

Russian Entrepreneurship in the Context of Socio-Economic Crisis: the Risks of Deprofessionalization

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The importance of sociological understanding of the risks of deprofessionalization of entrepreneurial activity in the context of a deep socio-economic crisis is determined by the peculiarities (crisis, illegal practices) of entrepreneurship in post-Soviet Russia which affected its modern development. **Methodology:** I. Schumpeter's theoretical ideas create the methodological basis for the study of modern Russian entrepreneurship. Schumpeter defines an entrepreneur as the "main phenomenon" of economic development. The scientist associates entrepreneurship with innovation and introduction of new combinations of production factors. The neo-institutional approach is methodologically important for the study of Russian entrepreneurship. This approach states that any social institutional practices are determined by the specific institutional system, the system being a historical product of a particular era and society. The study of the risks of deprofessionalization of Russian entrepreneurship is carried out on the basis of theoretical ideas of Zh. T. Toshchenko, aimed at analysis of a new modern phenomenon - "effective managers", considered in the context of opportunistic behavior in the field of entrepreneurship. **Results:** The study concludes that the attitude to entrepreneurship in Russia has positively changed in the last decade. Despite this fact, Russia faces the risks of deprofessionalization. The risks are associated with both institutional formation factor and the modern conditions of professional training of entrepreneurs: the crisis of educational system and transformation of professional and labour values. **Applications of this study:** The results of this study facilitate navigation in the meanders of institutional transformations which take place in professional and labour spheres of the modern Russia, making it possible to predict the situation in social reproduction of the Russian community from the prospects of innovative development. That is possible because entrepreneurship acts as a generator and implementation entity of social innovations. **Novelty/Originality of this study:** The risks of Russian entrepreneurship deprofessionalization in the current social reality are determined by a set of institutional factors which create a crisis space for professionalization of entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs at all the stages, from the process of professional self-determination to professional self-realization. This situation lays the foundation for crisis reproduction of the entire socio-cultural system. It is difficult to change the situation in the short term, therefore, we are talking about long-term projects. The authors propose to turn to potential of the institute of education, designed not only to form a layer of knowledge, skills, and competencies of the future businessmen, but also to form a culture of entrepreneurship with a high level of professional responsibility as one of the main indicators of professionalism.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship; Labour; Professionalization; Deprofessionalization; Socio-economic crisis; Labour market; Labour values; Entrepreneurial culture; Educational system.



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1. Introduction

The problem of Russian entrepreneurship relates not only to the socio-economic crisis that takes place in Russia, but to the very system of formation and reproduction of this socio-cultural phenomenon and professional class. Sociological study of deprofessionalization risks in the sphere of entrepreneurship is very important in this context. This study addresses the problems of professional choice, self-determination, negative trends in the field of professionalization of the young people as a result of decrease in level of their professional training and competence. Sociological study also focuses on material well-being as a key motivation in career and employment, on the decline in interest in work and profession as a terminal value, on the general tendency to treat both professional and working values with their orientation pragmatically (Vereshchagina *et al.*, 2015).

The Russian reality develops insanely rapidly. It is full of risks and uncertainty. In a crisis format, there is a need to stay mobile, follow flexible strategies, combine different activities and different forms of employment (Konstantinovskiy *et al.*, 2014). The labour market faces deprofessionalization in the form of decrease in

professional knowledge and skills, lower level of competence and qualification acquired in the process of professional adaptation.

Such a negative trend, typical for the Russian society, originates from the lack of integrated and effective system of professionalization, vocational training and adaptation of the young people. The rapid decline in quality of education in Russia threatens intellectual security of the country (Vereshchagina *et al.*, 2016), as well as the unregulated nature of the labour market, especially of the youth labour market. The young people experience failures in social and professional field. This situation threatens professional sphere of the entire Russian society and the field of entrepreneurship in particular.

Entrepreneurship belongs to one of the most active subjects of market relations. The history of Russian entrepreneurship is characterised by unique cultural and historical specificity that determines importance of this phenomenon and kind of activity in social development. Entrepreneurship is a potential member, exponent and translator of both traditional and new values of the modern era, in the times of information technologies and globalization.

Thanks to activities of the business entities, entrepreneurship (as a socio-cultural phenomenon) plays the key role in transformation of the value-system in Russian market society. In this regard, sociological study of Russian entrepreneurship is particularly relevant. Sociological study relates to the value content of entrepreneurial activity, professional entrepreneurial culture, the power of influence of business on the mass consciousness, behavioural practices of Russians and their consumer behaviour (Vereshchagina *et al.*, 2018).

The study of this problem facilitates navigation in the meanders of institutional transformations of professional and labour spheres in the modern Russia. We can also predict the situation in social reproduction of the Russian community from the prospects of its innovative development. All that is possible, because entrepreneurship is a generator and implementation entity of social innovations.

2. Methods and Materials

Entrepreneurship is quite well studied in social and humanitarian knowledge, including sociology. Representatives of various disciplinary practices still demonstrate a sustainable interest in this subject and form a large field of discourse. They tend to gain insight into the nature of this phenomenon, try to determine the essence, mission and structure of entrepreneurship. These problems are deeply analysed abroad, foreign scientists conclude that we shall consider the social and cultural factors along with the economic factors and determiners of entrepreneurship (Audretsch and Keilbach, 2004; Drakopoulou and Anderson, 2007; Montanye, 2006; Wennekers *et al.*, 2005). This research line is close to the ideas of domestic authors who study socio-cultural narratives of modern economic development (Konstantin *et al.*, 2017; Konstantin *et al.*, 2018).

There are many approaches to scientific study of entrepreneurship: we may treat it as a special kind of activity, as a socio-cultural phenomenon and as a professional class engaged in entrepreneurial activity. This study is based on I. Schumpeter's approach, who stated, that entrepreneur "is the main phenomenon" of economic development. Schumpeter links entrepreneurship with innovation, and entrepreneurs themselves with introduction of new combinations of production factors (Schumpeter, 1982). According to this statement, the most important feature of entrepreneurship lies in the innovative nature, that is crucial in the context of another functional predetermination – profit by business activities. Profit is an instrumental functional component of entrepreneurship. But the main one is the terminal innovative component.

The Russian scientist V. Radaev suggested that entrepreneurship is implementation of organizational innovation for the purpose of making profit (or getting additional income) (Radaev, 1995). In this context, this definition can be taken as a basis.

The neo-institutional approach is methodologically valuable for the study of Russian entrepreneurship. According to this approach states any social institutional practices are determined by the existing institutional system of the given society and this system is a historical product of the particular era and the particular society. D. North writes: "Institutional evolution of economy depends on the interaction between institutions and organizations. If institutions are rules of the game, then the organizations and entrepreneurs who create them are the players...emergence of these or those organizations is conditioned by the institutional matrix. Thus, if the institutional system encourages banditry, there arises organized crime; if the system encourages production, there arise production organizations (firms)" (North, 1997).

In other words, we shall study the institutional system of society and all the social processes determined by this system in the context of phenomenon of institutional dependence. Then, the present society in the context of its processes, organizations, institutions, phenomena, etc. depends on the historical trajectory of institutional development.

The study of deprofessionalization determines importance of theoretical ideas of Zh.T.Toshchenko, who studied "effective managers" - a new phenomenon of the Russian present (but not the Russian only) (Toshchenko, 2014). Under this term he means non-professionals who manage society and its sectors being focused on their personal interests to the detriment of the people. Some scientists consider this phenomenon in the context of opportunistic behaviour in the sphere of entrepreneurship (Aleskerova, 2017).

In this study, we mean by deprofessionalization the process associated with the loss of professional qualities and skills by the subjects of professional activity. Deprofessionalization is a decline of professional level due to unsuccessful self-realization in professional sphere for various reasons. These reasons can be both internal (lack of readiness, inability to professional activity, unwillingness to work hard in the chosen professional field or to raise

qualification) and external (unfavorable conditions in the labour market, the troubles of employment, incl. inability to find a job in specialization, low wages in a particular professional field, economic crisis, etc.).

Deprofessionalization also manifests in professional infantilism. Professional infantilism feeds this process, becomes the essential expression of deprofessionalization along with the low level of one of the main indicators of professionalism such as professional responsibility.

3. Results

Entrepreneurship is a significant factor in development for both economic sphere where it functions directly, and the social sphere as a whole. In the social sphere it performs a number of important functions such as: socio-economic, socio-political, socio-cultural, spiritual, social engagement and socialization. The proper functioning of business entities is fundamentally important for the society. In this case, entrepreneurs meet social needs and tend to the economic activity, contrary to the principles of opportunistic behaviour.

At the same time, the Russian scientists state that such behaviour of entrepreneurs is still relevant for the modern Russia. There still exist some crisis phenomena caused by the abrupt shifting from the planned economy of the Soviet period to the market economy of the post-Soviet period (Aleskerova, 2017).

Other Russian scientists state that the low efficiency of entrepreneurship in Russia is the result of the USSR collapse. The post-Soviet Russia, unlike the Eastern European countries and the Baltic States, made no radical step towards a highly competitive economy, democracy and civil society. Moreover, the dominance of etacracy continued, the private property took a secondary position with a tendency to form free market economy (Shkaratan and Yastrebov, 2008).

For the modern Russia the link "power-property" is still relevant, though to a lesser degree than in the early post-Soviet period. That influences socio-economic, political development of the country, and individual actors of economic relations. A good example is formation of large ownership in post-Soviet Russia. The combination of features of a former party-Soviet staffers and properties of ordinary businessmen determined the peculiarities of consciousness and behaviour of large owners.

It is clear that development of free and effective entrepreneurship requires formation of a democratic state and free civil society. Under the pressure of state-bureaucratic structures it is impossible to develop effective entrepreneurship in a free market manner for the benefit of society, i.e. civilized and socially oriented. Some researchers study the problem of social responsibility of Russian entrepreneurship. They give no definite answer, since "Russian entrepreneurship at the moment combines elements of socially "irresponsible" entrepreneurship: fraud, unfair competition, violence of tax obligations, lack of social guarantees for the employees along with the high level of social responsibility of economic entities, respectful attitude to the employees, high appreciation, ability to achieve reliable partnerships, and sincere desire to participate in creation of a prosperous society" (Baranova, 2017).

Scientists note that the historical image of the Russian entrepreneur is very attractive – "the man with unique mentality, with a special ability to do business. Russian businessman is hard-working, persistent, has good leadership qualities and desires to get profit. Thanks to initiative of entrepreneurs Russia was able to reclaim new lands" (Nikonov, 2017).

As we can see, innovation and efficiency are the key mental characteristics of Russian entrepreneurs, and even today, according to Nikonov, research of small and medium business representatives records rise in manifestation of independence and autonomy of Russian entrepreneurs compared to entrepreneurs of other countries. The Russian youth, according to sociological survey, considers entrepreneurship to be very attractive (57%), but about 48% of these 57% are not willing to do business officially because of their unwillingness to adopt some obligations like official registration of business, payment of taxes, responsibility (full or partial) for business activities, etc. (Nikonov, 2017).

The fact that young people are very interested in entrepreneurship reflects their desire for independence, stable income and labour autonomy (they want to work for themselves). The alarming factor here is the socio-economic instability of Russian society, the fear of failure, consequences of bankruptcy, high legal responsibility, etc., all that is associated with conditions of business development and the state of economy as a whole.

The results of a large-scale study by the Institute of Sociology of the RAS "Poverty and inequality in modern Russia: 10 years later" show that the Russian people name hard work (88% of the surveyed citizens believe so), good education and the right connections (90% and 88%), ambition (72%), and high material status of the family (66%) to be the necessary conditions, providing upward mobility in modern Russia (Poverty and Inequality in Modern Russia, 2013). Hard work is still considered to be an important success factor, but this does not necessarily mean to pursue in the chosen profession and education. The professional field has become a field of personal fulfillment.

Within the current system of employment and salaries people tend to choose profession and subsequent employment instinctively. That is a source of deprofessionalization among the young people who fail to find a job in specialty at the labour market. In the Russian reality, the interaction between education system and the labour market is not effective. That is seen in low rates of youth employment in specialization and the lack of demand for their competencies (Mukhina, 2016).

In Russia, the bureaucratic obstacles cripple economic activity, especially affecting those who start a business. Entrepreneurs, especially the young ones, face ineffective tax policy. They have no resource to fully comply with the norms and rules of the taxation, the young entrepreneurs need serious support themselves. The ineffective legal framework and vulnerability of Russian business (primarily small and medium enterprises) relates to the criminal component of the Russian economy and destruction of the professional training system.

Violation of the norms and outlawry appear to be good reasons for the growth of opportunistic behaviour in business. The socio-economic reality of Russia allows to follow only the survival strategy instead of the social utility strategy both in economy and professional life of individuals. The growth of opportunistic behaviour among entrepreneurs in terms of socio-economic crisis, that influences social development of Russia, is quite predictable and understandable. People react to aggravation of threats to stability and security. The threats force businessman to pursue his own interest, increased and even hypertrophied (Aleskerova, 2017).

Under these circumstances the principles of social responsibility as a component of high professionalism pale into insignificance. The prolonged crisis trajectory of the Russian society raises serious concerns about the future of entrepreneurship and professional level of this sphere. In crisis businessmen adopt the same survival strategy. Professionalism is not considered to be the main value of this conception.

4. Discussion

Thus, formation and development of the Russian entrepreneurship takes place in the context of a long socio-economic crisis. The economic development is still provided by raw materials, rather than by innovative economy focused on formation of effective economic institutions, including entrepreneurship to compete with the leading economic entities (Dyatlov *et al.*, 2015).

The labour in Russia has turned into a means of survival. The existential essence associated with personal formation in the course of labour is lost. Therefore is just the payment, not professional affiliation, that becomes the dominant factor of self-determination in the labour sphere. That is true not only for representatives of the younger generations of Russians, but also for the older ones (Chuprov *et al.*, 2014).

In other words, pragmatic treatment of labour values and the sphere of professional self-determination is the key factor for all generations of Russians (excluding the elderly population, still guided by the principles of the Soviet work ethics). This fact should be taken into account in the study of the problem of professional dynamics and adaptation of Russians at the labour market in modern conditions. Occupational prestige will be determined mainly by profitability, such a criteria as the social status of profession and prospects for professional growth, social approval and social utility of work have ceased to be fundamental. Even for this index, it is possible to judge about the critical nature of functioning of the Russian society, in which occupational prestige was first of all determined by its' social status.

Thus, the risks of deprofessionalization are mainly associated with the crisis of the institute of labour. This crisis appears in destruction of the traditional Russian ethos of work that considered labour to be a life-purpose value, essential to formation and improvement of identity in the process of labour, inseparably linked with the process of professionalization. Now, labour is a means of survival, realization of needs in the sphere of material well-being and success. Most of the Russian people, (except the oldest generations), associate success with material achievements and values, therefore, in professional choice, the material factor becomes crucial. Scientists criticize this factor and state that the lifestyle of a large part of Russian population misses such a complex socio-cultural need as "getting profession they really like" (Boikov, 2014).

The problems associated with deprofessionalization in Russia have their roots in troubles of professional and labour socialization, in the very socio-economic situation. The destroyed channels of social and professional mobility, the growth of social inequality (Gorshkov, 2014) automatically determine the format of professional socialization. These factors refocus professional formation as a means of personal formation on the search for the most effective professional trajectory to survive in the crisis.

No wonder that scientists assess the system of professional socialization in Russia negatively. It forms distorted ideas about occupational prestige for the young people. Also, this system does not provide the proper transfer of professional values, experience and formation of such a professional subjectivity among young professionals. That prevents the youth from joining professional community as the most effective actor of professional activity (Migacheva, 2007).

When the young people are motivated mainly by material factors rather than professional interests, values and abilities associated with pleasure, joy and the labour activity can not be a source of professionalization. M. Gnatyuk and I. Pechkurov note, that such an approach is deprived of emotive component.

In these conditions, development of entrepreneurship in Russia faces the same negative trends. This most important sector of social and economic relations complies with the logic of institutional development of society. D. North notes, that changes in economy are an all-encompassing, constantly growing process, a consequence of everyday choices made by both individuals and entrepreneurs in organizations within the framework of neo-institutionalism theory. As a result, the exchange regulating informal and formal rules of code of conduct gradually change and disappear, institutions do transform as well. By institutions D. North means a set of formal rules, informal restrictions and mechanisms for their enforcement (North, 1997). It is important to keep in mind that formal rules can be changed by the state, and informal restrictions change very slowly.

D. North states that entrepreneur is the current force of change, both in political and economic spheres. The potential of entrepreneurs is determined by institutional constraints, and if the restrictions are built so that one can get more profit by criminal activity or the firm wins only if it completely destroys the competitor, organization adopts the necessary structure to maximize profit in the present conditions. On the other hand, if you have to increase productivity in order to make a profit that results in economic growth. In any case, the entrepreneur and his organization invest capital in knowledge, education and additional skills to increase their profit potential (North, 1997). D. North's theoretical construction is important, because it reveals dependence of the institutional system and its development on the example of economic relations (efficiency/inefficiency) from the historical trajectory of a

particular society and its history of institutional development. Here we come to the theory of "Path-dependence", we will discuss it later.

Within the framework of neo-institutionalism methodology, entrepreneurship is a result of the previous development of economic institutional system of the given society. Effectiveness or inefficiency of entrepreneurship is determined in many ways by the chosen historical trajectories of development when there form and institutionalize economic relations. Thus, complexity of the situation for the countries with economies in transition (former social camp countries and, above all, Russia) is that D. North considers to be "the system of faith and values, formed on the basis of the past experience, unable to help economic agents in solving new problems. Again, therefore, "dependence on the chosen route" is an important factor in limiting our ability to make a difference in the short term" (North, 1997).

In these circumstances it is necessary to think about the long-term projects and turn to the potential of the institute of education. According to Russian scientists, the institute of education is designed not only to form a class of knowledge, skills and competencies for the future entrepreneurs, but also to cultivate culture of entrepreneurship (Avilkina and Leontieva, 2017; Korchagina et al., 2017). All that determines the most important mission of the education system – to form and found culture. It is obvious that the high culture should be the basis of entrepreneurship with a high professional identity, educational environment being the main high culture-forming element.

5. Conclusion

People with entrepreneur spirit have always existed. They act differently, some use their gift to do business for personal purposes and for the benefit of society, and some for the same personal purposes, but at the price of public interests. The modern world has changed only organizational forms of their activity. Now we call these people entrepreneurs. In Russia the attitude to them has always been contradictory, as well as the very appearance of a Russian entrepreneur. The most negative image, perhaps, corresponds to the period of the turbulent 90s, when the very unlawful framework of formation of Russian business structures and large owners triggered nothing but negative emotions.

Over the past decades, entrepreneurial climate in the country has changed significantly. The attitude to entrepreneurship and its subjects has changed as well. However, this positive perception of entrepreneurs themselves and entrepreneurship as a kind of professional activity does not provide them with high professional activity, first of all because of the crisis in current socio-economic reality. The field of labour market development forces entrepreneurs to adopt the tried and tested in Russia survival adaptation schemes, often of a non-legal nature.

The difficulties, risks and threats that accompany entrepreneurial activity in Russia do not inspire young people to engage in entrepreneurship professionally, despite their significant interest. However, modern Russian youth is afraid of high responsibility – both social and legal. Young people choose to ensure their well-being in a more stable and predictable kind of professional activity. Therefore, there is a very serious problem in the sphere of production and reproduction of human and professional entrepreneurship potential in Russian society. The education system should play the main role here.

Thus, the risks of deprofessionalization of Russian entrepreneurship in the current social reality are determined by a set of institutional factors. These factors create a crisis space for professionalization of entrepreneurs and future entrepreneurs at all the stages, from professional self-determination to professional self-realization. This situation lays a foundation for crisis reproduction in the entire socio-cultural system of society and the Russian society fail to break out of this vicious circle of crisis because of that reproduction mechanism. The key element of this mechanism is reproduction of professional system in the current society that gives grounds for a critical assessment of modern Russian reality in terms of professional development and professional self-realization of the citizens, including the field of entrepreneurship.

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