Specificity of professional careers of Rostov-on-Don residents

Oksana Posukhova *

South Federal University, 344006, Rostov-on-Don, Russia

Abstract. The article analyzes the results of an empirical study, which was aimed at studying the specifics of the professional career for the Rostov-on-Don citizens. The article analyzes the semantic content of the career, the factors of its development, career barriers and the “career peak”. The study showed that the traditional understanding of career is expanding: a professional career is not only a status-job promotion, but also an understanding of career as a professional development in the horizontal dimension is being updated. The change in career interpretation is driven by expectations and current prospects. Effective channels play a significant role in a successful career, among which patronage still plays a decisive role. The in-depth interviews also revealed the features of ways to legitimize a career in the political, economic spheres, as well as in science and education.

1 Introduction

A professional career is a fairly popular subject of scientific study, while scientists focus on issues such as motives and features of professional choice [Solodnikov & Solodnikova, 2015], career crisis [Angel, 2016], types [Sotnikova & Sotnikov, 2015] and models [Lyons et al., 2015] of professional careers. We can distinguish works that address the specifics of career planning in specific social groups: teachers [Ksenofontova & Ledeneva, 2018], civil servants [Khaimurzina et al., 2017], postdocs [Weijden et al., 2016], etc. Special attention is paid to studying the phenomenon of the “glass ceiling” [Guvenen et al., 2014], which, although it is becoming “thinner,” however, there is still a tendency for a small number of women to occupy leading positions in organizations [Cook, A., & Glass, 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016]. The “glass ceiling” actualizes the issue of gender equality in professional spheres, and forces one to study foreign experience of minimizing this effect [Bertrand et al., 2014]. A separate block presents studies of career optimism and expectations, which analyze the factors that determine them [Ohme, & Zacher, 2015; Fiori et al., 2015], generational specificity [Brown et al., 2015; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010].

In sociology, a traditionally professional career is considered as a status-job advancement (increasing ladder), due primarily to external structural changes in society and the internal motivation of individuals. However, at present, there is a transition of Russian

---

* Corresponding author: belloks@yandex.ru

society to a new social reality, characterized by a high dynamism of changes in all spheres of life [Chuprov et al, 2014]. Also, scientists have recorded such a phenomenon in the labor sphere as precarization, which leaves its mark on career prospects as a position indicator in the stratification structure of society [Standing, 2011]. In this regard, questions arise: what new definitions and meanings are filling the modern space of a professional career and what contributes to this change?

Comprehending the changes taking place in the social reality of Russian society, individuals form and adjust their professional strategies. The traditional understanding of a career as an “ascending ladder” has not lost its relevance and is present in the minds of the Russians; however, there is a tendency to understand a career in the horizontal dimension as self-development, personal growth, and professionalism [Press release, 2014]. Such interpretations involve the consideration of a professional career as a professional development process, which is constantly comprehended, evaluated and controlled both by the individual himself and his environment. This understanding of the career involves the identification of objective and subjective factors, career barriers and limits, expectations and prospects that affect the individual-semantic understanding of a professional career, and hence the models of its legitimating.

2 Research method

In the study, we relied on the proposition that people construct their own reality on the basis of subjective ideas about reality [Chuprov & Zubok, 2014]. These ideas change under the influence of various objective and subjective factors, which leads to a change in social reality in the process of its construction. The change in previously traditional meanings and the emergence of new ones leaves an imprint on people's everyday practices, which determines the realization of a professional career. When researching a professional career, we also rely on the M. Weber theory of social action, that makes it possible to talk about ways to legitimize the achieved professional status. The empirical basis is the results of an applied sociological study of Rostov-on-Don city residents conducted in autumn, 2015. According to a standardized questionnaire, 554 people were interviewed using the snowball method, of which 45% were men and 55% were women. In 2017-2018 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with deputies and party functionaries (10 people), scientists and teachers of the Southern Federal University (10 people), employees of large corporations and the banking sector (10 people).

3 The semantic content, external and internal factors of a professional career

The results of the study showed that a career is a value for 62% of Rostov citizens. At the same time, the availability of opportunities to achieve career growth in the profession is important for almost 80% of respondents in Rostov and not important for 15% of respondents. The recorded high attitude towards a career indicates its relevance and significance for the population. In view of the fact that career models are schemes of purposeful behavior, it is important to trace the logic of career achievement, which allows us to identify differences in its interpretation.

As can be seen from the table, career goals set significantly changes in the process of career realization: at the initial stage, the understanding of a professional career as professional development dominates, in its active phase; a professional career is primarily interpreted as an opportunity to improve financial well-being. In general, these interpretations differ from the traditional understanding of careers. In in-depth interviews,

as well as in the process of labor activity, a line of loss of the professionalism primacy in relation to the material component is traced. With what it can be connected? Of course, on the one hand, it could be assumed that a professional career is already typed as successful. But another option is not excluded. The reason for the entry into a fixed conflict of material factors with professionalism is the underestimation of professionals from the view point of the financial component - “paying professionals is not enough (Vyacheslav, economist, 48 years old)”. Another explanation may be the transition of a career to an adaptation strategy, when prospects are difficult to distinguish or they are not at this stage, but there is the possibility and need to improve the financial situation.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' answers to the question: “What goals did you set at the beginning of your career path, what are you currently doing?” (%)

№	Goals	At the Beginning of a Career Path	Currently
1	Gaining new knowledge and experience	25,1	12,3
2	Professional fulfillment	19,7	17,4
3	Recognition by the professional community	5,9	7,9
4	Getting a prestigious position	11,9	10,7
5	Gaining the ability to manage other people	2,9	5,0
6	Obtaining Privileges	2,8	4,3
7	Achieving Independence in Decision Making	3,7	6,1
8	High income	16,6	24,4
9	The accumulation of social connections and relationships	9,3	9,2
10	Nether	1,6	1,8
11	Other	0,5	0,9
	Total	100,0	100,0

The high importance and orientation to a professional career determines the practice of its implementation, which is due to a number of factors. These factors can be divided into 2 large groups: external and internal. The dominant internal factors are: determination (15.8%), self-confidence (13.5%), and communication skills - the ability to establish contacts and interact constructively with other people (13.3%).

An analysis of external factors shows that for 18.6% of respondents the greatest impact on a professional career is exerted by the conditions for advanced training, continuing education; 14.2% consider this a comfortable psychological climate in the organization; 9.9% is family support. The importance of institutional opportunities for a professional career is due to the fact that in the face of instability in the career space, family support is an additional career resource and is a support for respondents in overcoming barriers to career advancement. Materials from in-depth interviews actualize the role of patronage: “They pushed me, apparently I showed myself ... YES, it’s difficult in this business itself. There must be people who are older and engaged in breeding (Alexander, 60 years old, politician)”, “In most cases, the role of patronage is crucial, with the exception of natural processes, revolutions, accidents (Alexei, 48 years old, politician)”.

4 Career barriers and career paths

Changes in the understanding of a professional career, the practice of its implementation are due to career barriers. Only a small part of the respondents at the beginning of their career paths and at present have not encountered any problems. It is important to note that a small part of the respondents (7.1%) consider the lack of mentors willing to share their experience a barrier; the need to prove their professional solvency (9.3%), lack of experience (9.3%), doubts about the choice of profession (9.3%) also act as barriers to a career. These are indicators that in the Russian career space, career installations are influenced not only by the standards of professionalism, but also by informal norms alternative to professionalism. For 16% of respondents, more significant barriers are material limitations associated with the fact that a career cannot be achieved due to poor social resources, lack of support for friends and relatives. Uncertainty in their abilities also deserves attention (4.9%). The destructiveness of this barrier is manifested in the fact that a professional actor, unsure of his abilities, is not able to act in a mode of achievement, i.e. limited in possibilities of self-presentation. A significant factor (14%) is the balance of work and personal life, which is due to the desire to build a family career, create a comfortable private space, set aside from over-employment, the desire to have a free time resource.

A professional career in a certain period reaches its limit. According to the respondents, the career peak is due to the following factors: loss of interest, disappointment (24.2%), lack of prospects (21.3%), poor health (19.1%), systemic changes in the organization (15.9%), absence professional success (10.5%), it all depends on the situation (4.7%), loss of patronage (3.2%). An understanding of the career peak is determined both by the structural conditions of career opportunities in Russian society, and by changes in the interpretation of career goals. There is an obvious tendency to narrow the career opportunities corridor due to the difficult socio-economic situation, pressure on the labor market, precarization of labor, and the reluctance of employers to promote the career growth of workers.

Awareness of professional factors contributing to and inhibiting a professional career, an individual interpretation of the career contents, determines the expectations of career advancement. Expectations were justified by almost half of the respondents and were not realized by a quarter of Rostov citizens. The above data indicate that career realism is characteristic of Rostov citizens. However, they do not stop dreaming of a career, which is what most of the respondents does. The paradox of the situation is that only every third Rostov citizens (35%) really realizes the career prospects, 35.7% do not see the prospects. This means that for a third of those who dream of a successful professional career, dreams will remain dreams, because there are currently no conditions for their implementation, or they are limited. Therefore, there is an increase in social frustration of the professional environment, as unfulfilled career aspirations dramatically reduces social well-being and social self-esteem, leading to an increase in estrangement from the team and flight to the private sphere.

Many people dream of a professional career as a way of changing social status and self-realization, as the study showed. But the prospects for this dream are determined by the means that can be used. And the higher the result, the more exclusive the channel will be used. According to the results of the study, these include internships in successful foreign and Russian companies, as well as patronage by the boss. Knowledge acquired during these internships is considered as capital, which can be converted into professional positions and statuses.

The introduction of professional segmentation shows that for the economic sector, the most effective internship in foreign and large Russian organizations. In the field of science and education, this is participation in competitions and patronage, "And the dean made an effort to keep me in the department. That share of the rate that passed to me was received as

a result of the sequestration of the full-time pensioner teacher. Then he helped with the defense, then he made him his deputy, then I replaced him (Nikolai, 40 years old, assistant professor)". At the same time, the need for academic patronage decreases as professional development and consolidation in the scientific community occurs through active positioning of oneself in the scientific environment through grant activity, opposition, development of new ideas, publication of articles in high-level magazines, presentation of their research and expert activities. In the political sphere, this is also patronage "the role of patronage is the most important, and at all stages of professional growth. Only the boss is changing, and the essence is always the same (Alexander, 60 years old)".

According to 23.8% of respondents, a patronage based on the principle of professionalism can contribute to a successful professional career; 15.2% of respondents believe that patronage on the basis of personal sympathy and the ability to please bosses will help, which is also confirmed by the results of the interview "a talent comes from a young or mature person", "besides exceptional personal devotion, I can offer him nothing more".

In-depth interview materials complement channels for exclusivity and effectiveness. And for the political, economic and scientific and educational spheres, such a channel as a team is unique and effective - "the main thing is to be a member of the team (Aleksey, 48 years old, politician)", "presence in the team can speed up the social elevator and allow you to get the result much faster than if you advance alone and position yourself as a participant in a process not connected to any community (Lada, marketer, 30 years old)", "I positioned myself like that (as a member of the team), and he (dean) also saw me. Then he passed on his position to me (Nikolai, associate professor, 40 years old)," only the difference is fixed depending on the type: cross-functional or intact team.

5 Ways to legitimize a professional career

Professional career is evaluated both by the professional actor itself and its surroundings. The evaluative aspect of a career allows one to introduce into the analysis such a component as the legitimating of a professional career. From the materials of in-depth interviews it can be seen that the dominant model of legitimization of the achieved status is professionalism. Moreover, the dominance of the professionalism model over alternative models is observed in all professional fields - "You have to work and show yourself as a professional (Vyacheslav, 48 years old, scientist, teacher)", "Whether you will be at an average level, above average or at a low level in our business sphere, a professional is a guarantee (Alexey, 44 years old, businessman)."

The simulation model, when analyzing data obtained through interviews, shows that it is not rejected in such areas as education, science, and politics. But the truth is noted that imitation has a short-term nature: "The fact is that sooner or later imitation is recognized. At some stage, you will fail anyway (Arthur, a scientist, 39 years old)", "You can imitate as long as you like, but people see it. I see such people right away (Alexander, a politician, 60 years old)". For a successful professional career, in the end, you will have to work for a high professional result in order to be competitive. And for the economic sphere, the question of imitation and the way to legitimize a career, even if informal channels are in demand during its construction, is not worth it: "This is typical for a large bureaucratic organization, to a lesser extent, the results are important here. In a market economy, the distance between work and result is very short. If there are permanent shoals, it will be bad for business (Vyacheslav, economist, 48 years old)". This is due to the fact that too little time passes between the action and the result, and unlike other areas, the result is concrete and empirically tangible - profit.

6 Conclusion

Currently, there is a change in the meaning of a professional career, due to the expansion of its boundaries, understanding of the factors contributing to and inhibiting it in the conditions of a modern career space. This is not only a status-job promotion, but also professional development both in vertical and horizontal dimensions.

Changing the meaning of a professional career by expanding its horizontal component allows us to interpret the expectations of a career in a more positive way. The study showed that Rostov-on-Don citizens are characterized by career realism. However, this does not interfere with dreaming about a career, which is what most of the respondents does, because career prospects are limited by resources that allow investing in development (communication, money, qualification). The most effective channels for improving professional status are internships in successful foreign and Russian companies, patronage, and team work.

The most demanded practice of legitimizing the achieved professional status is professionalism. Alternative models and methods of legitimating are also in demand, which is due to the effectiveness of informal ties and patronage, which have not lost their relevance at the present time.

The article is written with the assistance of Southern Federal University.

References

1. O.Ju. Angel, *Kar'ernye krizisy u molodogo specialist*, Sovremennye problemy gumanitarnyh i estestvennyh nauk. Materialy XXVIII mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii, 158-159 (2016).
2. M. Bertrand, S. E. Black, S. Jensen, A. Lleras-Muney, *Breaking the glass ceiling? The effect of board quotas on female labor market outcomes in Norway*, National Bureau of Economic Research, **w20256** (2014).
3. E. A. Brown, N. J. Thomas, R. H. Bosselman, *Are they leaving or staying: A qualitative analysis of turnover issues for Generation Y hospitality employees with a hospitality education*, International Journal of Hospitality Management, **46**, 130-137 (2015).
4. V.I. Chuprov, Iu.A. Zubok, N.A. Romanovich, *Otnoshenie k sotcialnoi realnosti v rossii skomobshchestve: sotciokulturnyi mekhanizm formirovaniia i vosproizvodstva* (Norma, NITcINFRA-M, Moskow, 2014).
5. V.I. Chuprov, Iu.A. Zubok, *Changing Social Reality amid Crisis in the Russian Society*, Jekonomicheskie i social'nye peremeny: fakty, tendencii, prognoz, **10 (1)**, 41-57 (2017).
6. A. Cook, C. Glass, *Women and top leadership positions: Towards an institutional analysis*, Gender, Work & Organization, **21(1)**, 91-103 (2014).
7. S. Hauw, A. Vos, *Millennials' career perspective and psychological contract expectations: does the recession lead to lowered expectations?* Journal of business and psychology, **25(2)**, 293-302 (2010).
8. P. R. J. M. Garcia, S. L. D. Restubog, P. Bordia, S. Bordia, R. E. O. Roxas, *Career optimism: The roles of contextual support and career decision-making self-efficacy*, Journal of Vocational Behavior, **88**, 10-18 (2015).

9. C. Glass, A. Cook, *Leading at the top: Understanding women's challenges above the glass ceiling*, The Leadership Quarterly, **27(1)**, 51-63 (2016).
10. F. Guvenen, G. Kaplan, J. Song, The glass ceiling and the paper floor: Gender differences among top earners, 1981-2012. National Bureau of Economic Research, **w20560** (2014).
11. M. Fiori, G. Bollmann, J. Rossier, *Exploring the path through which career adaptability increases job satisfaction and lowers job stress: The role of affect*, Journal of Vocational Behavior, **91**, 113-121 (2015).
12. N.Z. Khajmurzina, V.N. Shapovalov, Ju.E. Ezhova, *Kar'era gosudarstvennykh sluzhashchikh RF, planirovanie i osobennosti kar'ery*, Jekonomika i socium, **1-2 (32)**, 871-874 (2017).
13. A.N. Ksenofontova, A.V. Ledeneva, *The visibility of the problem of developing a professional career of a teacher*, Vestnik Orenburgskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, **3 (215)**, 28-33 (2018).
14. S. T. Lyons, L. Schweitzer, E. S. W. Ng, *How have careers changed? An investigation of changing career patterns across four generations*, Journal of Managerial Psychology, **30 (1)**, 8-21 (2015).
15. M. Ohme, H. Zacher, *Job performance ratings: The relative importance of mental ability, conscientiousness, and career adaptability*, Journal of Vocational Behavior, **87**, 161-170 (2015).
16. V.V. Solodnikov, I.V. Solodnikova, *Professionalnaia karera 40-letnikh rossiian: vybor professii*, Monitoring obshchestvennogo mneniia, **1**, 129-145 (2011).
17. S.I. Sotnikova, N.Z. Sotnikov, *Professional career of the worker: relevance, essence, types, determinants, indicators of research [Professionalnaia karera rabotnika: aktualnost, sushchnost, vidy, determinanty, indikatory issledovaniia]*, Vestnik Omskogo universiteta. Seriya: Ekonomika, **1**, 100-107 (2015).
18. G. Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2011).
19. Press release VCIOM, information on: <https://wciom.ru/index.php?id=236&uid=675>.
20. I. Weijden, C. Teelken, M. Boer, M. Drost, *Career satisfaction of postdoctoral researchers in relation to their expectations for the future*, Higher Education, **72(1)**, 25-40 (2016).