

Mental Programs and Modal Models of Social Behavior of the Russian Youth in Education

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Abstract: A conservative-based modal model of social behavior of the youth prevailed in the Russian society in the 90's of the last century. It was associated with the fact that terminal values still dominated in mental programs of the Russian youth where the education was traditionally considered as a public good form of personal development and a way to obtain a profession "for life". At the turn of the century the Russian society moved from the conservative-based modal model of social behavior of the youth in education to the liberal-based one in the mental program of which instrumental values dominate in terms of which the education is considered as a social capital and means of social mobility. At the same time the model is characterized by contradictions between traditional and contemporary, terminal and instrumental, spontaneous and conscious, desired and feasible.

Key words: Education, youth, mental program, social behavior, modal model of social behavior, conservative-based model of social behavior, liberal-based model of social behavior

INTRODUCTION

Several types can be distinguished in the structure of the modern Russian youth which is often called "market" generation. The first type is entrepreneurial (20%) aspiring for business and looking to achieve material wealth and welfare; the second type is maximalists (19%) hoping to become successful in a certain life sphere; the third type is hard workers (17%) aimed at search for prestigious and interesting job; the fourth type is family-oriented (13%) wishing to make a sound family and bring up good children; the fifth type is hedonists (10%) looking to have plenty of spare time and enjoy it; the sixth type is careerists (6%) striving to achieve significant results in life; the seventh type is desperate (5%) not finding the strength to achieve certain success and the eighth type is conceited (1%) dreaming to become famous and have access to power.

These are ideal types of the Russian youth. In effect the life plans of the young Russians sweepingly include starting one's own business (79%), career growth (72%), becoming famous (50%), getting access to power (44%), becoming wealthy (20%) and having spare time (20%) all at the same time. However, according to opinion polls young Russians predominantly declare their wish to obtain education

(95%). It is explained by the fact that education for the Russian youth now is an instrumental value which achievement opens the opportunities for the further success in life. In pursuit to obtain education young people demonstrate various models of social behavior, study of which enables to develop a deeper understanding of their life intentions on the one hand and the current social situation associated with education availability in the modern Russian society on the other hand. The urgency of sociological study of social behavior of the youth in education is also preconditioned by the fact that excessive social inequalities appear in the modern Russian society namely in the educational sphere (Gorshkov, 2016).

Literature review: While studying social behavior of the Russian youth in education it is of great importance to understand its modern system of values. The results of sociological research show that the value-based system of the Russian youth experienced a change associated with strengthening of rational, utilitarian motivations and therefore, young people today do not correlate life strategies of social behavior with the public objectives and ideals any more not associating their plans and dreams with them. Moreover, value orientation of the Russian youth is characterized by enhanced consumerism

and reduced occupational prestige as a matter of honor and pride as compared to the values of personal success, prestige and welfare (Konstantinovskiy, 2013).

A particular interest of scholars lately has been aroused by social behavior of the youth in the light of labor market and education. In this respect there appeared a variety of sociological papers purposefully considering professional and educational ambitions of the Russian youth (Chekmarev, 2009) in comparative terms as well (Konstantinovskiy, 2014). The results of sociological research also show that youth behavior in educational sphere in the Russian society is directly connected with the labor market where availability of diplomas rather than qualification is in greatest demand today. Therefore, when selecting educational path one part of the youth looks to obtain high qualification, whereas another part (the most numerous) looks to obtain diplomas (Konstantinovskiy *et al.*, 2014; Voznesenskaya and Cherednichenko, 2013; Cherednichenko, 2013). Such selection of educational paths is determined not only by demand on the labor market but also by the fact that Russian education according to researchers does not fully meet the requirements of neither market economy nor youth including its aspiration to obtain innovative professions thus securing the capacity for successful professional career (Cherednichenko, 2016).

When studying social behavior of the youth in education the researchers pay attention to the existing social inequalities in it which are conditioned first of all by social-financial and territorial factors (Konstantinovskiy, 2014). What is meant here is an unequal access to a quality education for primarily young people from the families with a low social, financial and cultural capital. The presence of social inequalities in education causes various types of social behavior. In these circumstance according to researchers the higher the position of young people in social hierarchy the more attributes of self-determination in their social behavior and the lower the position the more attributes of adaptive social behavior (Sorokina, 2003).

In scientific literature particular attention is also paid to objective and subjective factors, determining social behavior of the Russian youth in education. Having said that, the objective factors are usually as follows: socio-economic and demographic changes in the country; transformation of the value system in society including those associated with prestige of education and different professions; development of hierarchy of the up-market and generally available educational institutions; introduction of paid education; financial condition, social and professional status of parents. To

subjective factors refer first and foremost social attitudes, norms and value orientation fixed in public, group and individual conscience. Upon that the researchers note, “if a macro-subjective level implies the formation of public values with respect to education and knowledge and notions about their place in social relations and life of individual people, then individual and group conscience implies the immediate link of adopted examples with generation of scenario of successful life. The reflection of macro-processes fills with specific content and motivates the activity of young people determining their attitudes in education” (Konstantinovskiy, 2010).

In this respect the conclusion of researchers that in the process of formation of social behavior in education, “young people make successive one after another steps from abstraction to reality from predominance of preferences to synthesis of factors both “internal” (determining the characteristics of a person in the first place) and “external” (with respect to the individual, i.e., the ones that are more associated with the an environment and social medium on the whole) comprehended by young people pertaining to their own specific nature” seems important (Anonymous, 2003).

In such a manner in modern scientific literature there have already been considered various scenarios associated with determination of factors and peculiar features of social behavior of the Russian youth in education. However, the modal models of such behavior have not yet become the subject for special sociological studies neither on the level of empirical research practices nor on the level of theoretical reflection.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two alternative approaches can be distinguished in academic studies of social behavior to explain it: personal and situational (Zubok, 2010). The followers of the first approach note that social behavior is primarily determined by personality traits. The followers of the second approach consider that social behavior is firstly, preconditioned directly by the social situation surrounding the person. Secondly, social behavior is affected by personal interpretation of the social situation which is neither its mirror reflection nor the product of spontaneous “reality generation” but a result of interrelation of a person and situation namely.

In scientific literature there is a notion that social behavior is realized on the basis of both internal and external regulations. In this respect two approaches dominate in the research of social behavior regulations

dispositional and cultural. Within the dispositional approach the focus is on study of internal regulations of social behavior-attitudes and system of values of a person (Heckhausen and Heckhausen, 2010).

Within the cultural approach special attention is paid to the study of external regulations of social behavior: cultural traditions and standards of social behavior which were functional in the past and help to choose instrumental forms of behavior in the present. Cultural traditions and social standards internalized by the individual constitute his/her subjective culture influencing the methods and results of interpretation of the social situation and choice of the model of social behavior (Ross and Nisbett, 1991).

Currently, there is a trend in research of social behavior associated with overcoming of a cognitive one-sidedness of personal and situational, dispositional and cultural approaches. In line with this trend the social behavior of a human is considered not as a result of pressure of the social situation or individual traits of character; social values, attitudes or cultural disposition. Social behavior of a human is regarded first of all as a consequence of his/her interpretation of the social situation and attribution of meanings and senses to it in a certain socio-cultural context. Interpretation of the social situation and respective social behavior as a human response to the social situation and external social changes in form of series of social actions directed at maintenance of social existence or adaptation to the social environment is fulfilled on the basis of a mental program having formed in the process of social communication (Yadov, 2013; Armitage and Christian, 2003; Chaielin, 2011; Trafimow *et al.*, 2004).

In contemporary science the models of social behavior are sometimes considered as short behavioral scenarios or patterns of social actions (Triandis, 1994). In this respect the model of social behavior is a cognitive counterpart of the social behavior practices as a human response to the social situation in form of certain social actions conditioned by the structures of a mental program. At that, non-reflexive structures of the mental program determine the normative model of social behavior which is dependent on the common cultural values and standards whereas reflexive structures determine the modal models of social behavior which are statistically the most widely spread in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Russia under conditions of transition to market relations a new social structure of society has formed and public conscience of the Russians experienced

significant changes. Mental programs of social behavior underwent transformation in different life spheres of the Russian society (Lubsky *et al.*, 2016). A new educational environment has formed in Russian society generating various educational strategies of the youth preconditioned not only by their socio-economical capabilities but by mental programs of social behavior as well that were formed as a result of socialization under new conditions.

The notions, values and attitudes of liberal nature turned to be predominant in these programs under the impact of social factors and social illusions. A liberal-based model of social behavior of a new generation of the Russian youth in education has formed. This model differed significantly from the model of social behavior of the youth in education dominating in Soviet society. Nominally, the model can be named conservative-based since in the 90's of the last century it was still appropriate of the young Russians mentally still living "in the inertia" of the Soviet times and notions, values and attributes peculiar thereto. The model was characterized by the focus on education as a terminal, socio-cultural value which was accompanied by the aspiration for education as a social value and a way "to be useful for society".

In the modern Russian society the education is sooner an instrumental value a capital to invest in the social status a way to achieve material values and prestigious success (Pavlenko, 2010). Therefore, today the educational strategies of the Russian youth are formed in the first instance based on their notions that sound education is a guarantee of successful life career and high income (Lubovskiy, 2016). Such a cognitive "drift" in the mental programs of social behavior of young Russians took place under the influence of both objective factors and as a result of informational impact on the conscience of young people and on account of comprehension of their own social experience as well.

The objective factors shall include first of all the situation on the market of educational services and labor market-enhanced competition, high unemployment rate among young specialists and critical level of social differentiation in society, unsteady state of the system of higher education which is under permanent reformation, educational inequality and inconsistent state educational policy implementing a strategy of education commercialization. Among the objective factors influencing the specific nature of social behavior of the youth in education the following should be distinguished: peculiarities of the modern market economy with its demand forces, competitive struggle and

unpredictability; growth of “temporary employment”, changes in the structure of professions, set of competencies and qualifications; quantitative and qualitative imbalance in view of inertia of educational systems between the professional structure of the graduates of educational institutions and the structure of real requirements of economy in qualified personnel. Lately, strengthening of inconsistency of the obtained diplomas and professional qualifications has been observed. It is not coincidence that results of employers polling more often note the incomplete or lack of the required professional qualification among young specialists (it was specified by 64% of the interviewed employers). Social behavior of the youth in education is greatly influenced by the mass media (primarily internet) that directly form the notions about prestige of certain professions and educational institutions.

However, according to the studies, despite the importance of macro-social factors, the immediate influence on the formation of mental programs of social behavior of the youth in education have the factors of microenvironment-surrounding community (family, relatives, friends, their welfare level, social status, values and attributes). It mostly affects the choice of young people of certain professions and educational institutions, respectively where these professions can be obtained. Thus, according to the data of opinion polls of the student youth, the answer to the question “Who recommended to choose a profession, specialty” was “parents” in 37% of the students of universities. The authority of parents affecting the choice of educational path was also specified by 35% of lyceum students and 37% of college students (Konstantinovskiy *et al.*, 2015). The factors of microenvironment having impact on the social behavior of the youth are also social status of parents, friends and prestige of their professional activities. It is determined by the fact that the “immediate circle” of the youth and weighty opinion of the subjects within it (especially in local societies) has an imperative meaning and as such forms basic notions, values and attitudes in mental programs of young people.

To subjective factors determining the content of mental programs of social behavior of the Russian youth in education can be referred goal and value orientation of a person, abilities and cultural level, intellectual qualities and psychological constitution of a person. Only several decades back the content of mental programs of social behavior of the youth in education one way or another was associated with the strategy of the selected life and professional path aimed to achieve a certain social status. In the modern Russian society the social behavior of the youth is associated with a continuous

change of social statuses, professions, qualifications and employment forms, since, the knowledge and skills obtained in the process of education get out of date during 5 years on average and the education and qualification obtained cannot guarantee professionalism and reliable employment. As a consequence a modern young person in a situation of social uncertainty aggravated by imbalance of the level of his/her social ambitions and availability of relevant social resources is under conditions of permanent social risk which becomes a “constant” of his mental program of social behavior. As a result the youth forms a model of social behavior associated with the situational and non-motivated approach to the choice of educational strategies and paths of professional self-determination.

Speaking about life values of the modern youth determining their social behavior in education and professional self-determination, it should be noted that financial welfare means much more for them than for instance respect of those around. From the late 90’s the urgency for aspiration to become famous grew significantly in the eyes of modern youth. Such ambitions of the youth are developed much stronger than that of the older generation (Gorshkov *et al.*, 2014). In addition to that, the results of sociological surveys show that modern youth is also characterized by the notions that education is a social symbolic capital, investment in the future, means of social mobility and path to successful career. The values of education are also associated with the opportunity to become an educated person, realize oneself in profession and fulfill one’s full potential as a person.

Social attitudes are closely connected with the notions and values of young people in education. Illustrative in this respect are the data reflecting the dynamics of the youth attitudes in education: to the question associated with the possibility to obtain sound education 48% of young people responded that “they can achieve it” in 1997 in 2012 the percent grew to 56%. The same regards the possibility to find a good job: “I will achieve it” -59% in 1997 against 69% in 2012. To the question associated with the possibility to start own business, 28% responded that “they can do it” and 39% responded they did not have such life plans in 1997, whereas in 2012 the figures were 43 and 39%, respectively. In 1997 young people did not have plans to “make a career” whereas in 2012 60% of young people responded positively. On the whole, the modern Russian youth in contrast to the majority of representatives of the older generation has attitudes towards life achievements. At that, they do not just manifest that would like to get certain values but are positive that “can achieve it”.

Among the key advantages of reforms for the youth is also approaching of the Russian way of life with that of the Western youth (24%).

Young Russians predominantly declare their wish to obtain education. Thus, only 5% of the youth in the age under 35 does not have such plans. According to the data of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences the orientation of young Russians towards the values of individualism, achievements, independence and competitiveness including in the educational sphere as well has strengthened during the last decades (whereas the Russians of older ages by and large are certain that it is better to fit in than to stand out). Young people aged under 25 predominantly choose orientation for initiative and search for something new whereas the older generation chooses orientation for habitual. Also the youth predominantly prefers the position, "it is hard to live in continuously changing society but still interesting". It affects social behavior of the Russian youth in education as well which is mobility-oriented. At that around 20% of young people would like to go abroad temporarily for study.

Considering the role of terminal values of the modern youth in education and professional self-determination it is worthwhile to say that they are largely determined by the fact that in the structure of life goals of young people the priority is given to the aspiration "to find a well-paid job" (97.7%), desire "to become a rich person" (72.8%), "have one's own business" (65.6%) and "make a career" (93.7%).

Therefore, the focus and content of the notions, values and attitudes in mental programs of the modal social behavior of youth in education testify that its liberal-based model is characterized by the early life pragmatism, individualism and mobility.

CONCLUSION

A conservative-based modal model of social behavior of the youth in education still prevailed in the Russian society in the 90's of the last century. It was associated with the fact that in mental programs of the Russian youth having formed in inertial context of social preferences typical of the preceding epoch, terminal values dominated where the education was traditionally considered as a public value form of personal development and a way to obtain a profession "for life".

At the turn of the century the Russian society moved from the conservative-based modal model of social behavior of the youth in education to the liberal-based one in the mental program of which instrumental values of financial welfare, success, prestige, career, high status and income dominate. Therefore, in the mental program of the modern Russian youth there are notions about education as a social symbolic capital, invested in the

future and a medium of social mobility "taking" a person to the high level of status and career. Moreover, the aspiration to obtain higher education as an opportunity to get material and symbolic values, career progression and self-fulfillment in prestigious profession should be distinguished among the attitudes determining the modal model of social behavior. At that young people demonstrating such model of social behavior in education associate the prospects for their further social advancement with the education in western countries.

Transition to the conservative-based modal model of social behavior of the youth in education was preconditioned by the transformation of reflexive structures in their mental program which was largely influenced by the significant changes that took place in the socio-economic and spiritual life of the Russian society and in public conscience of the Russians first of all. The education commercialization took place in society under the market conditions that turned it into the sphere of services and excessive social inequalities.

In light of the fluctuating social reality and social uncertainty, under conditions of breaking institutional bonds between the public demand for training qualified personnel and the existing system of training, the obtainment of a quality education becomes a social risk.

Under conditions of a continuous change of the labor market situation and obsolescence of the knowledge and skills obtained during study, the education and qualification can no longer be a reliable guarantee of social success and career progression. Therefore, the modern youth has distinct attitudes in the mental programs to change profession and social status any time. The uncertainty of professional present and all the more future, largely marginal social status of the modern youth are becoming the ground where the specific modal model of social behavior is formed not quite oriented at professional development and growth as a goal in itself.

Besides, the Russian youth has such a modal model of social behavior in education today which is conditioned by a short-term and non-motivated approach to selection of the future profession. The model is characterized by contradictions between the desired and feasible, traditional and contemporary, terminal and instrumental, spontaneous and conscious.

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