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MENTORING AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON: RUSSIAN AND WESTERN MODELS OF VALUE TRANSLATION IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. *The article considers mentoring not as a narrowly pedagogical technology, but as a fundamental cultural institution providing intergenerational transmission of values, norms and professional ethos. The purpose of the work is to conduct a cultural comparative analysis of Russian and Western mentoring formats, revealing their similarities and differences at the level of basic cultural codes: types of sociality (collectivism / individualism), models of power and authority, methods of initiation and rituals of transition, as well as the relationship between tradition and innovation in educational practices. The method uses an interdisciplinary cultural and anthropological approach complemented by elements of comparative analysis of national educational systems. It is shown that the Russian model tends towards a paternalistic type of relationship, sacralization of the mentor's role and value-oriented transfer of experience, whereas Western models (primarily Anglo-American and Continental European) are built around contractual logic, instrumentality and reflexive autonomy of the mentee. It is concluded that the differences between the models are rooted in deeper civilizational patterns, which requires culturally sensitive adaptation rather than mechanical borrowing.*

Keywords: *mentoring, cultural transmission, Russian cultural tradition, Western models of mentoring, collectivism, individualism, cultural codes, intergenerational communication.*

Introduction

In any culture, regardless of the degree of its technological development, there is a mechanism for transferring accumulated experience from older generations to younger ones. This mechanism can take various forms, from family education and workshop apprenticeship to institutionalized mentoring systems in universities and corporations. However, the external similarity of the procedures hides fundamental

cultural differences: attitudes towards authority, understanding of freedom and responsibility, ways of constructing identity and the nature of social ties.

In modern humanitarian knowledge, mentoring is increasingly understood not as a purely pedagogical tool, but as a complex cultural phenomenon in which anthropological, social and axiological dimensions are intertwined [1; 6]. This perspective allows us to go beyond methodological recommendations and raise questions about which cultural codes are translated through mentoring, how national educational systems reproduce the basic values of society, and to what extent modern reforms take into account deep cultural archetypes.

A comparative analysis of Russian and Western mentoring formats is of particular interest, since both traditions, while superficially similar in goals, rely on different anthropological models and cultural scenarios [3; 5; 6]. In the Western (especially Protestant) tradition, mentoring is built around the idea of an individual path, autonomy, and contract. In Russia, it revolves around the idea of community, spiritual connection, and paternalism. These differences are not accidental; they are rooted in historical types of sociality and cultural codes formed over the centuries.

The purpose of this article is to present a culturological interpretation of Russian and Western mentoring formats, highlighting their similarities and differences at the level of basic cultural foundations: the type of sociality, the model of power, the nature of value transmission, initiation rituals and ways of institutionalization.

The Russian Mentoring model: Cultural foundations and archetypes

The Russian model of mentoring is rooted in the Orthodox spiritual tradition, the communal way of life, and specific forms of paternalism formed in the context of catching-up modernization [1]. The key cultural archetypes here are the elder, the teacher-mentor as the bearer of not only knowledge, but also the supreme truth, as well as the community as the environment in which education takes place.

1. Collectivism and value orientation. The Russian culture is traditionally dominated by the collectivist type of sociality, where personality is defined through belonging to “we” – a family, community, collective. Accordingly, mentoring is perceived not as an individual service, but as part of a common parenting effort. Researchers note that Russian education begins mentoring from school [5], which reflects its systemic nature and focus on the formation of the student’s personality at all stages of education. The mentor here acts not just as a translator of knowledge, but as a spiritual authority that influences the worldview and moral character of the mentee.

2. Paternalism and sacralization of the mentor’s role. The Russian tradition presupposes an asymmetric “senior–junior” relationship, where the former is endowed not only with competencies, but also with the moral right to instruct. This goes back to the Orthodox tradition of eldership, where the spiritual father (elder) acts as an intermediary between man and higher meanings. In

the secular interpretation, this model transformed into the figure of a “teacher of life”, which gave rise to high expectations for the mentor’s personality and moral character. In this context, the sustainability of such forms as dynastic and individual mentoring is understandable [1].

3. Centralization and unity with regional variability. The Russian system of postgraduate support for young professionals is centralized, reflecting the cultural need for a single value space. However, as emphasized in the research, regions are given considerable freedom to choose tools [7], which indicates a dialectical combination of universalism and local identity.

4. Traditional methods as reproduction of cultural code. The predominance of methods such as conversation, observation, and the work of methodological associations [2] reflects a focus on oral tradition and direct, “live” communication, a trait deeply rooted in Russian communicative culture, where personal contact is valued above formal instructions. Western mentoring models: a variety of approaches.

Western Mentoring Models: Cultural Scenarios and the Logic of Individualism

Western models of mentoring (primarily Anglo-American and Continental European) were formed in different civilizational conditions: Protestant ethics, individualism, the cult of contract and rationality. This predetermined a fundamentally different set of cultural codes.

1. Individualism and instrumentality. In Western culture, mentoring is primarily a contractual relationship between a professional and a novice aimed at achieving specific career or educational results. As the researchers note [3; 6], the emphasis here is not on spiritual connection, but on the transfer of effective business strategies. The mentee is considered as an autonomous subject who chooses the trajectory of development himself, and the mentor is a facilitator who helps to realize this choice.

2. The Anglo-American model: coaching and horizontality. The USA and the UK demonstrate a model where technologies of coaching, modeling and mentoring sessions play a special role [3]. These methods are not aimed at broadcasting the “only true” experience, but at developing critical thinking and reflection of the mentee himself. It is significant that in the West they prefer peer mentoring in higher education [6], which promotes the development of horizontal connections and mutual learning. This reflects a cultural orientation towards equality and decentralization of power.

3. The British model: centralization without paternalism. The British postgraduate support system, like the Russian one, is centralized [7]. However, the cultural logic here is different: centralization does not serve to preserve the unity of values, but to ensure uniform quality standards. This is typical of cultures with a high degree of institutional trust in formal procedures rather than personal authority.

4. French and Finnish models: research competence and pre-professional training. In France, the emphasis is on pre-professional training through internship

sites and pedagogical internship [6], which reflects the French tradition of centralized state regulation of education, combined with the high importance of practical experience. The Finnish model, focused on conducting pedagogical research as a mandatory element of the qualification exam [6], embodies the values of research culture and reflexive autonomy characteristic of the Northern European cultural type.

Comparative analysis: cultural codes and their manifestations

Similarities: universal mentoring functions

Despite cultural differences, there are three universal functions that mentoring performs in all the cultures considered:

1. The function of socialization. In both traditions, mentoring is seen as a key mechanism for a young person's entry into the professional community and culture in general. This is confirmed by research indicating a common understanding of mentoring as a means of staff adaptation and retention [4; 6].

2. Value translation function. Everywhere, the mentor is the bearer not only of knowledge, but also of the values of a professional ethos. The only difference is which values are conveyed and how – through authority and imitation (Russia) or through dialogue and reflection (the West).

3. The function of symbolic legitimization. Mentoring in any culture is a ritual of recognition.: it officially confirms the status of a “mature specialist” and legitimizes a person's transition to a new professional quality.

Differences: cultural specifics

The key differences are shown in table 1.:

Table 1. Key differences between cultural codes in Russian and Western mentoring models

Comparison parameter	Russian model (cultural code)	Western model (cultural code)
Type of sociality	Collectivism, community [1]	Individualism, autonomy [3; 6]
The nature of the relationship	Paternalism, sacralization of the mentor figure	Contractual, instrumental relations [6]
The purpose of mentoring	Transfer of values and personal education	Competence development and career growth [3]
Transmission methods	Oral tradition, direct communication (conversation, observation) [2]	Coaching technologies, modeling, digital formats [2; 3]
Program management	Centralized (state-owned) with regional freedom [7]	Decentralized, institutional [7]
Attitude towards authority	High power distance, trust in elders	Low power distance, dialogue and equality
The role of reflection	Reflection is subordinated to the authority of the mentor	Reflection is an independent value [6]

Conclusion

The conducted cultural analysis allows us to conclude that the differences between Russian and Western mentoring formats are not limited to organizational nuances – they are rooted in fundamental civilizational patterns.

The Russian model is focused on a person-community, on the formation of personality through a deep emotional connection with a mentor-authority. Western models are based on an individual, where a mentor is a professional consultant who helps build their own trajectory.

Modern challenges – digitalization, globalization, and the intergenerational gap – require not mechanical copying of Western practices, but culturally sensitive adaptation. It seems promising to move towards a dialogue model that integrates Russian value depth (attention to personality, ethical dimension) with Western technologies of reflection and autonomy [1; 6]. Preserving the best traditions of the Russian pedagogical school – the education of a moral personality and spiritual and value orientations – combined with modern tools will create a unique model that meets both the Russian cultural code and international standards of professional development.

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