

The ratio of social and human capital in the professional competition of the working youth in a cross-border region: results of a sociological research in the Tyumen region

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the resources of professional competition of the working youth in the Tyumen Region, one of the important transboundary regions of Russia. An attempt is made to examine the currently debatable problem of the predominance of human or social capital as its resources. The purpose of this article is to identify the ratio of human and social capital in the resources used in the professional competition of working youth employed in various enterprises (organizations) of the Tyumen Region. Two main types of such resources are identified as a result of our research, one of which represents human capital, the other one is related to the social capital. The questionnaire was used as a data collection method. Methods of mathematical statistics were also applied by us, namely the correlation and factor analysis. It has been established that the surveyed working youth more actively use human capital in their competition. The article shows certain specifics of using these types of capital by the representatives of enterprises from various sectors of the national economy and organizational-legal forms as resources in professional competition.

Keywords: working youth, professional competition, capital, resource, enterprise

1. Introduction

In modern Russia, professional competition relies on the use of two types of resources. On the one hand, competition relies on the use of professional knowledge, competencies, high business skills, etc. On the other hand, competition uses high trust from employees and managers, wide contacts and respect in the professional community, the presence of “useful” connections, help from relatives and influential friends, use of active “self-promotion”, including even certain mechanisms of a corruption nature. The first kind of resources is united by the concept of human capital, the second one is considered with the scope social capital. Often, the social actor uses both of these resources in its competitive strategy at the same time. At this stage of the study, it was important for us to establish the presence of the specifics of using one or another type of capital in the competitive strategies of young people working in various organizations. The next stage of the study, which goes beyond the scope of this article, will be an analysis of the effectiveness of competitive strategies based on social or human capital depending on the organizational and legal form of the enterprise and its affiliation to a particular sector of the national economy.

2. Materials and Research Methods

The Tyumen Region in which this study was conducted is one of the cross-border regions of Russia. The length of the state border with the Republic of Kazakhstan is 186.7 km. Traditionally, it has production, trade, and cultural ties with the neighboring republic. In the spring of 2017, the staff of the educational and scientific sociological laboratory of the Tyumen State University (TSU) conducted a questionnaire survey, which is the basis of this study. The target quota stratified the sampling used. Representativeness was determined on the basis of the following characteristics: gender, age, ownership of the enterprise, average monthly salary. Young employees of 20 organizations (at the place of work of the respondents), which belong to the main sectors of the economy of the Tyumen region and are located in large, medium, and small cities (Tyumen, Tobolsk, and Ishim) and in rural areas were interviewed. N = 956 people. The structure of the sample by gender: 57% of men and 43% of women, the average age is 26.8 years. Their years of service: total length of service – 6.1 years, in the currently occupied profession – 4.5 years, in a particular organization – 3.4 years. Education: incomplete secondary – 1.5%, secondary general – 4.5%, primary vocational – 2.5%, vocational secondary – 16.5%, incomplete higher – 8.3%, higher (specialist, bachelor, master) – 63.6%, postgraduate (second higher, postgraduate) – 3.1%. The average age of respondents is 26.8 years. Data processing performed in SPSS IBM Statistics 20.23.3.

3. Results

The analysis of social capital is very widely represented in modern world sociology. Thus, the “palm of primacy” in the sociological understanding of this phenomenon belongs to P. Bourdieu. According to his approach, social capital acts as “a set of existing or potential resources, implying the existence of a system of institutionalized mutual recognition or recognition relations to a certain extent” [1, p. 245]. From the standpoint of this study, it is important that the resource character of this phenomenon is initially emphasized, which allows us to rely on this approach in our work. G. Becker, J. Coleman, R. Putnam, F. Fukuyama, and many other well-known foreign authors made a significant contribution to his analysis. In Russian sociology, S. Yu. Barsukova, V. V. Radaev, Yu. V. Latov, A. N. Tatarko and others contributed to the development of theoretical approaches used for understanding the various aspects of social capital (as well as its functioning) in the last decade.

There are many definitions of social capital. So, L. V. Strelnikova gives a detailed overview and typology of a dozen and a half of his modern definitions [2, p. 37]. We also considered theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of social capital, methods, and results of its analysis [3]. Without attributing to the number of our tasks the analysis of the entire existing set of definitions of human capital, the study of which in Sociology also has a great tradition, we generally consider it as a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivations of social actors.

A number of authors share the opinion that it is social capital that ensures the high competitiveness of social actors, for example [4], etc. Some researchers, mainly economists, consider human capital as the most important for ensuring the high competitiveness of social actors ([5], [6], and others).

The professional resources resulting in higher competitiveness are the means and mechanisms that social actors use both to realize their competitiveness (within the enterprise, on the labor market), and to increase it. In accordance with the approach that we implement, competitiveness resources are different types of human and social capital and their development activities. We can also talk about financial capital, if it is used for the development of human or social capital (which allows it to be conventionally attributed to such resources). Some of them are socially approved, others may be contrary to social norms in some cases (for example, the promotion of influential acquaintances, friends; cunning, wit, or active self-promotion, “PR”).

The factor analysis of the respondents' answers about the resources used by them in professional competition was carried out using the “Varimaks” rotation method. As a result, three latent strategies of professional competition are highlighted in the context of the resources used.

F-1 characterizes the use in competition of various elements of human capital: an ability to convince that a case is correct – 544; intellectual competitive advantage – 580; professional excellence

– 633; continuous professional development – 650; personal high moral qualities – 721; hard work – 698; talents, abilities – 664. The descriptive power of the factor is 24.68%.

F-2 describes the “mixed” competitive strategies based on the use of resources of both human and social capital: development of necessary qualities and skills – 532; cunning, wit – 666; assistance of influential acquaintances, friends – 592; active self-promotion, “PR” – 679 (16,14%).

F-3 expresses such an element of social capital of an employee as the support of an employee by his leadership – 417 (10,82%).

The factors characterizing the three competitive strategies among young people, which work in enterprises and organizations of different organizational and legal forms of ownership (Table 1), as well as in various sectors of the national economy, are highlighted in a similar way (Table 2).

Table 1. Comparative analysis of factors characterizing the types of competitive resources of the youth working in firms (organizations) of various organizational and legal forms (in %).

The legal form of a company (organization) where the respondent works	Types of capital used in competition (total descriptive power of factors)		
	Human	Social	Mixed forms
State enterprise	46.91	14.42	-
Municipal enterprise	-	10.74	59.74
PI + family (own firm)	24.30	11.94	34.01
Private company	25.36	9.79	16.46

Table 2. Comparative analysis of factors characterizing different types of competitive resources of the working youth (by sectors of the national economy) (%).

Branches of the national economy where the respondent works	Types of capital used in competition (total descriptive power of factors)		
	Human	Social	Mixed forms
Industry	35.50	-	16.14
Trade	33.60	14.72	15.05
Agriculture	44.75	28.49	-
Construction	38.49	11.24	14.19
Transport and communication	50.32	-	17.50
Financial activities	9.29	40.55	-

4. Discussion

Young people employed in various spheres of the national economy use different resource strategies for increasing their competitiveness, complying with the specifics of activity in each of them (see Table 1). In particular, their human capital resources in such sectors as transport, communications, and agriculture are most actively used to ensure their competitiveness. It is in these very distant spheres of the national economy that their own talent, qualifications, and development of their professional competencies are required from a young competitive employee more than can be helped by wide connections and acquaintances among the “right people.” Financial activity is a leader among the areas of the national economy that we have studied in the use of competitive strategies by the youth based on the use of social capital. It should be noted that the respondents working in industry, transport, and communications do not use strategies based on social capital “in their pure form.” Elements of the latter are present in combination with human capital resources. It seems appropriate to hold an in-depth research in these and other areas of the national economy, which were not sufficiently covered by our survey.

As shown in the Table 2, the activity of young professionals in private firms, as well as in their own (family firm), is very close in terms of competitive strategy structures. Although in the latter, in comparison with private enterprises, mixed strategies prevail somewhat. Most of all, human capital is the basis of young professionals’ competitive strategies in the state-owned enterprises. Municipal enterprises are distinguished by mixed competitive strategies.

The predominance of competitive strategies based mainly on deviant forms of social capital can be a sign of negative processes occurring both in society as a whole and in various social structures. Therefore, by the dominance of one or another of the described types of capital used in professional competition, one can indirectly judge the state of the industry or organization where the actor works.

Taking into account the results obtained, it is important to analyze the impact of the transboundary status of this region on the specifics of the competitiveness of working young people living in it. So, it is advisable to conduct comparative studies of competitive strategies of the working youth in the neighboring “internal” regions of the country. At the same time, a comparison of such strategies among the students of universities and professional educational institutions who came to study from Kazakhstan is relevant with the students from Russia.

5. Conclusion

Analysis of the factors that determine the specificity of resource strategies used by young people employed in various enterprises and organizations is beyond the scope of our study. At this stage of the study, it was important for us to identify the fact of the presence of such diversity. Working young people of such a large cross-border region like the Tyumen Region use resources based on human capital in professional competition a little more actively. At the same time, social capital is also used by young people in professional competition, both in combination with human capital and independently. Hence, the need for special attention in the process of vocational training of young people towards the development of the social capital of young people, as well as the prevention of the use of its deviant forms follows. In our opinion, the stated results lay the foundation for the further analysis of this problem with the use of research materials in other cross-border regions of the country, not only in enterprises (organizations), but also in vocational education institutions, including with the involvement of state and departmental statistics.

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