

HUMAN CAPITAL OF UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS IN RUSSIA AS A PROBLEM OF UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Studies of Russian students in recent years show that their acute problem is educational failure. It is largely due to the low quality of students' human capital. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is the limited attention paid to it by university management. The purpose of the article is to identify the areas of activity of university management to overcome the educational failure of students through the development of their human capital. The main objectives of the study: 1) interpretation of the concept of the human capital of students; 2) characteristics of the human capital of unsuccessful students; 3) identification of the reasons for the weak interest of university management in the problem of the human capital of these students and the directions of its development. Empirical basis of the study are results of an online survey of students of the Sverdlovsk region (January-February 2021, n=921, quota sample according to two criteria – direction and level of training). Main results of the study are the interpretation of the human capital of students, the characteristics of its main elements and the directions of university management activities aimed at creating conditions for the development of the human capital of unsuccessful students.

Key words: human capital of students, educational failure / success, university management

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Introduction

Studies of Russian students in recent years, including the authors, show that one of their most acute problems is educational failure. It is largely related to the level of development and quality of the students' human capital. One of the main reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon is the limited attention paid to the development of students' human capital by university management. The purpose of the article is to characterize the activities of university management to overcome the educational failure of students through the development of their human capital. Main research objectives: 1) interpretation of the concept of the human capital of students; 2) characteristics of the human capital of unsuccessful

students; 3) revealing of the main areas of work of university management for the development of the human capital of educationally unsuccessful students.

For the study of the problem of human capital of students, the works devoted to the formation of an optimal educational policy focused on the development and transfer of human capital are of particular importance (Cremer, Pestieau, 2006; Bernasconi, Profeta, 2012, Hekman, 2011). In recent years, there have been quite a few publications devoted to the problems of human capital of students. Among them are the issues of professional employment of students during their studies and after graduation, the problems of preparation for professional activity and postgraduate studies through the prism of human capital (Benati, Fischer, 2020). Interesting work of M. Jakubik, dedicated to the case of human capital development during the preparation of a master's thesis as a work-based learning project (Jakubik, 2019). The study of S. Djajic with co-authors is devoted to the influence of «brain drain» on the optimal educational policy aimed at the development of the economy (Djajic et al, 2019). Building on existing criticisms of modern higher education mechanisms, E. Muddiman focuses on the claim that the human capital model undermines the civic or public role of universities, restricts student participation in learning, and damages critical thinking and empathy (Muddiman, 2020). Despite the wide range of issues studied in connection with the problem of human capital of students, the problem of human capital of unsuccessful students remains a «white spot» on the research map. The activity of university management aimed at overcoming this problem is also not considered in the literature.

1 Theoretical approaches and methods

The authors used community-based and resource-based approaches as the main scientific approaches. The community-based approach allowed us to structure the student community, revealing the specifics of the value consciousness and the activities of its individual groups, and at the same time showing their common features and relationships. The principles of the community-based approach determined the possibilities of typologizing students in the context of the problem of educational success/failure. So, we have identified and analyzed successful and unsuccessful students. The typology of students depending on their position in the structure of the educational community («core», «semi-periphery» and «periphery») was also justified. The «core» included groups of students who achieve significant academic results and success in the field of scientific research, culture, art, sports, and have a high level of social activity. This is the vanguard of students, acting as a driver of its development. The

«semi-periphery» consisted of students achieving some achievements in these areas, primarily in education. Due to this part (the most widespread), Russian students reproduce themselves as an educational community. The «periphery» of students includes those groups that do not have (and do not seek to obtain) any noticeable results in any of these areas, primarily in education, which by definition is a priority in the university.

The resource-based approach allowed us to consider the human capital of students as a set of resources – personal, organizational, community, necessary to achieve educational success or overcome educational failure. The resource-based approach was needed to understand the interconnectedness of resource allocation mechanisms with political, organizational, socio-stratification and other mechanisms. The main groups of resources considered by the authors in the structure of students' human capital were cognitive, behavioral, and predictive.

The empirical base of the study included the results of a mass online survey of students of the Sverdlovsk region (January-February 2021, n=921, quota sample according to two criteria – profile and level of training).

2 Results and Discussion

2.1 The concept of student human capital

We define the human capital of students as a set (relationship) of accumulated cognitive, non-cognitive and predictive resources that allow them to achieve a certain level of educational success. The content of cognitive resources is determined by a variety of educational standards, so the subject and meta-subject knowledge, skills, and abilities included in this group are extremely differentiated and difficult to empirically verify. In the study, a methodological technique was used, according to which cognitive resources were not differentiated depending on the direction of training and educational program, but were measured through three indicators: 1) students' value attitude towards them; 2) students' satisfaction with the state of this element; 3) activity on its formation and development.

The non-cognitive resources include educational and achievement motivation, the ability to make professional choices, and the willingness to make professional self-determination (Alva, 2019). They are based on value orientations on education and educational activity as work. An important characteristic of the human capital of students is the formation of their professional orientation. In our study, it was measured through students' ideas about their future work and satisfaction with the choice of future profession.

The third group of structural elements of students' human capital is formed by the elements of health capital, cultural, moral, and social capital, which act as predictors of educational success. Many of them are formed during the period of pre-professional education and, by definition, should receive a new impetus to development at the university. How productive the process of building predictive resources will be for students depends on the socializing potential of vocational education as a whole and the specific university.

2.2 Characteristics of the human capital of unsuccessful students

The quality of cognitive resourcing largely depends on the students' attitude to the acquired knowledge. This knowledge is the core of education and an indicator of its quality. However, the quality of education is not the basis for achieving success in life in the eyes of unsuccessful students. Among university students, this factor took the 7th place in the list of 10 positions.

This position of students correlates with their dissatisfaction with the volume and quality of the knowledge, skills and abilities obtained. We believe that this situation reflects the generally low level of satisfaction of unsuccessful students with their educational activities. Most of them are not satisfied with their attitude to study (62.9%) and their achievements in it (66.7%).

At the same time, according to the survey results, the majority of unsuccessful students are indifferent to the opportunities to develop knowledge in higher education through the system of additional and informal education. Almost half of these university students (47.6%) are satisfied with the knowledge they receive during classes. For about 25% of unsuccessful students, the knowledge obtained in an educational institution does not matter at all for later life and work. Only 26.7% of respondents highly value knowledge and try not to miss the opportunity to engage in, including science and self-education. 57.1% of unsuccessful students are not currently engaged in any type of additional education, justifying this primarily by lack of necessity and secondly by lack of time.

The analysis of the survey results concerning the behavioral resources of the human capital of unsuccessful students showed that the formation of educational motivation is a significant difference between the students of the «core», «semi-periphery» and «periphery».

A significant part of unsuccessful students are poorly motivated to study (tab. 1). More than half of them, although not particularly willing, nevertheless understand that it is necessary to study. But for 20% of students, training is absolutely forced – this group of students does not want to study at all. Grades for unsuccessful students do not have any

motivating value: only 10.5% of students are stimulated to some activity, while the rest are alarmed (45.7%) and indifferent (43.8%).

Tab. 1: Educational motivation of unsuccessful students, in % of the number of respondents

Which of the following statements is more consistent with your position?	%
I want to learn, it gives me pleasure, increases self-esteem	27,6
I understand that it is necessary to study, although there is no special desire	52,4
I don't want to learn, but I have to do it	20,0
Total	100,0

Source: author's research

Next, we will consider such a characteristic of the human capital of unsuccessful students as their attitude to the future profession. The correlation analysis revealed a clear relationship between the level of academic performance of students and the clarity of their vision of professional and labor prospects. Unsuccessful university students rated their ideas about work and profession on an average of 6.43 points on a 10-point scale. Among the unsuccessful students, there were much more of those who are not currently satisfied with the choice of their future profession (tab. 2).

Tab. 2: Students' satisfaction with the choice of their future profession, in % of the number of respondents

How satisfied are you with your future career choice?	What grades are you studying for?		
	Excellent and good («core»)	Good and satisfactory («semi-periphery»)	Satisfactory and lower («periphery»)
Rather satisfied	81,9	77,3	66,7
Rather not satisfied	18,1	22,7	33,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: author's research

Among the unsuccessful students, there are fewer working students (due to difficulties in studying and finding a job). For those unsuccessful students who still found a job, it is in no

way connected with either the profile of training or with the future profession, i.e. their employment is spontaneous.

Let us turn to the consideration of the predictive elements of the human capital of unsuccessful students. When studying their value orientations, the absolute priority of the value of health (1st position), financial well-being (2nd position), and family (3rd position) was revealed. As you can see, this is a fairly traditional set of value orientations, and such a resource of success as health was in the first place in it. This is all the more understandable because the study was conducted during the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, the most satisfied with the state of their health were the students of the «semi-periphery» (tab. 3). The unsuccessful students were much less satisfied with their health.

Tab. 3: Students' satisfaction with the predictive resources of their human capital, in % of the number of respondents

How satisfied are you at the moment...	What grades are you studying for?		
	Excellent and good («core»)	Good and satisfactory («semi-periphery»)	Satisfactory and lower («periphery»)
The state of your health	65,7	67,8	56,2
Active participation in cultural events and social projects	51,6	48,5	57,1
The moral side of their actions	89,5	87,8	76,2
Relationships with other people	84,3	83,5	79,0

Source: author's research

Interestingly, such an indicator of the moral capital of students as honesty and integrity (considered by students in the system of factors of life success), was put by the students of the «periphery» in one of the last places (8) in the list of 10 positions. At the same time, the vast majority of students showed their satisfaction with the moral side of their own actions (tab. 3), although the group of unsuccessful students again showed a significantly lower level of satisfaction with this aspect of their lives.

The such values as «good friends», «recognition, respect in society, demand» and «popularity, fame» can speak to a certain extent about the social capital of students. The first of these categories took the average position among unsuccessful students in the system of

value orientations (6th place out of 15), the rest – the «honorary» last places. In general, this arrangement is quite predictable: students during their studies form their social capital at the expense of their immediate environment, i.e. friends. Almost all groups of students – both successful and unsuccessful – are mostly satisfied with their relationships with others, but still among the students of the «core» and «semi-periphery» there were more of them than among the representatives of the «periphery» (tab. 3).

The cultural capital of unsuccessful students was evaluated by us through the significance for them of such values as «the opportunity to engage in a hobby», «self-realization», «the opportunity to relax, travel», «harmony in life». Of these values, only the opportunity to engage in a hobby, a favorite activity was significant (position 4).

2.3 Managing the human capital of unsuccessful students

In the course of the study, we identified the reasons for the weak interest of university management in the problem of the insufficient level of human capital of students. Among them, the reasons of organizational and managerial, competence, motivational, behavioral and cultural nature were identified. At the same time, as a special reason, the clearly insufficient attention of managers at different levels to the interests and needs of students, as well as their poor knowledge, was emphasized.

According to the study, an important task of university management is to create conditions for the accumulation and enrichment of students' human capital. Some of the conditions can be offered to them directly (the first group), others – indirectly, through the scientific and pedagogical community (the second group).

Speaking about the first group of conditions, we note the need for a good knowledge of the real situation in the university and its structural divisions and the purposeful use of this knowledge in the interests of enriching the human capital of all students. Most often, such knowledge is clearly lacking. Usually they are limited to a list of excellent students and permanent losers, and as a rule, no one purposefully works with the latter. They are deprived of scholarships and warned about «non-compliance» for failing to perform well. However, the system of punishments, built in this way, has not worked for a long time in relation to unsuccessful students.

What is the meaning of management activities in universities aimed at enriching the human capital of students, among whom there is a low proportion of educationally successful and a high proportion of educationally unsuccessful young people? It consists in paying attention not only (and not so much) to the former, but also to the latter (de Wit, 2019). To do

this, it is necessary to create a special incentive system in universities for both educationally unsuccessful students and teachers who work effectively (actually, not imitatively) with them. We are talking about those people who successfully help students enrich and develop their human capital (Lane et al, 2019).

Strong students can also play a role in this process. Students acquire many skills and abilities in interaction with the scientific and pedagogical community, as well as among themselves, in communication with each other. The organization of this interaction and the creation of favorable conditions for it is an important task for the management of universities in general and their specific structural divisions. The experience of leading foreign universities (especially American ones), which create special spaces for such interaction (coworking spaces for communication, discussions with comfortable furniture, the Internet, and computers), may also be useful.

Interaction between the three main university communities (students, research and teaching staff, and management staff) is a real process of human capital transfer: 1) from some students (successful) to others – less successful and unsuccessful; 2) from the scientific and pedagogical community to students; 3) from managers to teachers and students.

In this process, there can be contradictions between all participants in the interaction. We pay special attention to the contradiction between managers and students and teachers. It is caused by the need to involve managers in a new field of activity for them – creating conditions for supporting educationally unsuccessful students and enriching their human capital. Overcoming this contradiction, as it seems to us, can be carried out by creating special conditions, using social, psychological and pedagogical technologies to work with unsuccessful students, and showing special attention to such students.

It is necessary to see and take into account at different levels of management the real growth of students' human capital in each of the main types of university activities and how its transfer can be carried out. In our opinion, the main indicators of this growth and successful promotion are: in the educational process – the transition of students characterized by educational failure to educational success, in the field of scientific and project activities – the involvement of the majority of students in its various forms and types, in social work and in management – participation in various manifestations of social activity of a significant part of the student youth.

The work of university managers to support educationally unsuccessful students and form a special direction of work with them requires attention from the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Its participation in this process would be highly appropriate. We can

talk about the introduction of new indicators for evaluating the performance of provincial universities located on the periphery of Russian higher education. The traditional indicator – an increase in the proportion of students who achieve high results (and belong to the «core» of students according to our classification) – should be supplemented by an increase in the number of students who have gone from failure to success both in educational, professional, and social terms.

Conclusion

The study showed a low level of development of cognitive, behavioral and predictive resources that students must possess in order to successfully carry out educational and research activities. The article emphasizes the role of two areas of management activity in order to enrich the human capital of students. The first is to create conditions for strengthening the interaction between the «core», «semi-periphery» and «periphery» of students. It can contribute to the development and transfer of its human capital, especially the last two groups of university youth. The second is a special incentive for teachers who are willing to additionally and effectively work with unsuccessful students, contributing to the development of their cognitive and behavioral resources.

The authors proposed the directions of university management activities aimed at creating conditions for the development of the human capital of unsuccessful students: equal attention to all students – successful and unsuccessful; orientation of pedagogical staff to the importance of special work with unsuccessful students and its special stimulation; a systematic approach to solving the problem of human capital of educationally unsuccessful students. According to the authors, the work on the development of the human capital of unsuccessful students should be a special strategy of university management.

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