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**ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPANTS
IN THE PROCESS OF POST-SPORTS ADAPTATION**

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Abstract

The subject of the study is the assessment by professional athletes of the participation of institutions in the processes of post-sports adaptation, including government bodies, sports federations and professional teams. As research methods, we used a survey of athletes at the stage of completing a sports career and the results of an analysis of the data obtained during group discussions on the theme "Character, features and difficulties of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes in modern Russia". 4 discussions were held, 2 in 2016, 2 in 2019, they were attended by International Masters of Sports, as well as Honored Masters of Sports, including several participants of the Olympic Games (sports - boxing, athletics, rock climbing; sea all-around, swimming, judo, sambo, classic wrestling, football, weightlifting). The study revealed that the Sports Federation, State authorities and local governments, sports organizations, teams and other "institutions" provide assistance in the processes of post-sports adaptation in less than 7% of cases.

Keywords

Institutions – Professional sports – Post-sports adaptation – Sports career

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Introduction

Today, sport is an institutionalized form of social activity, manifesting itself in the physical, psychological, institutional, social, cultural, economic forms of life of individuals who are involved in sports practices. According to Eckstein, Moss, Delaney¹, modern sport has become a “comprehensive social phenomenon” because it is able to influence society as a whole and all social structures. Sport affects all aspects of public life - political, economic, cultural, social, technological - and at the same time affects the lives of individuals who form the newest society.

In recent studies, sociologists Seippel², Young³, Collins⁴, Ryskin, Kocheryan, Davydova⁵, began to talk about the originality of modern sports as a completely new product that has formed in society as a result of a combination of three main factors: peculiar forms of political life, a specific type of relationship between social groups and the special structure of emotional life.

In this work, in the context of studying the features of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes, as well as a result of the above, we offer the following two working concepts of professional sports:

Professional sports are a form of performative body-oriented practice, which is a source for producing a “high sports result” and its further mass consumption or use as a political resource or search for another social purpose.

Professional sports are a social institution within the framework of which relations of production and consumption of high sports results are organized, providing for the following activities:

- training of professional athletes.
- social formatting of sports practices (rules of the game, league, association).
- organization of performances (sports show events).
- generation of value-based foundations and other social constructs.

Research background

Consider the methodological basis of the study. In the theory of social action, the coordination of the “life world” of the subject and social systems is achieved through the integration and rationalization of their relationships⁶. Rationalization implies interaction, not guided by a normatively prescribed agreement, but - directly or indirectly - through a communicative understanding.

¹ R. Eckstein; D. M. Moss y K. J. Delaney, “Sports sociology’s still untapped potential”, *Sociological Forum* Vol: 25 num 3 (2010): 500-518.

² Seippel Ø, “Topics and trends: 30 years of sociology of sport”, *European Journal for Sport and Society*, Vol: 15 num 3 (2018): 288-307.

³ K. Young, *Sociology of sport: A global subdiscipline in review*. Emerald. 2017.

⁴ R. Collins, “Micro-sociology of sport: Interaction rituals of solidarity, emotional energy, and emotional domination”, *European Journal for Sport and Society*, Vol: 13 num 3 (2016):197-207.

⁵ P. Ryskin; M. Kocheryan y E. Davydova, “Self-identification features of professional athletes in modern Russia”, *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, Vol: 19 num 2 (2019):1118-1125.

⁶ J. Habermas, *On the pragmatics of social interaction: Preliminary studies in the theory of communicative action*. MIT Press. 2002.

This idea allows us to substantially clarify previous ideas about the adaptation process in professional sports. The agreement between the subject and the system is achieved because of communicative intercourse between individuals in the process of rationalizing their "life world". At the same time, communicative intercourse and rationalization develop unevenly. As a result, contradictions arise between social systems and the "life world" of individuals, which are resolved in the process of "decolonization" of the life world by achieving free communicative consent. Thus, adaptation can be interpreted as the process of reaching agreement between the individual and society in the process of rationalizing the "life world" of the individual.

From the standpoint of the theory of structure Cohen⁷, Giddens, Pierson⁸, the subjective nature of the process of social adaptation is noted. A subject reconstructing social interaction through the application and interpretation of stereotypes in practice, independently determines the balance of spatio-temporal relationships within and without social systems. In the context of the theory of social systems Adorno, Khorkov⁹, Gergilov¹⁰, one of the reasons for social development is considered to be the individual's creative and adaptive activity (establishing equilibrium, balance of forces and relationships) to the system. A large role in the considered form of social adaptation is played not only by the adaptive abilities of subjects, but also by the impact of adaptors, primarily social institutions, organizations, and people. The main task of adapters is to assist in the elaboration, formation and development of adaptation strategies, skills for an adequate understanding of the processes in the new social environment. In post-professional adaptation, the main adapter is the institutions of the profession and professional culture.

For the future professional athlete, the institute of sports is the environment that encourages him to participate in public life, teaches him to understand culture, conduct in the team, affirm himself and perform various social roles. Obviously, we are talking about the processes of socialization, that is, about the active formation of the personality of a professional athlete. People from birth do not possess all the necessary skills for living in society, they acquire them throughout their life's journey.

An individual gains this knowledge and skills in the process of communicating with others, which makes communication an important mechanism for transmitting culture. Socialization refers to those processes through which people learn to act effectively in social groups. A person is socialized when he can participate in concerted actions based on conventional norms.

In the process of sports socialization, the future professional adapts to the conditions of his "sports existence". In this case, colleagues, and trainers act for him as role models, sources of reinforcement of their own actions. During professional and sports formation, the future professional learns the set of roles that he will play in society and introduces into his system of behavior those patterns that are authorized by the sports community. This gives him the right to participate in the life of a sports team.

⁷ I. J. Cohen, *Structuration theory: Anthony Giddens and the constitution of social life*. 1989.

⁸ A. Giddens y C. Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. 1998.

⁹ T. Adorno y M. L. Khorkov, *Problems of moral philosophy*. 2000.

¹⁰ R. E. Gergilov; *Theory and Methodology of Gurvich Sociology*, *Sociological studies*, num 4 (2008): 129-138.

In the theory of social exchange Emerson¹¹; Cook¹², human relationships are considered as the result of a systematic practice of rewards, which means not only material and financial assistance to the subject, but also social approval, raising social status, building authority and respect and other moral and psychological incentives. These incentives are necessary ways of social adaptation of individuals. In the process of developing the theory of exchange, the idea of "exchange networks" arose in which social relations are structured and set initially for the subject. The individual chooses such structural models of these relationships that are most beneficial to him. Thus, in line with the concept of social exchange, adaptation can be understood as the process of choosing the optimal model of social relations during social rewards exchange. Adapters can be professionals using special technologies and controlling the adaptation process, and "amateurs" using their personal resources, especially informal ones, to solve short-term tasks. As a rule, amateur adaptors participate in post-professional adaptation, first, they are friends, as well as close relatives who seek to help a person survive a difficult life period. Moreover, the need for the impact of adapters increases as the subject's adaptive resources decrease. Support, approval of relatives, significant people can increase the adaptive resource. The complete absence of adapters in the post-professional period of life is unlikely to help overcome deformations in the relationship between the subject and the environment after the completion of a professional career. A brief analysis of the classic main sociological concepts allows us to determine the essence of "social adaptation" as a process of organizing the interaction of social actors with their environment, as a result of which relationships are established between them that are productive. On the one hand, the individual adapts to the changing conditions of the social system, on the other hand, builds, changes them as an active subject of interaction. At the same time, "an important aspect of social adaptation is the adoption by the individual of a social role, and the effectiveness of adaptation depends on how adequately the individual perceives himself and his social connections. As part of an empirical study, we set ourselves the purpose to verify the presented methodological findings. The objectives of the study were:

- to identify professional institutions related to the process of socialization of athletes in various sports sectors at various stages of their career (beginning, peak, completion).
- to identify the forms of adaptation used by these institutions to help athletes at the end of their professional careers.
- to get an assessment of adaptation tools from professional athletes.

The survey involved athletes who decided to complete or have already completed a sports career, so that we can analyze the various institutions that assist them in post-sports adaptation. The results of the analysis of data obtained during group discussions with the participation of professional athletes on the theme "Character, features and difficulties of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes in modern Russia" were also used. 4 discussions were held, 2 in 2016, 2 in 2019, they were attended by International Masters of Sports, as well as Honored Masters of Sports, including several participants of the Olympic Games (sports - boxing, athletics, rock climbing; sea all-around, swimming, judo, sambo, classic wrestling, football, weightlifting).

¹¹ R. M. Emerson; Social exchange theory", Annual review of sociology, Vol: 2 num 1 (1976): 335-362.

¹² K. S. Cook; C. Cheshire; E. R. Rice y S. Nakagawa, "Social exchange theory", Handbook of social psychology (2013): 61-88.

Results

During group discussions regarding the problems of post-sports adaptation, a common vision of the problems faced by professional athletes after the end of their professional career was formed. Respondents noted that in professional terms, Russian sport as a system is not at the proper level of development. Many professional athletes' study at the university along with everyday sports, are at work in organizations that provide their classes. In either case, the university or organization creates the conditions for professional sports, training, or work activities by athletes, as a rule, are not fully implemented. An athlete is required to successfully participate in different competitions, representing the honor of a university or the honor of an organization. This is considered part of their work, goes to the offset of study. This form of organization of professional sports activities is rooted in the Soviet tradition of amateur sports.

Respondents note that Russia has developed a specific sports system among law enforcement agencies.

“Departments are required to represent their employees in such competitions. They should perform there in different sports, at different levels. Therefore, they include athletes of different levels. Some compete in lower level competitions, others in higher ones. The agency is gaining points on the rating system to be ranked high enough. This is their compulsory system” [Yana - International Master of Sports, Swimming, 2016].

Such a system reproduces the structure of the organization of professional sports since the times of the Soviet Union, when, first of all, the power, as well as some other departments “kept”, had high-level athletes in their fictitious positions.

“Together, a normal salary is obtained if a person gives a result. Accordingly, if there is no international result, then some bets disappear immediately. It is just that some coaches and team managers have access to those who additionally can stimulate the athlete (to provide him with a semblance of professional earnings), someone does not. The athlete's main income does not come from the institute of professional sports, if I may say so” [Dmitry - International Master of Sports, Football, 2016].

Thus, in an unsportsmanlike structure, whether it be the so-called “epaulettes” department, or the sponsor's enterprise, an athlete often gets more than when he is only “listed” as an instructor athlete.

It is important to emphasize that due to several natural physiological factors (aging, fatigue, etc.), an athlete can demonstrate high athletic performance only for several years. According to experts, a professional athlete's career can be realized within the framework of “active” 10-15 years only.

“By the age of thirty to thirty-five, as a rule, you become professionally unsuitable. Expires “fit” age. If you put in life a professional sport, what are the specific life, professional, status, personal prospects of your development? To achieve a high result is quite difficult, the percentage is small. For many good athletes, for various reasons, they fail to secure a high status - to become the Champion of the Europe, the World, a participant of the Olympics Games ... It often occurs to you what you will do when you leave the big sport. Someone comes up with a good thought on time, but

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someone does not think to the last, and in the end, they write it off ... throw it out like squeezed lemon. If there was a real alternative, of course, many of us would choose other areas when the time comes" [Alina - International Master of Sports, Athletics, 2019].

At the same time, respondents note the availability of post-sports career options.

"I always knew that climbing is a sports dead end - a non-Olympic sport, but I also always knew that when I graduated from a professional career, I would still be engaged in something from this field, in management, in coaching. In any case, for me it is development" [Nikolai - Honored Master of Sports, Rock Climbing, 2019].

The period of primary post-sports adaptation is associated with the stage of ending a sports career and is understood by experts as a situation of a gradual, smooth transition to extra-sports life, as a rule it is a logical and progressive, rather than a discrete and unexpected process. A sports professional is looking for related industries and professions, tries to switch, shifts priorities, reduces the intensity of training, implements other life, professional projects, etc. Familiar friends and relatives often come to the rescue here. A professional athlete is a carrier, although not formally confirmed, however, of high social status. Are former high-class athletes able to build a successful, status career of the same level in other areas of work? This question arouses a lot of discussions among experts; each expresses his own opinion.

"For everyone, in different ways, some aim at well-being and prosperity, do not care about the high status in another, about popularity, others go to deputies, etc." [Fedor - International Master of Sports, All-around, 2016].

Now the practice of moving professional athletes into coaches and university trainers is widespread. Why are they going there? Not because they like it, it's just that they are more or less familiar with it.

"Firstly, there is no state-regulated clearly built-up adaptation system in Russia (transition)" [Nikolai - Honored Master of Sports, Rock Climbing, 2016].

"Once upon a time, the age qualification was introduced in the USSR team. After 25 years - impassable - they tried to solve this issue in this way. Previously, in the Union it was like this: if in the national team for more than 6 years, a pension is due. But now there is no such thing, now you've been sucked out and thrown out" [Peter - Master of Sports, Boxing, professional, 2016]

Most experts note the decisive role of the state in improving the efficiency of training professional athletes for the new realities of life. A professional athlete should be assigned a formal official status. As one of the most important tools for the post-sports support of professional athletes, respondents unanimously note the provision of pensions, which is a stable basis for his after-sports activities - significantly reducing stress from leaving the profession, being a guarantee of psychological peace, etc. The athlete feels that he has already worked out a certain base and now can develop further in any direction and not think about finding the most necessary livelihoods, only not in the active 20 years, but in 35-40, when there is more fatigue, etc.

“The military has, I can be mistaken, of course, the opportunity to retrain, to go the other way on retirement. The state gave them such an opportunity. But the athletes do not! Inexplicably?” [Elena - International Master of Sports, Sea All-around, 2019].

Having gained a rather high status in society and having spent a considerable amount of effort, money and personal time, strength, opportunity, young years, an athlete after leaving professional sport is again at the beginning of his professional path.

“In sports, you were a God and everyone, relatively speaking, prayed for you, but here many athletes have to start creating themselves from scratch, already you start to «pray”for an employer, officials, etc. But there is a lot of ambition, and it’s painful for many to “fall from a height!” [Victor - Honored Master of Sports, Wrestling, 2016]

In addition, the status of professional-sports achievements does not find life-long consolidation, as for example among the highest ranks of the army, the judiciary, and public servants. At the same time, the position and status of a professional athlete is directly, like that of representatives of the army, public service, etc., associated with the prestige of the state. Psychologically, it is exceedingly difficult to survive, which essentially determines the conflicts of post-sports socialization. The athlete is again forced to do what he has already done, to achieve the heights that he has already reached once, to prove to everyone his social significance once again, talent, etc.

The study allowed us to identify the structure of assistance by categories, which are provided by various institutions of post-sports adaptation for professional athletes, Figure 1.

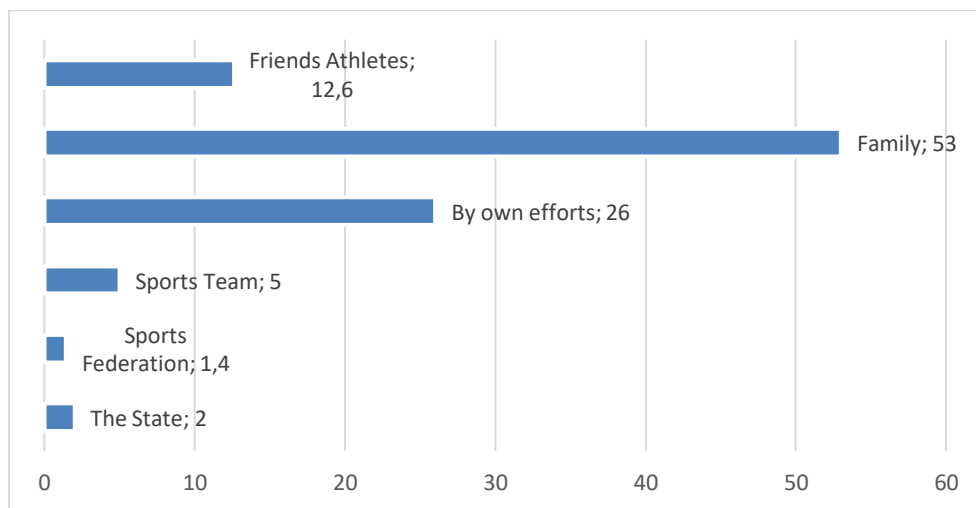


Figure 1
Assessment of the distribution by categories of assistance from various institutions of post-sports adaptation, %.
Source: Compiled by the authors

So, in most cases, relatives and family members (53% of the total number of respondents), or friends-athletes (12.6% of the total number of respondents) help in solving social, domestic, family, professional problems that arise. More rarely, the sports industry comes to the rescue most often in the person of a coach (5% of the total number of respondents).

Otherwise, the athlete is forced to solve his difficulties and problems on his own (26% of the total number of respondents). As for the Sports Federation, State authorities and local government, Sports organizations, Teams, and other "institutions", according to professional athletes, help comes from this side infrequently (less than 7% of the total number of answers).

During the interviews, it was also possible to find out in which areas the assistance from professional sports institutions is being implemented, Figure 2.

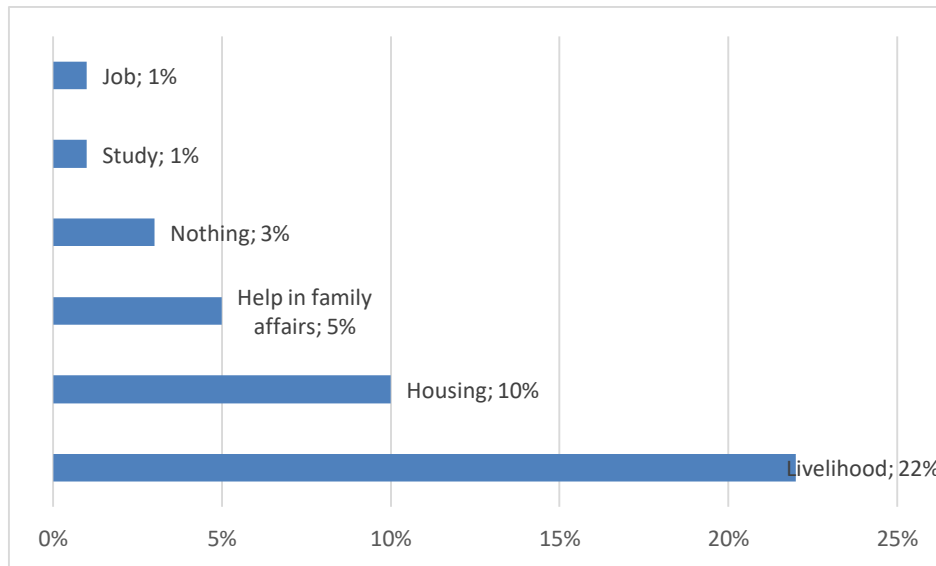


Figure 2

Respondents' assessment of assistance by professional sports institutions, %.

Source: Compiled by the authors

Only 22% and 10% of professional athletes noted the participation of institutions in resolving issues with money and housing. As for providing leisure, support in solving family problems, personal fulfillment, study and extra-sports work, here the percentage of participation in the sports industry is noted by less than 5% of respondents - professional athletes. It is noteworthy that the assessment of the role of the coach, his desire, willingness to solve the life problems of professional athletes is reduced in proportion to the stages of a professional career.

Obviously, at the very beginning of a professional career, as well as at the peak of it, the coach is most interested in the athlete and is always ready to help him in everything to ensure a high sports result. Over time, the coach's activity in this direction will probably weaken, in proportion to the decrease in the volume of the sports results that a professional athlete demonstrates.

At the stage of completing a professional career, the assistance of the federation, club, and sponsors in meeting various needs was assessed by respondents as follows, Figure 3. So, 35% of respondents say that no help is provided at all, 17% said that the help consists in finding a job, a small number of respondents also indicated such types of assistance as housing, study, leisure, money.

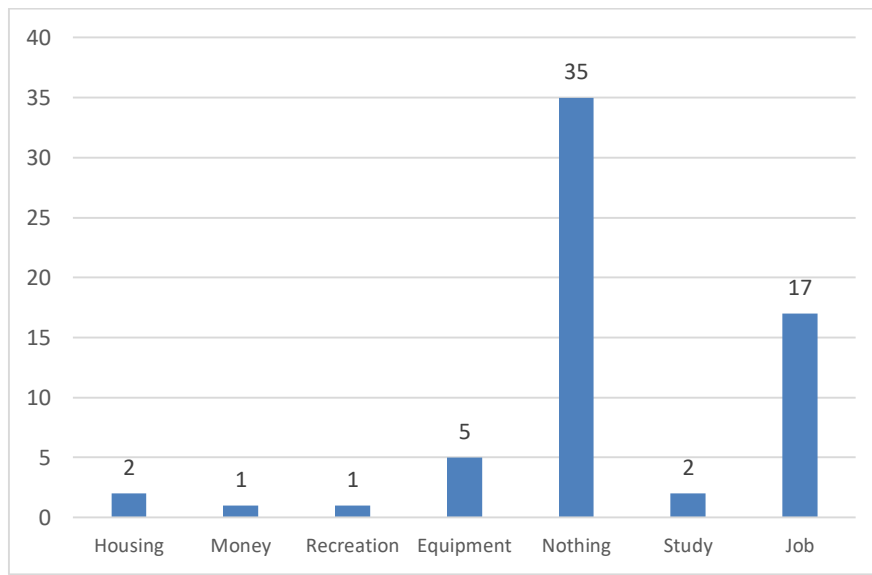


Figure 3

Respondents' assessment of assistance by the federation, club, sponsors in meeting various needs at the stage of completing a professional career, %.

Source: Compiled by the authors

As a result of summarizing the materials of the study, it can be stated that the status of an athlete giving the highest sports result is not professional in Russia, in the strict sense of the word. The athlete most of his time goes in for sports and receives a material reward in exchange for a high sports result, ensuring his life, as well as other social opportunities and benefits. However, at the state level, his status as a professional athlete in the majority is not fixed. There is no labor contract fixing the labor nature of its main activity, which means that its legal status is uncertain. In addition, because of the existing system of relations, in relation to a professional athlete, there are no clear social guarantees from the state: pensions, disability benefits, etc. A professional athlete is not de facto recognized by the state and society as an employee in the field of sports, and if recognized, the level of his support does not at all correspond to the level of professional competence.

Basically, various institutions are involved in the social and material support of the work of a professional athlete: sports federations, teams that also experience resource limitations¹³. Relations are often one-sided, which negatively affects the level of satisfaction and social stability of an athlete as a high-level professional. In this case, it is exceedingly difficult to defend any rights of a professional athlete.

The nature of the post-sports adaptation of professional athletes in modern Russia is determined by the following factors:

- the factor of unsystematicity when we say that there is no nationwide system to ensure the process of post-sports adaptation of professional athletes.

¹³ M. A. Kocheriyana, I. V. Vashlyayeva y T. V. Volovik, "Ural region's municipalities: sport infrastructure state analysis", *Theory and Practice of Physical Culture*, num 8 (2019): 28-28

- the pronounced social monofunctionality of a professional athlete, his “social infantilism”, which is understood as a lack of professional knowledge and experience of a non-sports nature that would provide him with the opportunity to improve in society in a different socio-professional status;
- increased social expectations, ambitions, when we can talk about the psychological difficulties of a professional athlete related to the need to rebuild their own careers, to win a high social position, acceptable social status in a different social and professional role;
- “Resentment” on the state and sports institutions, because, obviously, they do not create conditions for a “transition” from the sports sphere to the non-sports one. Resentment is expressed in psychological tension, fatigue and negative moods among professional athletes, which is often the basis of their deviant behavior.

Conclusion

Thus, post-professional adaptation is largely associated with the transformation of old and the formation of new professionally oriented norms and values of people. That is why this type of adaptation directly affects and relies on the traditions of professional culture with which the subject parted, and in exchange may acquire new ones. In this sense, the values of professional culture become systemically important within the framework of this type of social adaptation. They form the basis for harmonizing self-esteem and claims of subjects and value systems that regulate the state of the new institutional environment.

The subject, as a professional, can try to find adaptive reserves within the framework of his social position in the professional structure of society and begin an active struggle for “survival” in the new environment and in new conditions.

Realizing the acuteness of their situation, social actors who have entered the post-professional period of life take the situation for granted and strive to develop a specific adaptation strategy and tactics. They are included in the process of studying an environment alien to them and begin the active process of its transformation and development. Naturally, the adaptation process is unlikely to be unambiguous, unidirectional and uniform.

The success of post-professional adaptation is largely determined by the presence of a significant adaptive potential in the subject. This potential depends both on the traditionally analyzed factors - gender, subject's age, his financial situation, level and profile of education, and on the key for this type of adaptation - the degree of involvement in the profession, the level of professionalism. The higher the adaptive potential realized in the post-professional stage of life, the easier the adaptation occurs.

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