

Reflexivity and Adaptivity in Russian and International Students: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study in a Multicultural University

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Abstract

Background: The internationalization of higher education highlights the need to understand the psychological adaptation of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Reflexivity and adaptivity are key factors in this process, yet their interplay in multicultural settings remains underexplored.

Objective: This study aims to compare the manifestation of different reflexivity types and adaptivity indicators between Russian and international students in a multicultural academic environment.

Methods: The sample comprised 188 students (18-23 years) from RUDN University: 96 first-year and 92 third-year students. Reflexivity was assessed using the "Differential Type of Reflexivity" methodology (Leontiev et al.), and adaptivity was measured using the social-psychological adaptation diagnostics (Rogers, Diamond) and the "Adaptivity" test (Krupnov). The Mann-Whitney U test was used for statistical comparison.

Results: Both groups exhibited a predominance of Systemic Reflexivity (SR). Russian students showed significantly higher scores on Adaptivity (2) ($p < .001$) and Communicativeness ($p < .001$), while international students demonstrated significantly higher Nostalgia ($p < .001$). Although less adapted by outcome measures, international students displayed comparable Emotional Comfort and higher Internality than their Russian peers. Notably, Russian students' successful adaptation was accompanied by higher Alienation ($p < .01$) and lower Introspection (IN).

Conclusion: While Systemic Reflexivity serves as a foundational competence for all students, the psychological profiles of Russian and international students differ significantly. Russian students demonstrate more effective external adaptation at the cost of personal alienation, whereas international students rely on stronger internal resources (internality) to navigate adaptation challenges. Targeted, culturally-sensitive interventions are necessary to support the distinct needs of each group.

Keywords

Reflexivity, adaptivity, cross-cultural analysis, international students, multicultural education, psychological adaptation.