містить огляду літератури, оскільки в українській професійній літературі така форма соціально-культурної адаптаційної роботи зі студентами-іноземцями описана вперше, що й становить **наукову новизну статті**.

**Ключові слова:** культурний центр; культурна адаптація; Козак; іноземні студенти; приймаюча/місцева культура.

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