

ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНАЯ МОБИЛЬНОСТЬ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ

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Methodological Approaches to the Study of Socio-Professional Structures Resulting from Digital Technologies in Contemporary Russia

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In this article the author outlines the main classical and modern works in the sociology of professions to highlight the most appropriate for considering the transformation of socio-professional structure in contemporary Russia. A comparative analysis of the points of view that have been expressed in the literature on the role of professions in the social division of labor is made as well as some factors that determine Russia's current socio-professional structure are studied. Drawing on retrospective and modernization approaches, the paper proposes that the current situation in professions should be assessed from its more developed state. Since Western countries have embraced the digital society earlier, than Russia, which is at the start of this process, it is necessary to outline the commonalities and differences between these countries. It is argued that while European countries are characterized by fairly similar models and channels of social mobility, the key features of Russian professional mobility are quite unique and based on the share of power individual members of society could possess, the character of labor, and access to rewards. The author reveals a complex character of transformation of socio-professional structure in contemporary Russia resulting from the advent of digital technologies, the legacy of Soviet professional structure with a comparatively low degree of social differentiation, and the influence of Western standards and models of business organization. Taking into account that socio-professional structure of contemporary Russia is still under-researched empirical context, the author concludes that the process of modernization has insignificantly influenced the Russian socio-professional structure and that the scope of occupational change was not profound.

Keywords: methodology, professions, professionalism, socio-professional structure, digital technologies, Russia.

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Introduction

This article contributes to the debate concerning the factors that affect professions, the social status of individuals, and occupational structure. The main hypothesis of the research is that success in the modernization of contemporary Russia depends on the capability of the socio-professional structure to change in directions relevant to modern societies. The modernization approach enables us to investigate the main directions in which the socio-professional structure is evolving.

A significant number of sociologists working in this field believe that the most optimal approach is to use the ideas of Erickson, Goldthorpe, Lipset and others as a methodological basis. In modern society, the positions of individuals, and entire social groups, are determined primarily by their employment [*Goldthorpe, 1974; Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1992*].

Modern society is expanding the possibilities of social mobility by increasing the number of jobs, professions, and changing the prestige of skilled labor, making them increasingly dependent on their level of professional education. In this regard, Grusky proposed the class structure of society as a model of professions [*Grusky, 2001*].

For instance, European countries, according to Goldthorpe and Erickson, are characterized by fairly similar models and channels of social mobility. They are primarily related to the place of the profession in the employment structure, the level of professional education and the level of professionalism achieved [*Erikson, Goldthorpe, 1992*].

For Russia, the features and channels of professional mobility are determined by global trends and historical specifics. Globally, the process of professionalization has significantly changed: specialists more often work in large companies, assuming roles dictated by market economy relationships. Historically, Russia's current professional structure is a legacy of the Soviet Union's social structure with a comparatively low degree of social differentiation. The main fundamental works [*Liubimova et al., 2008; Shkaratan, Iastrebov, 2007; Anikin, 2009, 2013; Bessudnov, 2009*] observing the dynamics of socio-professional structures in contemporary Russian society were published before the crisis of 2014–2016 (many of them — before the crisis of 2008–2010), which dramatically changed the situation in Russia. As for the most recent research, the important contribution to the problem was made by Gimpel'son, Kapeliushnikov, Luk'ianova, Sharunina, Vishnevskaya, and Zudina. Russian researchers, considering the socio-professional structure, focus on the study of the certain occupational groups, analyzing them in the context of the sociology of professions [*Tikhonova, 2020*].

The article focuses on some aspects of the Russian society's shift to a new stage of economic and technological development, caused by digital technologies. In Part I we observe the main theoretical approaches to the study of professions and occupations in sociology. In Part II we emphasize the role of digital technologies in the transformation process of socio-professional structures, tracing it back to the Soviet period of Russian history. Thus, outlining the social-historical context of contemporary Russia, we compare the current situation in professions with its previous (Soviet) state and with the similar situation in the Western countries.

Literature review

Profession, according to Weber, is defined as those specifications, specializations, or combinations of the labor efforts of an individual, which provides him or her with the basis

for obtaining a means of living or income [Weber, 2016]. Consequently, people should be interested in this sort of activity, because it corresponds to human needs and intentions. It is a resource that can be used for obtaining status, income, and other rewards.

Functionalism, alongside the trait approach to professions, was the dominant orthodoxy in the Anglo-American sociology of the professions up until the 1960s [Saks, 2014]. The functionalist approach was based on the works of Spenser, who regarded professions as specific social institutes.

Professionals, according to Spenser, obtain status in industrial societies due to their responsibility for producing and maintaining expert knowledge. Durkheim said that moral zeal, determining the responsibility of professionals, is a core element which overcomes the anomic tendencies caused by social and civil modernization. Parsons emphasized the importance of the professional complex for the reproduction of the societal system and analyzed the behavior of professionals using the theoretical categories of social action. This strengthened the institutional emphasis in understanding professionalism and attributed to professionals' positive impact on the public interest [Abramov, 2014]. Parsonian functionalism is based on two principles, according to which professions qualitatively differ from other types of occupations and form a unique social order providing the trajectories of social change [Sciulli, 2009].

We argue that continuous changes move some occupations closer to the status of professions and move others away. Various definitions describe the degree of professionalization, e. g. professionalized occupations, semi-professions, new professions [Abramov, 2014]. We see that, primarily as a result of the division and cooperation of labor on a national economic scale and at the enterprise level, new industries and sub-sectors, professions and specialties are emerging, and intra-production relationships of employees are becoming more complex. This approach assumes that professionalization is not a single process that develops along similar lines, but several parallel processes that follow their own trajectories.

The stratification approach (in the theoretical visionary view by Veblen, Bell, Galbraith, Toffler, Stiglitz, Hawkins, etc.) assumes that rapid technological change entails large-scale social, cultural and economic transformations that promote new groups of professionals with special knowledge and official positions, which allow them to constitute the core of modern social structure [Abramov, 2014]. Digital technologies, robotic systems, new materials and methods of construction, big data processing, machine learning and artificial intelligence have caused new challenges for social and professional structures.

One of the consequences of the increasing uncertainty in the professional world is the emergence, development and institutionalization of transprofessional activities over the past decade. The spread of transprofessionalism is a result of the third professional revolution [Perkin, 1989], which has changed the ways and organization of professional activity. There has been a shift from mass professions to professions that do not involve such a rigid specialization, and to professions with a leading form of organization in the form of professional and interprofessional networks. The emergence of new ICT and innovation in modern society, including Russian society, contributes to the formation and spreading of such professions: digital and social PR, territorial branding, internet communications, including the creation and support of corporate forums, social networks and blogs [Didkovskaia, 2016].

Methods section

In order to trace the main directions of occupational change in contemporary Russia, we first compare the socio-professional structure in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia. Unfortunately, the comparison is far from conclusive, as there is a lack of research and empirical data in the field. For this reason, our analysis is based primarily on secondary data.

Another method of research is the study of changes related to professions. This focuses on the factors that determine the socio-professional structure of modern societies. The trends analyzed involve the advent of digital technologies and their influence on the labor market and the resulting structure of labor force supply and demand.

Both these methods were based on English and Russian sources. This comparative research can fill the gap in the literature on occupational change, which covers mostly European and English-speaking countries, and provide a better understanding of social processes in this sphere.

The author also relies upon the empirical sociological research of social and labor relations he conducted (from 2008 to 2010) at industrial enterprises in Chelyabinsk Region (Russia). The poll was conducted at the workplaces of respondents—employees of various socio-professional groups ($N = 1,150$). Empirical data were processed and analyzed using the Vortex 6.0 program.

Results

According to the retrospective approach to the study of transformation processes, no problem can be solved without taking into account the former state of the social system, i.e. the history of society. This is why we first look at the characteristics of the Soviet system that defined the socio-professional structure of that period.

A number of authors define the social structure of Soviet society as an estate-corporate system [Tikhonova, 2007], or neo-etacratism [Shkaratan, 2009], or redistributive economy [Bessonova, 2019], where one of the main criterion for stratification was the share of power individual members of society could possess, the character of labor, and access to rewards [Shkaratan, 2009].

According to the stratification approach, professional differences were crucial to the description of the social structure of Soviet society. However, the degree of material, financial and social differentiation of socio-professional groups was not clearly expressed [Arutiunian, 1971; Shkaratan, 2009].

Tikhonova points out that Soviet society was divided into two main groups, one of which — the so-called ‘middle class’ — consisted of the leadership of enterprises, high-skilled professionals, including the working class elite, and those workers whose main activity was connected with the distribution of goods. The second group included the representatives of the lower class: industrial workers and peasantry. The members of this class perceived themselves as the middle class, because they not only constituted the majority of populace, but their standard of living was ideologically associated with the ‘standard’ for the whole of society [Tikhonova, 2007, p. 6–7].

This stable social structure created a hierarchy of prestigious professions in Soviet Russia. Shubkin and Titma showed that professions of intellectual labor connected with higher education were the most prestigious for youth [Titma, 1975; Konstantinovskii, Shubkin,

1977]. Earnings were of less interest to Soviet people, because it was not a differentiating criterion and did not influence the prestige of a profession. The choice of profession determined future social status, and this status was then approved by formal credentials obtained at university. There was a strong correlation between education, profession, prestige, and social status [Didkovskaia, 2016, p. 162].

The transformation of the socio-professional structure from the beginning of 1990s had several dimensions. We can divide these into the formation of new professions, the changing status of professional groups and occupational change (or the growth of wage inequality between socio-professional groups).

Concerning the social status of professional groups, Popova regards professionals in Russia as new marginal groups with unstable, transitional status and uncertain prospects. This field of research covers several areas, including precarious employment. Popova supposes that it is decisive for professionals to find possibilities for a positive exit from a situation of marginality, through the growth of professionalism and upward mobility [Popova, 2020, p. 60].

The socio-economic situation in Russia is still unstable. In these circumstances it is very difficult to forecast the future of socio-professional structures. Hence, the professional choice of young people tends to rely on the wage differences between occupations. This was supported in our previous research, where data indicated that the higher the satisfaction with wages, the higher the work satisfaction in general. The proportion of dissatisfied respondents among those who are not satisfied with their wage is 35.2%, while among those who are satisfied with their wage it is an order of magnitude less (4.2%). Meanwhile, for specialists and managers, after reaching a certain wage level, the correlation between earnings and job satisfaction weakens and then disappears [Odiakov, 2011].

New ICT and digitalization have transformed working patterns and the character of communication between people [Mullan, Wajcman, 2019]. Computers transformed work into a more knowledge-intensive activity, occupations located at critical junctions of information flow have gained greater structural power, and thereby higher wages [Kristal, 2020, p. 466]. In advanced industrial societies the workforce is differentiated in the way people have access to and control information.

Table 1. The distribution of employees engaged in three types of work in leading industrial economies for 1960, 1990 and 2005 (% of employees)

The types of labor resource	US			Germany			UK			Japan		
	1960	1990	2005	1961	1989	2005	1961	1981	2005	1960	1990	2005
Professions of primarily intellectual type	37	45	49	32	41	45	39	50	56	33	46	52
Professions with elements of intellectual labor	26	29	31	25	30	33	24	23	22	32	35	37
Professions of routine and semi routine labor	37	26	22	43	29	22	37	27	22	35	19	11

The source: [Nayemnyy trud..., 2015, p. 48]

In all countries the proportion of innovative workers grew 1960–2005. This period covers the transformational shift to post-industrial society. The highest proportion of intellectual work is in the UK and Japan (56% and 52% respectively), and the lowest in Germany (45%).

The proportion of workers of the second type has also grown. The exception is the UK, where there was a reduction in this category. However, the decrease in this group (from 24% to 22% in 2005) is statistically insignificant. In comparison to the US, Germany and Japan, the proportion of workers of the second type in the UK is the smallest (22%). The highest is in Japan (37%). In all the countries the speed of growth of the first type workers are much higher than the second type.

The dynamics of third type of workers demonstrate a decline. Table 1 shows the speed of this decline, and it is high in all the countries. The biggest decline was in Germany (from 43% in 1961 to 22% in 2005). The proportion of the third type of workers is similar in the US, the UK and Germany (about 20% of the total number of employees). The smallest proportion of this category is in Japan (11%) [*Nayemnyy trud...*, 2015, p. 46–48].

Digitalization has led to the widespread growth of automation. With the progressive reduction of working hours, on the one hand, contacts with the professional environment are reduced, and on the other hand, the time spent in the family circle, at home, increases.

It can be supported by the data on the structure of employees' value orientations obtained as a result of our research. Almost 78% of respondents preferred such values as 'a strong family, prosperous children'. 'Good health' has a little less importance for respondents (71.8%), providing a core component of an employee's resource potential, since it ensures the reproduction of labor. 'Material prosperity, providing normal living conditions' was preferred by 2/3 of respondents. At the same time, such values as 'success, achievements in professional activity' (21.9%), 'development and realization of their abilities' (17.6%), 'high position, successful career' (10.5%), 'recognition from society, prestige, honor' (10.1%) and 'the opportunity to engage in creativity, to create something new' (8.8%), were actually pushed to the periphery of public consciousness. All this suggests that at present time the resource potential is aimed at maintaining an acceptable standard of living for the employee and his family members, which is based on the satisfaction of primary biological needs. We can conclude that for Russian society it means that the effectiveness and productivity of human capital engaged in new kind of jobs is much to be desired.

Discussion and conclusion

As summarized by Scott 'professions in modern society have assumed leading roles in the creation and tending of institutions. They are the preeminent institutional agents of our time' [Scott, 2008, p. 219]. This institutional function includes their crucial role as gatekeepers who guarantee the integrity and functional operation of core societal and economic institutions [Coffee, 2006] such as capital markets and organizational governance regimes. Brock considers that professionals, through their distinct cognitive, normative and regulative capabilities, play a more active role as 'lords of the dance' who help choreograph the broad restructuring of contemporary political-economic systems [Brock et al., 2014].

As the result of new challenges, the process of professionalization has significantly changed. During the 'golden age' of professionalism, most professionals were self-employed entrepreneurs; today most knowledge workers are employed by relatively large, complex or-

ganizations such as professional service firms, group practices, corporations, government agencies, or hospitals [Gorman, Sandefur, 2011]. Despite a great amount of excessive work that is delivered by bureaucratic management in such organizations (including education, healthcare system), professionals are usually get accustomed to combine the so-called professional and managerial logics in their workplaces.

Digital technologies could facilitate organizational efforts to control expert work, e.g. some genetic procedures by means of DNA-analysis enable employers to identify predilection of employees for some diseases (Alzheimer's or Parkinson's syndrome). Technology of proctoring provides a kind of surveillance system by recording a random conversation between two colleagues, tracking the content of e-mail correspondence, monitoring their day-to-day work. Many professionals perceive that these practices of formal control limit their autonomy at work. Therefore, successful regulation of industrial relationships can only be realized within the boundaries established by psychological, moral, and legal requirements.

Another trend is associated with digitalization which reinforces the fragmentation of labor market are: wage inequalities in wages, work conditions differences, and guarantees of employment [Kristal, 2020]. These are the factors around which new types of inequalities arise in contemporary Russian organizations [Tikhonova, 2014]. However, Murphy and Oesch evidence that the employment polarization is not a uniform and encompassing trend across countries, and suggest that a polarized job structure can be an outcome specific to particular labor market conditions. In addition, change in contemporary job structures is shaped by specific historical conditions and shifts in a country's occupational structure must be understood with reference to the idiosyncratic specific political context that applies to key industries at a given moment in time [Murphy, Oesch, 2018, p. 1113].

As for the historical context of contemporary Russia, current social stratification is determined neither by market criteria, i. e. level of income, prestige, consumption, or education of individuals and social groups (Weberian approach), nor by conflicts of social groups and consequential economic collective interests (Marxist approach). It is caused rather by the social status of an individual, or his or her closer surroundings, and rental exchanges, which they are able to maintain with the state. Occupations are embedded in this state corporate system and possessors gain success if professional status enables him or her to convert administrative resources into economic rents.

The choice of profession by youth is also at risk because of large degree of uncertainty, inherent in many aspects of getting ahead in professional organizations. As for the components of a profession (expert knowledge, technical autonomy, a normative orientation toward the service of others, and high status, income, and other rewards), many of them are still unstable, which makes forecasts of the most popular professions in the future uncertain.

In this context, the advent of ICT would probably lead to a number of collisions in contemporary society. For example, the risk of automation would result in the shrinking of labor demand with the subsequent growth of unemployment. The main effect to date of technology on professions has been to complement and enhance their work, and to create new fields relating to technology and its application. As Lester puts it, "technology has typically made practitioners more efficient and better-informed, enabling them to carry out new tasks, increased communication and accountability, and in some cases increased their exposure to market forces and client or patient choice" [Lester, 2020, p. 6]. These new challenges require a new type of professionalism. It is worth remembering that with an abundance of technology, humanity comes to the fore, and today it is important to learn soft skills. Although some new ICT-related occupations have appeared in the last two decades, they have

not yet become widespread and their institutionalization is not complete. This highlights the problem of the transformation of socio-professional structures in contemporary Russia, because in order to complete the shift to post-industrialism, Russian society will have to solve this problem.

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Методологические подходы к изучению социально-профессиональной структуры в условиях цифровизации современного российского общества

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В статье анализируются основные классические и современные подходы в области социологии профессий с целью изучения трансформации социально-профессиональной структуры современного российского общества. Основным методом выступает сравнительный анализ сложившихся в международной и отечественной практике точек зрения на роль профессий в системе общественного разделения труда. Изучены факторы, которые влияют на современное состояние социально-профессиональной структуры в России. Используя ретроспективный и модернизационный подходы, автор показывает, что текущая ситуация в сфере профессиональной структуры должна рассматриваться с позиций ее более развитого состояния. Поскольку западный мир встал на путь цифровизации раньше, чем российское общество, которое находится в начале этого процесса, то необходимо проследить сходства и отличия между этими странами. Обосновано, что для европейских стран характерны однотипные модели и каналы социальной мобильности, тогда как для России особенности и каналы профессиональной мобильности определяются местом во властной иерархии индивида, характером труда и доступом к распределению благ и услуг. Раскрыт сложный характер трансформации социально-профессиональной структуры в современной России, на которую влияет: 1) внедрение цифровых технологий, 2) наследие советской профессиональной структуры с ее относительно низким уровнем социальной дифференциации и 3) влияние западных моделей и технологий ведения бизнеса. Учитывая, что социально-профессиональная структура современной России относительно мало исследована отечественными авторами, автор делает вывод, что процесс модернизации незначительно коснулся профессиональной структуры и масштаб изменений отношений занятости оказался невелик.

Ключевые слова: методология, профессии, профессионализм, социально-профессиональная структура, цифровые технологии, Россия.