

# PROFESSIONAL STRATEGY AND LIFE PLAN OF RUSSIAN YOUTH ACTING AS A RESOURCE FOR INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REGION

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## Abstract

Youth as a special socio-demographic group acts as a resource for the development of the economy, since their strategies and plans for life is aimed at fulfilling their innovative potential.

The conclusions in this article are based on data from an empirical sociological study conducted on working and studying youth in six industrial regions of Russia in 2018 and 2019. We interviewed students of universities and colleges receiving professional training in engineering and IT (N=2400) and young employees of industrial enterprises of high-tech sectors (N= 1200).

In this study, we identified the relationship between the life strategies implemented by young people, their social attitudes, and confidence in the future. We identified four different life strategies of working and studying youth: “strategy of the professional improvement”, “strategy of creativity and implementation of ideas”, “strategy of the economic survival”.

Using correlation analysis, we compared these types of strategies with the social attitudes of young people (optimistic and pessimistic). The “strategy of the professional improvement” and the “strategy of creativity and implementation of ideas” which implies the fulfilment of innovation potential, correlates with optimistic social attitudes and security. In contrast “strategy of the economic survival” correlates with pessimistic attitudes and insecurity.

**Key words:** youth, innovational development, resource, life plan, professional strategy

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## Introduction

In the process of ongoing globalization, quality human capital becomes a valuable unique resource for the economy. The characteristics of the human capital in its modern sense entails not only education and expertise but a variety of other skills among which are adaptability, creativity, intellectual, managerial and business skills. Qualitative and quantitative

characteristics of human capital are in close connection with the innovative potential of society (Bovenberg, 2008).

Being the most perspective representative of the human capital youth can act as economy, social sphere, education and science development driver as long as its life strategies and plans are aimed at innovative potential fulfilment.

Life and professional strategies, life goals and plans of the young people could be analyzed in the different problem context. First of all, we must highlight the study of the connection between life goals with value preferences and culture (Caliskan, Sapmaz, & Uzunkol, 2015); (Kasser, 2016); (Keijer, Nagel, & Liefbroer, 2016). Kasser's findings prove that material values as life goals oriented on reaching wealth, possession, image, position reduces the motivation to study and work in controversy to the personal and emotional growth values. As a result, to reduce the impact of modern culture on consumption, profit, and economic growth, appropriate policies should be adopted (Kasser, 2016).

Another area that we highlight is the study of life and professional strategies about the institutional conditions and processes that occur in society (Baliasov, Boronina, Vishnevsky, & Belova, 2017); (Osipova & Enveri, 2016); (Gasparishvili, 2016). Osipova after surveying students and expert interviews concluded that there is an imbalance between the career intentions and preferences of young people and the needs for labour resources in the labour market, which ultimately reduces the ability of young people to fulfil their potential (Osipova & Enveri, 2016).

The most promising approach in the study of life strategies is the study of the population life goals in whole and its specific groups (with young people among them) in the context of subjective well-being and satisfaction with life ((Bone, 2019); (Martos & Kopp, 2012); (Karacharovskiy & Shkaratan, 2019), 2019; (Gasiukova & Korotaev, 2019). According to Martos research, the pursuit of intrinsic life goals, such as personal growth, leads to positive subjective well-being and satisfaction. In contrast, extrinsic life goals such as wealth are poorly or negatively correlated with subjective well-being. This correlation is observed equally among both poor and wealthy groups of the population at the same time (Martos & Kopp, 2012). As a result of Karacharovsky and Shkaratan's research, a particular socio-demographic bias in life goals was revealed – young people pursue “idealistic” goals related to improving skills, professional and personal growth, and solving creative tasks less likely than older age groups; for young people, the prevalence of either pragmatic external goals (income, etc.), or goals related to creating a family and having children is more typical (Karacharovskiy & Shkaratan, 2019). In our opinion, this fact intensifies the problem of quality characteristics of youth as

society's innovative resource, since it is doubtful that such strategies and plans can lead to the young people's creative, cognitive and other abilities fulfilment.

We believe that in the subjective well-being of the young people as a social group, a significant role is played not so much by satisfaction with the present, but by moods and attitudes directed to the future, its optimistic or pessimistic perception. It would be an interesting topic for the study - how these social attitudes of young people relate to their life goals. Among the few studies on this topic, we noted the study by Bone, which showed the relation between young people's life plans on negative social attitudes, expressed in the sense of insecurity and uncertainty as a result of precarious employment. Negative social attitudes contribute to delayed life plans related to family organization and other adult commitments, or lack of long-term youth plans (Bone, 2019). The analysis of literature has shown that there is a gap in knowledge in life strategies and plans of young people in the context of their social attitudes towards prospects. Although life plans and consequent set of individual goals can significantly change the society (Karacharovskiy & Shkaratan, 2019). Also, there were almost conducted no studies on the impact of life and professional strategies on the innovative activity of young people and their potential fulfilment. In this regard, the main task of the study was to determine which strategies of young people contribute to their innovative activity and whether social attitudes influence the choice of these strategies.

## **1 Data and method**

The conclusions in this paper based on the empirical sociological study conducted on working and studying youth in the six largest industrial regions of Russia from 2018 to 2019. We interviewed students of universities and colleges receiving professional training in engineering and IT (N=2400) and young employees of industrial enterprises of high-tech sectors of the regional economy (N= 1200) using the questionnaire method.

During the study, we focused on the three topics: youth innovative activity degree during the study or professional activity; youth life and professional plans; youth social mood about the near future.

Young people's innovative activity was taken as the practice of a certain type of educational or professional activities related to the development and implementation of innovative potential. We considered life strategies as individual long term life goals, based on the value priorities of a young person, which can serve as the basis for achievements. Professional strategies serve as an essential part of life strategies. We studied the social mood of the youth as emotional attitudes to social changes in the near future (next three years), the

expectation of better changes is interpreted as a mood of optimism and expectation of changes for the worse as pessimism; the expectation of maintaining the status quo in society was seen as a neutral setting about the future.

## **2 Results**

### **2.1 Young people innovative activity characteristics**

According to the survey results conducted on students and young employees, more than half of the respondents practice some kind of creative activity during their work or study (51% of students and 60% of young employees, Tab. 1). Speaking of creative activity, students and employees both practice project activities with a practical orientation, aimed at solving a technological problem. It is also quite common for young people offering some technical improvements for utilitarian personal consumption (14%). Offering creative ideas and research projects, and its implementation is less popular, especially among students (9%). Lesser young people are characterized by inventive activity, creation of software products, promotion of business ideas and their promotion in the form of business planning, even though 26% of students and 20% of young employees indicated the creation of their own business, the development of a business idea among their life priorities (see Tab. 2).

Young employees are more active in mastering and implementing innovations and improving the level of education and professional skills than students (see Tab. 1). In this question, we have not offered students to evaluate alternatives related to professional development, innovation, and the development of new technologies and equipment in the production process, since this is not relevant for them. Therefore, we compare their activity with young employees only by participation in various conferences and seminars, as well as by participation in professional competitions, competitions for grants and scholarships. The activity of young employees and students is approximately the same in these areas. However, it seems to us that presentations at scientific conferences, participation in competitions for research projects and grants are usually integrated to some extent into the learning process in universities and colleges. Therefore, if the level of participation in competitions for scholarships and grants at 7-8 % is most likely normal for young employees, the same level is not sufficient for students.

Assessing the innovative activity of young people, we note several facts. First, the innovative activity is higher among young employees than among students: every tenth young employee of the enterprise only does not participate in any form of activity (11%), among students - almost one fifth (19%). Second, among active students, creative and implementation

activities are approximately equally represented, and among young employees more represented the implementation activity - the activity of implementing innovations in life and on their professional self-improvement.

**Tab. 1: Types of students' innovative activity by level, %**

Innovative activity level	Innovative activity types	Students	Employees
High (creating innovations)	Offered the project (idea) on the solution of a production problem to the management	12	19
	Participated in research projects and grants	9	14
	Created or improved devices, technical means for personal consumption (for you, your family, your friends)	14	14
	Created software products	7	7
	Registered patents for inventions	2	3
	Developed a business plan and offered it for consideration in the bank	7	3
	TOTAL	51	60
Moderate (the development of innovations, increase their level)	Raised the level of education in the educational organization	-	40
	Engaged in professional training	-	37
	Mastered new technology / new equipment / new methods of work	-	34
	Decided or participated in the decision to introduce innovations in the production process	-	15
	Made presentations at conferences or seminars	19	12
	Participated in professional competitions, competitions for grants, scholarships	7	8
	Participated in student academic writing competitions	24	-
	TOTAL	50	146
Low/ absent	None of the above	19	11
	TOTAL	19	11

\* As each Respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in TOTAL can be more than 100%. Source: author's calculation

## 2.2 Youth life strategies types

The structure of life and professional goals maintaining the basis for the strategies is for students, and young employees are the same (Table 2).

The youth oriented on starting a family and reaching high economic position. This data prove the life goals study results conducted by Karacharovsky and Shkaratan on the priority of utilitarian materialistic values among young people in the form of orientations on creating a family, having children and achieving economic well-being for themselves and their families (Karacharovskiy & Shkaratan, 2019). We can also refer to a similar orientation as getting the house, which is the significant life goal for 28% of respondents. Together with the focus on achieving economic status, it indicates that a significant part of young people is unsettled and not satisfied with their financial and material situation.

Orientation on starting a family and having children more represented among young employees which is a part of the elder age cohort comparing with young students. Also, professional achievements are more important for employed, and creativity, implementation of the ideas and creation of their own business is more important for students.

**Tab. 2: The most significant youth life goals, %**

Life goals, achievements	Students	Employees
Family, children	61,5	78,8
Economic position, income level	53,0	51,1
Owned housing	27,4	27,7
Professional achievement	39,5	44,3
Career, achieving high positions	31,5	29,0
Creativity, implementation of ideas	37,3	25,4
Own business, business idea	26,4	20,3
TOTAL	294	281

\* As each Respondent could give several answers at the same time, the sum of % in TOTAL can be more than 100%. Source: author's calculation

We have identified several types of young people's life strategies and analyzed their opportunities basing on the orientation of the goals to fulfil the innovative potential.

We have found that the strategy of "professional improvement" aimed at professional and career achievements is quite widespread among working and studying youth. Its potential lies in the ability to self-improve (in professional and educational terms) to achieve success and high socio-professional positions.

Then we identified the strategy of "creativity and implementation of ideas", which involves focusing on creativity as a vital value, the implementation of their creative ideas and

projects, also including the business ones. It has the most significant creative potential because here we can talk about the implementation of their creative ideas as the leading guide to life and creativity of thinking as the primary way to achieve it. This category of youth is aimed at producing new ideas, developing, and implementing their projects. Focus on business success, and starting business also has significant potential in terms of innovation activity – creating business projects that lead to the introduction of innovations, which involve bringing the development to the mass consumer, is extremely important for innovative development.

The next strategy of “economic survival” is associated with providing the desired level of income and economic well-being in general. Here also we carried and setup in fact on a family and desired for her living conditions (own home). These orientations are often present as the priority of young people life goals. However, it is difficult to point out their prospects in terms of implementing innovative potential. Instead, the strategy that accumulates them will carry the features of adaptability-focusing on stability and economic “survival” in adverse environmental conditions.

Let us point another thing related to the implementation of life goals – more than 15% of students do not see the possibility of self-fulfilment in Russia and plan to leave it for another country in the next three year. There are almost no such plans among young employees (less than 1%). Here we can interpret this orientation in two ways: either this is simply a higher need for mobility (educational, professional, etc.) of the youngest age cohorts, or it is a manifestation of negative social attitudes – insecurity, pessimism. It means that it is necessary to interpret the types of young people strategies in the context of their social attitudes.

### **2.3 Life strategies in the context of youth’s social attitude and their connection with the innovational activity**

The choice of life and professional strategies are taking place in the context of particular social well-being of young people. Taking into account various indicators of well-being, we have chosen the social attitude on near-future changes. More than half of young people showed a neutral attitude on the future - 55% think that in the near three years nothing will change dramatically (neither for better nor for worse). In general, the array of respondents is almost equally optimistic and pessimistic.

One of the critical study results was the relationship between life strategies types and young people social attitudes regarding prospects - optimism and pessimism (Tab. 3). Table 3 shows that social pessimism is slightly higher among young people who practice family and achieving economic well-being strategy (28 %) than among young people who follow professional success and career and creativity and implementation of ideas strategy (18-22%).

**Tab. 3: Correlation between life strategy type and social attitudes of respondents, %**

What do you think the situation in our society will likely change or not in near 3 years?	Life strategy type			TOTAL:
	professional success and career strategy	ideas implementation strategy	economic well-being strategy	
No, nothing will change (neutral or latent attitude)	54,1	54,5	59,1	55,4
Yes, it will change to worse (pessimism)	18,7	21,9	<b>27,8</b>	21,7
Yes, it will change to better (optimism)	<b>27,2</b>	<b>23,7</b>	13,1	22,9
Total:	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

\* Cramer's V [0..1]: 0,103, Error probability (significance): 0,000 Source: author's calculation

On the other hand, social optimism is more typical for professional success and career and creativity and implementation of ideas strategy (24-27%), rather than for family and economic well-being strategy (13%). Thus, the empirical material obtained suggests that strategies that have a particular innovative potential are more consistent with the optimistic social attitude about the future, and strategies for "economic survival" (adaptive) are associated with the pessimism, an adverse scenario of a possible social future.

**Tab. 4: Correlation between life strategy type and social attitudes of respondents, %**

Innovational activity level	Life strategy type			TOTAL:
	professional success and career strategy	ideas implementation strategy	economic well-being strategy	
High(create)	33,8	<b>44,8</b>	26,2	34,9
Moderate (implement)	<b>44,0</b>	33,7	41,3	40,6
Low / absent	22,2	21,5	<b>32,5</b>	24,5
TOTAL:	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

\* Cramer's V [0..1]: 0,103, Error probability (significance): 0,000 Source: author's calculation

The analysis of innovation potential concerning each identified type of life strategy is justified and confirmed by the established relationship between strategies and innovation activity. The results of the correlation analysis showed that the level of innovation activity is associated with the type of life strategies of young people (Tab. 4). High level of innovational activity more often represented among creativity and ideas implementation strategy (45%),



moderate activity or activity to implement more often represented among professional success and career strategy (44%), low-level activity represented among adaptive economic well-being strategy (33%).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, we draw the following conclusions concerning students and young employees in the industrial regions of Russia.

First, the majority of young people, both students and employees practice some activity in the process of studying or working related to its innovative potential implementation. This is the development and promotion of their ideas and projects. However, much more often, this activity involves improving their educational or professional level, or the development and implementation of ready-made innovations, rather than the promotion and development of their ideas.

Second, life and professional strategies that have a particular innovative potential are more likely to correspond to optimistic social attitudes about the future, and adaptive “economic survival” strategies are more likely associated with pessimism and negative social attitudes.

Third, young people are mainly focused on achieving their life goals to start a family and ensuring their economic well-being with the pessimistic social attitudes about prospects, which does not contribute much to their innovative potential fulfilment.

Therefore, we need social policy measures aimed at students and working youth, which would help young people choose life and professional strategies that lead to a high level of innovation activity. During our research, we identified two types of such strategies – the “professional self-improvement strategy” and “creativity and ideas implementation strategy”.

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