

YOUNG PEOPLE OF RUSSIAN INDUSTRIAL REGION EXPECTATIONS, PROBLEMS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES ON A LABOR MARKET

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Abstract

In this paper we focus on young people`s social well-being concerning the labour market and employment. We use the research results which are based on the data of sociological survey of students and young professionals.

The research was done in one of the biggest industrial Russian regions – Sverdlovsk Oblast. The sample consists of young people aged from 15 to 30 (n=1530).

Young people believe, that the most urgent problems for their employment are the absence of work experience and the gap between professional skills level and the requirements of the employer.

According to the results of our survey, young people consider CV placement on the web and searching for the job through the internet as the most productive types of work search. Nevertheless, in their actual search for some job they rely on their parents and relatives` help, and they don`t rely on the help from employment services or recruitment agencies.

According to young people, high-quality higher education and professional skills are the best guarantee for the employment which provides them with better job perspectives.

Key words: youth, labour market, employment methods

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Introduction

Young people as a special socio-demographic group with specific employment problems are under the investigation of many researchers. The recent surveys reflect several trends.

Firstly, problems of choosing the career paths by young people are studied (Zubok & Chuprov, 2015; Cherednichenko, 2013; Kerekes & Pakucs, 2013). Secondly, a lot of researches are dedicated to comparison between young people`s demands on the employment and their professional skills assessment by employers (Kliucharev, 2015; Jackson, 2014).

Thirdly, factors which influence successful young people`s employment are analyzed (Mok, 2016; Varshavskaya, 2016). The studying of undergraduate students` employment and combining work and study has being developed intensively (Theune, 2015; Byun, Henck & Post, 2014; Varshavskaya, 2016).

Researchers` attention to the youth problems of employment can be explained by the high social vulnerability of the youth comparing to other socio-demographic groups. This vulnerability grows from the young people`s contradictory state on the job market. From one point of view, they have rather high theoretical preparation for work (most of the youth study at university or in college), which creates the excessive youth self-evaluation, unreal image of their capabilities and prospects on the job market. On the other hand, the lack or absence of practical skills and work experience reduce the young people`s attractiveness for most employers.

Bad position of young people on the job market leads to highly negative consequences in social and psychological spheres. Researches of Virtanen, Hammarstrom and Janlert have showed that there is a connection between unemployment in young age (21-25 years) and problems of psychic health in mature age. On the national level this problem causes the necessity for raising the health care costs (Virtanen, Hammarstrom, & Janlert, 2016). According to Bhatm and Rather Tareak analytical papers, the stress of employment, the fear of losing a job and the educational competition stimulate nervous breakdown or even the youth suicide (Bhat & Rather, 2012). The series of economic crises started in 2008 stimulated the worsening of young people`s position on the job market (Mok, 2016).

In our research we stress a regional aspect of young people`s problems of employment. Our research was done in Sverdlovsk Oblast which is one of the highly developed industrial Russian regions. Kaumov, Kanikov, Ishakova in their analysis of objective conditions for youth employment suppose that the development of qualification and creativity as well as the reproduction of qualified employees in big companies are the matter of great importance for the big industrial centers (Kaumov, 2013). It gives extra opportunities for youth employment. Highly developed industrial infrastructure provides the region with sufficient quantity of vacancies including job for young people. However, the concentration of young university graduates in industrial regions stimulates the competition among them, especially for the most desirable jobs. It leads to the situation on the job market when there are a lot of job opportunities for young people, but only a few vacancies can meet their needs and demands.

The important but to some extent less studied aspect of this problem is the youth self-evaluation of capabilities and perspectives on the job market, their expectations and fears about employment, which in general form their social well-being. In this regard, the purpose of our research is to study problems of youth employment (getting education, getting a job and working in a big industrial region) according to young people's self-assessment.

1 Data and method

The results of our research are based on the data of sociological survey of young people who potentially can work and study at the same time. The survey was conducted in January and February 2016 in one of the biggest industrial Russian regions - Sverdlovsk Oblast.

We used target quota sample. The sample consists of young people aged from 15 to 30 (n=1530). As the main quota signs we used age, type of residence (city or countryside) and type of occupation (studying, working or not working young people).

As far as age is an important factor for differentiation of young people, we divided respondents into three age groups: the younger age group (20 years and below), the moderate age group (from 21 to 25 years) and the older age group (from 26 to 30 years). These age groups are substantially different if we analyze and compare their positions on the job market.

In the younger age group almost 70% of respondents don't work yet and they are going to enter the job market in the near future. In the moderate age group (85%) and in the older age group almost all respondents (97%) already have work experience. This is convincing enough for us to say that age is the substantial factor, which determines the difference in young people's opinions, estimates and feelings regarding the problems of the employment.

2. Results

2.1 Employment Problems and Methods

The results of our research have shown that young people face a lot of problems during employment nowadays (Tab. 1). Young people's opinion about these problems is the most informative indicator of their social well-being and the situation on the job market itself. The vast majority of respondents highlighted the problem of absence of work experience. The gap between young people's professional skills and the employer's requirements for the job is another important problem raised by the respondents. For the older age group (from 26 to 30) this problem is not so important, only 19% of respondents mentioned it. This can be mostly

explained by the transformation of Russian professional education system to the multi-level training system.

The younger age group (20 years and below) and the moderate age group (from 21 to 25) got education through the multi-level training system, the older age group (from 26 to 30) graduated as specialists. Russian employers still evaluate graduates with bachelor degree cautiously (those graduates who got the four year training program instead of five year program for the specialist qualification). There are only a few professional training programs today which are designed for preparing graduates with the specialist qualification that is why employers should understand the difference between two training systems.

Tab.1: The rating of youth employment problems

Problems	Share of respondents who marked the problems as substantial, per cent		
	Age under 20	Age 21–25	Age 26–30
No work experience	62	67	64
Low salary	43	46	47
No vacancies	41	32	30
Gap between professional skills and employers` requirements	30	30	19
No information about companies which need my professional skills	18	21	16
Competition for getting a job between young professionals and other categories of employees (migrants, experienced professionals)	18	9	13
Accommodation problems (getting accommodation provided by an employer and others)	18	16	25
Gap between salary rate and my professional skills	13	16	10
Weak coordination between State Employment Service, university and employer	10	16	17

Source: author's calculation

The second important problem for young people is the problem of low salary. "Low" salary is not the specific rate of salary but the gap between young people`s desired income and the real market offers about the salary. Thirdly, we have the problem of vacancies absence, which shows the lack of interaction between the educational organizations and the subjects of the market.

The main employment trend today is the interconnection of professional experience and educational background. Thus, we have more young people who combine work and study in college and at university. That is why the most effective method for graduates` employment is saving the job which they have during the educational process or during the work practice.

Tab. 2: The effectiveness assessment of different employment methods according to young people, per cent

Options (respondent could choose more than one option)	Age groups (years)		
	Age under 20	Age 21–25	Age 26–30
Youth labor exchange, Vacancies Fair*, Days of Career* (*special activities for students to get better understanding about professions and to get closer to employers)	12	9	4
Placement of graduates	21	25	23
Parents and friends` help	25	33	27
Assistance of State Employment Service	11	5	4
Continue to work for the company of work practice or of the actual work place after graduation	40	27	32
Mailing CVs to employers	25	22	17
Work search on the web and posting CVs on the recruitment sites	31	37	36
Agencies assistance in recruiting	10	5	5
Targeted training on the employer`s demand	7	12	11
Contact with employer`s HR department	5	3	5

Source: author`s calculation

Posting a CV and searching for vacancies through the internet stays quite a popular method of work search. This method is on the second place of the most popular methods rating for different categories of working young people (from 21% to 40%). Young people highly appreciate traditional employment methods with a use of social capital – the parental support and the friends and relatives` support. This method has the same rating in different types of age groups: over 22% of respondents identify it as the effective method. Methods based on mediation services (including State Employment Service, recruiting agencies, labour exchange) and taking part in special events are less popular. In addition, methods based on the collaboration of employers and universities (Vacancies Fairs, Days of Career) are not popular as well, especially among the “older” youth, which however could be explained by “a loss of

connection” with the field of educational institutions. Moreover, such activities are usually targeted on young students.

2.2. Plans for changes of profession

The important indicator of working young people`s well-being is their satisfaction with a job. The research results show that the substantial part of youth is more or less satisfied with a job (77%). Also 14% of young people are more not satisfied than satisfied and 10% of them are absolutely not satisfied with their work. While young people are not satisfied with their job in different aspects, this can stimulate their willingness to change not only the work place but also the profession. According to the survey results, respondents are divided into three roughly equal parts: 37% of young people are going to change their profession, 32% of respondents are not going to do it and 30% of young people have not decided yet, i.e. haven`t thought about it.

Tab. 3: Young people`s plans for possible change of profession, per cent

Options	Age groups		
	Age under 20	Age 21–25	Age 26–30
No, I am not going to change my profession	30	22	49
Yes, I am going to change my profession	35	55	16
I haven`t thought about it yet	34	23	35

Source: author`s calculation

The stability of professional intentions and path depends on the age. Respondents aged under 20 are at the start of their professional path. However, 35% of them are going to change their profession. The choice of profession is very vague today. Young people have to choose a field of professional training while they don`t have enough information about professions and they are influenced by mass media which creates fake images of professions. Besides, young people make a decision while the economic situation is unstable, a job market fluctuates, prestige hierarchy of professions and occupations is in change, a system of professional education remains to be in the constant reforming, i.e. “game rules” are permanently changing. Thus, making the deliberate and motivated choice without life and work experience is rather difficult. A lot of young people leave their choice of profession until later when they will get any professional education. Hence, young people have willingness to change their profession as the profession which they got has been considered as temporal or for testing.

On a stage from 21 to 25 years a choice of a professional career becomes important again. For many young people this is the stage of graduation from a university or a college and gaining some work experience. They re-evaluate their professional status from the perspective of a certified specialist or a graduate with bachelor or master degree. On the other hand, work experience requires re-evaluation of their professional perspective. That's why the number of young people planning to change profession in this age group is up to 55%.

On the stage from 26 to 30 years we can see the stabilization of professional interests, young people become more and more ingrained in their profession and the share of those who want to change it decreases to 16%. Also we studied young people's motives for changing the profession. Young people under 20 are motivated to change the profession because of temporal status of their current job (see Tab. 4). This age group mainly consists of students. As we know, student's job is mostly a part time job with a temporal status and doesn't count as "serious" job with a long period of employment.

Tab. 4: Reasons for possible change of profession, per cent

Options	Age groups		
	Age under 20	Age 21–25	Age 26–30
I am working temporarily, as long as I study	47	34	4
I considered my work as a temporal job right from the start	16	19	7
I am not satisfied with working conditions and the type of work	13	16	15
I am not satisfied with the salary	29	50	53
The work is boring	19	13	19
The work is too hard	13	7	10
I've got bad relationships with management	12	5	4
I've got bad relationships with my colleagues	11	5	12
My company is under the threat of bankruptcy/closure	7	6	8
I've got regular salary delays	18	4	8
I've got no social guaranties	7	5	8
Equipment and facilities are old, no modern technologies	7	4	8

Source: author's calculation

Among the age group from 26 to 30 there are other motives for changing a job and a profession and the main of them is the salary which doesn't satisfy them. This reason also is substantial for other age groups but for the age group from 26 to 30 it is the most important. The share of those, who are not satisfied with their salary in this group, is 53%. A boring job

is a motive for work change for every fifth respondent, the absence of career opportunities is the reason to change a job for every fourth respondent.

2.3 Resources for Getting a Job

During the study young people evaluated different kind of resources required to get a good job, among them are professional, qualification and educational resources. According to the survey results, the most important resources required for getting a good job are the high quality of professional training and of higher education (see Tab. 5).

Tab. 5: Young people evaluation of resources to get a good job, per cent

Options	Age groups		
	Age under 20	Age 21–25	Age 26–30
Good higher education	52	35	35
Good professional training (a mix of theoretical knowledge and practical experience)	57	63	57
Good IT competence	24	20	19
Good knowledge of a foreign language	37	33	24
Good communicational skills, ability to work in a team	36	40	37
Leadership	21	24	17
Good connections	28	39	33
Good health, physical characteristics	21	13	7
Attractive appearance	14	9	12
No bad habits	17	5	9
Good resume	18	12	7
Good image in social media	5	4	0

Source: author's calculation

High quality of education as an effective resource for getting a good job was evaluated with greater importance by people from the age group under 20. Respondents from this group also highly appreciate good knowledge of a foreign language (43%).

The fear of losing a job indicates the level of anxiety among young people. According to our survey, the level of anxiety is rather high. About 40% of respondents expressed such worry to different extents. Young people from Ekaterinburg and other cities of Sverdlovsk Oblast consider their profession and professional skills as a kind of insurance in case of unemployment, while young people from countryside are not so optimistic in their

considerations. Obviously, they are more vulnerable to unemployment, and they realize their vulnerability to the sufficient extent.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the study of the young people`s social well-being in the spheres of labour and employment, we can conclude the following. Among the most pressing problems related to employment there are the absence of work experience and the gap between professional training and the employer`s requirements. Comparing this fact with the low young people`s evaluation of the activities organized by both educational institutions and business for successful employment, we conclude that collaboration between educational institutions and employers is not effective.

Young people use their own resources and their parents and relatives` help as a main method for work search, they almost don`t use formal methods for employment based on mediation services or labour exchange, State Employment Service and recruitment agencies.

The substantial part of young people is not satisfied with their profession and even more of them are going to change a profession in the near future. More than a third of young people are afraid to lose their job. They consider quality of higher education and professional skills as a kind of insurance in case of unemployment and as a guarantee of getting better job. That is why it is very important to widen the educational opportunities for young people, to expand their access to high-quality higher education and other forms of complementary and professional education as the means of improving their professional competence and qualification.

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