

## Professional Career in the Changing Reality of Russian Society

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### Abstract

Modern Russian society, according to domestic sociologists, is going through the stage of transition to a new social reality characterized by very dynamic changes in all spheres of life. Reflecting on the changes in the social reality of the Russian society, highlighting significant events, giving them significance and meaning, the individuals form and adjust their life strategies that serve their core life strategy suggesting setting goals, means and methods to achieve it. Professional career is one way to implement such life strategies as a vital strategy of material prosperity and success, a strategy of self-realization. Therefore, such issues as career choice or change, the choice of career implementation strategy, the factors contributing to it, legitimization models which lie in the understanding of subjectively successful career still remain relevant.

**Keywords:** Professional career; Professional career legitimization models; Designing professional career; Professional dynasty; Career space; Imitation; Professionalism

### Introduction

The development of major socio-economic centers in Russia creates favorable conditions for the professional mobility in Russian society, which is due not only to formal but also informal institutional rules. In this context the issue of legitimization of career processes in a professional environment becomes relevant. A sociological study of the peculiarities of a professional career formation in the changing reality of Russian society is of great importance for the understanding of specific social practices related to the justification by the professional actors of ways, channels of its diversification and potential social lifts for both vertical and horizontal movements. The dependence of the professional career on the existing social and human capital, features of career space of Russian society stipulate the model of careers' legitimization that have a significant impact on both the perception of different professions in mass consciousness, on the development of specific professional organization, as well as on the socio-economic development of the country.

Various aspects of professional career in the Russian society in terms of employment and career development have already been considered in a special sociological literature. So the issues of professional careers of different social groups are covered in the works by the following scientists: Balabanova and Effendiev, Solodnikov and Solodnikova [1,2] the work of Bondarev [3] cover the analysis of the career lifts. However, the problem of legitimizing professional career, the role of professional dynasties has not yet been adequately interpreted scientifically.

### Methodology and Research Methods

The methodological basis of sociological study of professional careers is the neoclassical model of scientific research allowing us to obtain a holistic view of the main resources, channels of professional career and models of its legitimization in the changing reality of Russian society. This model is based on a synthesis of cognitive set of classical and non-classical sociology providing for the use of methodological opportunities of various scientific paradigms while solving specific research problems.

The empirical base of scientific study was the findings of the author's sociological research obtained by a qualitative strategy using techniques of deep and expert interviews. Solution of the following tasks is expected in this article:

### Research Findings

The domestic sociology is currently seeking for methodological bases for scientific research of professional career in Russian society. In this regard, the question arises: is it possible to use a methodological potential of foreign concepts of professional career while studying it in Russian realities.

In the modern sociological discourse the question actively being discussed concerns the possibility of using Western theories in the study of Russian social reality, as some scholars, including in the West, now question the universality of social theories developed in the study of Western society due to the recognition of the uniqueness of its socio-cultural experience.

According to modern ideas about the use of Western theories in relation to the Russian reality, these theories not only can, but must be used, because they allow within the framework of neoclassical model of sociological research to interpret scientific facts from different angles [4]. But the use of Western theories that have been developed at a different socio-cultural material, in relation to the Russian socio-cultural specificity implies their preliminary methodological expertise which should be aimed at 'determining the degree of commensurability of different strata of Russian and Western European socio-cultural experiences or finding areas of their cultural coincidence' [5]. In today's Russian society, the existence of such areas of socio-cultural overlap is primarily due to its modernization in a liberal direction, which the actualization of such a social phenomenon as a professional career is connected with.

In our view, a significant potential for sociological conceptualization of features of the professional career formation in a changing social reality of Russian society has the concept of polyvariant career suggested by Hall, Marvis, Briscoe and others. This approach is different from

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the understanding of a career model as a linear consistent progress from lower to higher positions in the organizational hierarchy which contains projected series of specific fixed stages [6]. Heuristic potential of the concept of polyvariant career in the study of professional career in the changing reality of Russian society is what allows singling out the specificity of the formation and development of professional career at different stages of the development of Russian society.

In the scientific discourse on issues of interest to us there is the concept of career anchors suggested by Schein [7], which also has considerable heuristic potential at conceptualization of the features of a professional career formation in a changing social reality of Russian society. For understanding of the features of career management Schein introduces the concept of 'career anchors' which is of a significant interest or the actual value which an employee facing career choice will never refuse from. Career anchor is the employee's available ideas about himself/herself causing a career choice. The heuristic potential of the concept of career anchors is that it will help to identify popular types of professional careers, as well as to justify the emergence of new types of careers and strategies for their implementation depending on the emergence of new career anchors, on actualization of the value orientations and self-presentation in the changing reality of Russian society.

A study of professional career is impossible without singling out of its stages. The scientists identify different timeframes for each stage. So, in the concept of 'career maturity' by Super professional development is understood as a long-term holistic development of the individual [8]. The concept of career maturity allows actualizing the choice of a career path in adolescence or early adulthood as a factor that contributes to a professional career. In our view, the research potential of these concepts will be fully implemented through the biographical interview that will allow understanding of the primary conditionality of socio-professional status and self-identity of the personality achieved. Bibliographic approach is based on the belief that the previous experience, interests, relationships, features of the biography of a man including its parent family, defines professional requirements in the future [9].

The above universal concepts of professional career research must be supplemented by such concepts as 'career space', 'legitimization of career' that will contribute to sociological conceptualization of the formation of professional career in the changing reality of Russian society. We believe that the career space is a kind of social space which results from the relationships and interactions developing between people, and is characterized by intersubjectivity. Development and changes of the career space is due to the type of subjects exercising their practice in it. Decisive for the development of the career space is also the availability of resources or the capital of these entities, as well as their value orientations. Career space can be of two levels: individual (personal) and social. The space becomes a career one only when it is conceived and perceived as such. Career space is constructed both individually and collectively that allows posing the question of legitimizing professional careers. Subjective and attributed meanings suggest the existence of different career realities within the same career space. The actions of the professional actor should be clear to others that increase the chances of achieving the necessary prestige and life capital in daily routine. Generally accepted rules of the game shall be complied with in the career space. The central task of a professional actor in everyday life is the realization of the author's project by integrating it into world which already exists and functions under its own laws. The features of career space determine the trajectory of the professional career.

Change of professional status, change of professional role suggests certain actions on the part of the actor of professional activities which are based on not only the subjective evaluation of social actions by the actor, but also on 'focus on the other' - waiting for the response from the other actors. Evaluative aspect allows introducing of such a component as a legitimization of a professional career into the analysis.

In Russian society, despite the fact that the selection of staff through institutionalized channels is promoted, a tendency to use the informal capital in the implementation of a professional career still remains. The question of legitimizing the employment and career development occurs when using informal channels based on the capital of informal client relations arising from social resource exchange that takes place between the subjects, being confirmed, if necessary, by the achieved professional status in the eyes of a particular social community. Under the legitimization of professional career we mean designing of a comfortable career space which consists of subjective and intersubjective realities by way of justification or explanation of professional career (mobility) making it immune to rejection.

Analysis of expert interviews allowed to conclude that the need to legitimize professional career arises under the following circumstances: employment, building career through the use of favouring channel based on the provision of sexual services, with a radical change of profession without specifying the channels used.

Through expert interviews they managed to supplement the already existing ways of legitimization. If earlier it seemed that only the actor of movement thinks about the legitimization, now, according to the new data, whoever favoring professional career is actively interested in this process.

Thus, the legitimization is now seen from a position of legitimization for the team and for the legitimization for the head, as well as from the perspective of internal and external legitimization. The strategies in this case are different. For the team, the possible option is a demonstration of professionalism. Legitimization in the eyes of the head is expressed through 'a demonstration of loyalty and digestibility', 'ideological affinity'.

They also managed to identify a very interesting aspect, namely the interest of the head himself/herself who favors in legitimizing the status of a subordinate.

The analysis of in-depth interviews revealed that:

- Informal ties are in demand and efficient in the implementation of professional career both in the initial stage and in its active phase. The role of patron-client relationship has not lost relevance. It gets special relevance in seeking to occupy the position of high status, being unsupported by high reputation and professional experience in this area. Despite social effectiveness of informal relations for the realization of a career, the role of education, professionalism, work experience, professional portfolio has recently become relevant as well.
- Belonging to the team and work for a positive high quality result is essential for a professional career.
- The higher the level of professionalism, professional experience, the more known positive professional reputation, the less of impact particularly destructive features of a career space of Russian society have.
- Professional dynasties carry both constructive and

destructive principle. Constructive principle is that qualitatively different professional socialization occurs promoting training of high-level professionals. The destructive role of professional dynasty is that it can act as a social monopoly restricting access to the professional spheres endowed with high status and prestige.

- Depending on the age and understanding of success/failure of his/her career, interpretation of factors of career development changes. According to the youth, 'career growth depends on the level of professionalism, intelligence, the ability to improve skills, the ability to formulate and solve problems of any complexity, the ability to think outside the box, commitment', 'personal qualities, professional and communication skills of a person'. The older generation believes that career is largely determined by 'family affiliation', 'proximity to the body of the head, especially the provision of sexual services', 'family ties', 'ability to knock and ignore' and 'luck', and to a lesser extent 'professionalism', 'knowledge', 'skills', 'education' and 'the color of a diploma'. Unanimity is observed in the detection of such factor as compliance with market conditions.

- Speaking of career development with interviewees we managed to identify such its components as a 'career barrier' and 'career limit'. Along with 'natural' factors (education, personal qualities, work experience), 'artificial' factors may contribute to career limit: 'desire to revenge, enemies in the team (will do anything to prevent going ahead)', 'closing the doors' to those who haven't pleased', 'the desire to keep a person in a particular position because of the 'fear' of competition from potentially more competent rival', 'key positions of possible career development are already 'planned' for others, and this person, in spite of professionalism, is not included in the range of interest', 'the strength and interest of the patron in you', 'the absence or availability of unwanted kinship relations'.

- Career anchors are different depending on the occupied position and positioning by himself/herself as a professional in the professional hierarchy: the lower position and less professional positioning is pronounced, the more urgent material component is, the higher the position the more urgent status privileges are (power, extensive social network of informal contacts), the higher the professional positioning is, the more relevant such anchor is as the professional interest, an interesting professional project.

- In the career space of Russian society two basic models of legitimization of professional career may be singled out: professionalism and imitation, which are due to the values of the subject of professional activity. In this case, the opinions between young people and the older generation are divided. Young people insist that 'legitimization is possible by confirming the level of professionalism and competence', while the older generation adds that 'you can simply simulate the activity'. This situation can be explained only by the availability of a greater experience of the older generation in a professional environment.

- The simulation model is short-lived. For a successful professional career we will finally have to work to a high professional result to be competitive. If the simulation is retained, it is more likely to lead to a refuse to get a better workplace.

## Conclusions

Recent studies describe the career as an individual sequence of events related to the work experience and other forms of activity during the life of a person [10]. The concepts polyvariant career, career anchors, career maturity developed in the western sociological and

psychological thought have methodological solvency as applied to the study of a professional career in the Russian socio-cultural conditions. Professional career in the presented approaches is understood as the self-realization due to the self-concept of the individual. The heuristic potential of this understanding allows conceptualizing and identifying subjective factors and features of the formation and implementation of the professional career of both the individual and the social group by gender.

Sociological conceptualization of the features of formation of a professional career in the changing reality of Russian society is possible through the introduction into a methodological construct of a study by the concept 'career space' and 'legitimization of a career'.

Social practices of designing a professional career are due to those social resources possessed by a professional actor. The identified factors of successful professional careers condition the legitimization model - professional or simulation, and the demand for simulation model is short-lived and eventually either degenerates into a professional, or is the cause of changing the workplace.

Under estimating of the implementation into a socio-management practice of theoretical developments has a negative impact on the system of professional mobility and its social effectiveness. Dysfunction of the channels of professional movements, simulation strategies of legitimization, the expansion of protectionism, substitution of the objectives of social management by personal and clan interests add relevance to further study of the career space of Russian society and features of a professional career in it.

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