Social and psychological features of career strategies mobility of the college students

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Abstract. The modern world sets high standards for competitiveness, productivity, leadership qualities and commitment of young people who have just received secondary professional education. In this regard, the article deals with the problem of building a career and forming effective career strategies. The authors study different approaches to defining “career” and “career strategies”, analyze how students understand what a career means, their attitude to building a career, the appropriate traits for a successful career and the role, which a career plays in people’s lives. To conduct the research and gather the data the authors used Solomin’s method of colour metaphors, Schein’s “Career Anchors” method and a questionnaire survey. On the basis of the survey results the authors proposed a program of development of effective career strategies “My Success” that is aimed at optimizing the process of training qualified specialists for main industrial companies of the region.

Introduction

In the modern constantly changing world a person must be a competitive, productive and successful leader, who is able to achieve goals, resist obstacles, step over barriers, that is primarily associated with the choice of the appropriate career strategy. Experts in the field of economics and psychology accentuate the problems of professional socialization of young people: employment difficulties, the problems of holding the employment position, the growth of youth unemployment. Along with the economic reasons for these phenomena (economic instability, low salaries, lack of work experience for graduates of educational institutions), there is a psychological aspect of the problem associated with the internal uncertainty of the professional way, the inexpressiveness of career orientations or the discrepancy between the abilities and real professional requirements. Today career planning is an important task not only for young people and their parents. There are more parties interested in the appropriate choice: employers, the workers themselves, state employment services, the state itself. Thus, the relevant career and professional orientation is the task which is to be solved not only at the local level by the youth, psychologists and teachers but also at the state level by the authorities. The aim of the research is to highlight the features of career strategies of modern provincial youth, substantiate scientifically and develop a program of designing the effective career strategies. The hypothesis of the research states that career strategies of the modern youth have the following features: students rely on such values as job stability, humanism, material prosperity and personal growth; have high career mobility; female students are more likely to associate a career with creativity than male ones do.

Having analyzed the approaches [1, 2, 3, 4] to understanding career in modern scientific research, we relied on the definition of a career in the broad sense as professional advancement and in the narrow sense as a movement towards the top of our personal achievements. The following personal
factors, which largely determine the peculiarity of a career, were identified: anxiety, emotional stability (or instability). Sociability, openness and willpower, which facilitate promotion, are equally important. And, on the contrary, a career can be affected by suspiciousness or suspicion. Maximum results can be achieved when professionalism is combined with high personal qualities [5].

Donald Super identifies four categories to explain career patterns: 1) **Stable pattern.** Highly skilled and educated individuals make a permanent career choice directly after school or college and follow it till the retirement time. 2) **Conventional pattern.** Individuals try several careers before taking up a stable one which is more satisfying to their needs. 3) **Unstable pattern.** Individuals move from one job to another following the sequence trial-stable-trial. Different careers can be considered before making the final choice. 4) **Multiple-trial pattern.** Individuals change employment rather frequently and usually take entry-level positions without establishing in a career [6].

We define career strategies as a specific system of actions designed for adaptation or development of the career and the person in it and aimed at transforming a person himself, other people, changing the conditions and the content of the professional activity in order to achieve career goals [7, 8].

There are two conditions particularly relevant for young students in the process of formation of life strategies [9]: 1) age identification, 2) students as a social group do not stand ready for the certain practical actions and social subjectivity, that is necessary for the life strategies formation, since youth positions adequate to their social and age opportunities in the social space are either functionally limited or absent.

As a result of the analysis, we can conclude that all typological models of life strategies of young people are divided into three groups [10, 11, 12]:

- by the content and form of expressing subjectivity of the individual, characterized by the fact that the life strategy is formed by the individual and the social and economic conditions affect the content of strategies, but are not dominant;
- by the nature of the influence of institutional living conditions when the external socio-structural and economic conditions (type of settlement, social and ethnic origin, region of residence) have a dominant influence on constructing life strategies;
- by the degree of normativity of social stereotypes and behavior in which the content of young people’s life strategies can relate to the normative values and attitudes prevalent in the society.

The students of the 1st and 3rd (final) year of the Secondary Professional Education Department (Volzhsky branch of Volgograd State University) were chosen as the participants of the experiment. At the ascertaining stage of the research we studied the specific features of career consideration among female and male students.

On the basis of the theoretical analysis we can determine the methods used for conducting the research: questionnaire survey, I S Solomin’s method of colour metaphors, Schein’s Career Anchors method. The students were offered to answer how they understand the concept of career; to express their attitude to the career; to define personality traits to build a successful career; to describe the role of a career in their lives; to distinguish the peculiarities of career mobility. The questionnaire was processed through the content analysis [13].

In contrast to traditional psychological tests and questionnaires Solomin’s method of color metaphors [14] makes it possible to find out what a person really thinks and feels. It is focused on identifying the content and structure of consciousness and unconsciousness. Subjects are asked to associate the things from the proposed list with specific color (a set of M Luscher color cards). The “Anchor of a Career” questionnaire by E Shein contains 41 statements that measure 5 patterns, or anchors explaining the career decisions. The respondent rates on a 10-point scale how the given statements apply to them. The items are grouped into 8-point scales, representing 8 non-mutually exclusive career value orientations (“career anchors”): general managerial competence, technical / functional competence, autonomy / independence, security / stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service / dedication to a cause, pure challenge, lifestyle [15].

**Results and Discussion**
The diagnostics, run on the basis of E Shein’s method “Career anchors” [16], revealed the following results. The most significant value (anchor) of a career is the employment stability. Students tend to long-term employment without any job changes, leading to stress and fear of losing it, what reflects the current economic state and social instability of the society.

The next important value is serving: “working with people”, “serving humanity”, “helping people”, “wanting to make the world better”, etc. The students see their future careers in accordance with humanism, the mission of benefiting the society, helping people. They do not plan to neglect their values in relation to other members of the society, and if the place of work (organization) is opposed to these values, they will choose being fired, rather than a compromise.

The third most important value for students is the integration of lifestyles: focusing on a combination of different aspects of life (family, career and self-development), students strive for a balance between these areas. In this case career is considered a means of self-expression in life. Life is much more important than a career in particular, and a career is inseparable from life in general, but not identical to it.

As it is indicated by the students in the questionnaires, the least preferred anchors are: stability of residence, that reflects the mobility of modern young people, and professional competence, that can be associated with inexperience in finding a job, career advancement and orientation towards other opportunities while moving up the career ladder (commitment, workability, arrogance, sociability, “the right contacts”).

The survey on the basis of I S Solomin’s method of colour metaphors shows that students of the final year are more optimistic about their future career than first-year students. This is due to their overall greater personality and age maturity, the experience of communicating with professionals at master classes, teachers-practitioners, and a special system of educational work aimed at students as future competitive specialists, better adaptation to their professional life.

Among female and male students, there was no difference in the subjective attitude towards their future career. However, they significantly differ in subjective reflection on the connection between career and creativity, career and interesting occupation. While associating with a career connected with creativity or creative attitude to work, terms of “career” and “creativity” have the same emotional coloring among female students, and it is more than among male ones. There is also some difference in their attitude towards the connection of career and success. More female students than male ones associate success with building a career.

Having conducted a study questionnaire about the attitude to building a career among the students it is possible to present the given results:

1. Understanding the concept of career. The students perceive a career through the values of material prosperity (35%); values of power and influence (21%), personal growth as a goal, reaching a new level (14%).

2. Attitude to career. Modern students consider their future careers in the context of values: personal growth, the desire to go forward in life, get over themselves – 28%, to achieve material prosperity, to improve their financial level, financial well-being – 17%; to gain authority, to manage and lead people – 12%.

3. Personality traits to build a successful career. The students distinguish the traits which are essential for a successful professional career: dedication – 15 people, responsibility – 11 people, communication skills, leadership, tact, ability to work in a team – 12 people, traits related to the work quality (diligence, professionalism) – 10 people, traits associated with education (intelligence, education, advanced training) – 4 people, a separate group of negative traits (arrogance, cynicism) – 7 people. The students also mentioned some other traits such as activity, perseverance, willpower, flexibility and so on.

4. The role of a career in a person's life. In the survey 65% of the students are willing to take risks for their careers, and 35% are not ready to take risks, 26% are ready to choose a career at the expense of personal happiness, and 74% choose personal happiness. Among their priorities, students average career an average of 6-7 out of 10.
5. Peculiarities of career mobility: in case of job loss – 16% of the students will look for a job within their specialty; take any job – 40%; learn a new profession – 30%; set up their own business – 28%; look for a temporary, but well-paid job – 5%; look for a stable job – 16%; hope to have a chance and take no action – 0.

As a part of our research, we proposed a program to develop an effective career strategy “My Success” which contains three forms of work: 1) group counselling, which includes informing on the problems of understanding the essence of a career and career strategies, types of career strategies, qualities and abilities necessary for a successful career and career mobility; 2) participation in the development work of the program “My Success”, which includes the awareness of their own career strategies, a career place in the hierarchy of their own values, typical models of behavior in situations of professional activities, especially goal-setting; 3) individual counseling for students on developing their own career strategies.

The aim of the program is to increase the level of students’ psychological competence for effective career strategies formation. To achieve the aim it is necessary to take the following objectives: • to promote formation of effective career strategies; • to inform about the psychological foundations and patterns of career building; • to present the methods of self-regulation in difficult situations; • to expand the repertoire of professional behavior in the professional career development; • to promote the students’ awareness of the career place in the hierarchy of their values.

The program includes the system of interconnected psychological exercises in the form of group counselling, also based on the diagnostics results, trainings on the reflection development, time management, and self-regulation. It is also connected with developing the system of homework tasks (both individual and for all participants). The program involves the use of the following techniques and methods: inputs (short information messages aimed at introducing the problem with which students will work later); card games of L. I. Pryazhnikov, art therapy techniques and methods (metaphorical associative cards). The purpose of the mentioned above methods is to promote the students’ awareness of their values, motives, the hierarchy, which allows them to make an important life decision, take responsibility for it and simulate the consequences of decision and choice making.

The conducted survey and the launch of the given program at the Department of Secondary Professional Education can contribute to optimizing the educational process in general and improving the preparation of specialists for industrial companies, thereby satisfying the social demand of major manufacturing companies of Volgograd region such as JSC “Volzhsky Pipe Plant”, JSC “SunInBev”, JSC “Volgomyasmollorg”, JSC “Gazprom khimvolokno” and etc.

Conclusion
Summarizing the results of the empirical research, we have made an attempt to give a descriptive characteristic of the main features of career strategies of modern young people: understanding the concept of career modern students rely on such values as employment stability, humanism, integration of lifestyles (some harmonious balance); building their own future career they rely on the value of material prosperity and personal growth; among the important traits which are necessary for a successful career students choose commitment, responsibility, interpersonal skills; career mobility is expressed in the ability to take any job in case of its loss. Thus, we can state that the aim of the Department of Secondary Professional Education is to prepare future specialists of industrial companies both in the local region and in the whole country in such a way that the students are focused on stable employment, developing their personality and being harmoniously included in the environment. They understand the importance of universal human traits for being a qualified specialist and are ready for being mobile when the external life and professional circumstances change, that emphasizes the relevance of the modern competence-based approach in education to the conditions of social and economic development of the Russian society.

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