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CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF SOCIALLY ORIENTED PROFESSIONAL GROUPS IN RUSSIAN MEGALOPOLISES

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Abstract

At the present stage, state policy in Russia is changing its direction to labor expense reconsideration, implementation of social programs to support socially oriented professions. The reform of Russian spheres of education and health turns into bureaucratization and focuses on achieving formal performance indicators. Economic crisis leads to a massive decrease in purchasing power among the population, inequality between regions and exacerbate precariatization of social and labor relations. The article examines career orientations of representatives of socially oriented professional groups in Russian megacities in conditions of precariatization of social and labor relations. The empirical base of the research is the results of mass sociological surveys of more than three thousand employees of public schools and hospitals. The survey materials show that metropolitan teachers and doctors consider their career chances to be larger than in regional large cities. Satisfaction with career opportunities, in general, is higher for doctors than for teachers. The educators and doctors interviewed in megalopolises are concerned about the risks of increasing workload without wage growth and loss of work. In the health care sector, there is also an enclavization of precariatization risks in a regional environment, when the influence of precariatization in the capital is stronger than in the provinces. As a result, changes in career strategies of socially oriented professional groups are recorded and include the risks of precariatization, specifically, reduction of the influence of professional self-realization factor, awareness of weak career prospects due to the peculiarities of the career space in these professional segments.

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1. Introduction

Professional activities of the representatives of socially oriented professions (teachers and doctors) play an important role in the processes of maintaining the community macrolevel integrity through the reproduction and transmission of normative value attitudes and behavior patterns. These groups are rather significant for ensuring society's sustainability, reproduction of human resources through professional activities in the field of young people training and socialization, in the sphere of treatment and prevention of diseases among population. In addition, despite a significant public sector jobs cut in recent years, teachers and doctors remain one of the most numerous professional communities in modern Russia. According to official data there are more than one million teachers of secondary schools, about seven hundred thousand doctors and more than one and a half million representatives of nursing staff in the country.

In Soviet society, teachers and doctors had significant social status, social and labor guarantees, and material support from the state. Reformatting Russian social structure during perestroika caused a downward group mobility of teachers and doctors and their socio-economic status, thus, the prestige of work has greatly decreased. As a result, a long stay in the zone of negative professional identity caused lowering of professional motivation of these groups, erosion of attitudes to serve the public, weakening attitudes towards career advancement in the teaching and medical professions. This, in turn creates risks for maintaining societal integrity.

2. Problem Statement

In the last decade, social policy in the field of Russian education and health care redirected towards the increase of socio-economic position of socially important professions. On the other hand, the series of economic crises in Russia (2008–2009, 2014–2015) exacerbated social and economic polarization in society. Reduced production, rising unemployment and labor market instability have led to an increase in the flexibility of social and labor relations in Russian society, when unsustainable principles in the field of wages and working time (often violating the labor rights of employees) are spread. The rules and procedures for layoffs, the transfer to the worst pay principles and working conditions are simplified in the sphere of hiring and relocating workers. Deterioration of the social and labor situation of a large number of workers, the growth of their social insecurity and instability in the labor market in the scientific literature were designated as the process of precariatization (Standing, 2012; Hartung et al., 2017; Jenkins, Charteris, Bannister-Tyrell, & Jones, 2017; Alonso, Ferreira, & Alonso, 2016).

Precariatization has become widespread in Russia, which negatively affects professional motivation and career attitudes of broad groups of the population and weakens its integration potential for society (Klimenko & Posukhova, 2018). According to the Center of Economy of Continuing Education, RANEPa, over half of teachers were unhappy with their salary in the period from 2012 to 2016. Reforming the Russian education system does not provide the expected improvement in the social and labor status of teachers. Teachers explicitly or unconsciously resist innovations because they are not convinced in practicability of changing the usual system and do not see the end result. Young teachers rarely stay in the profession, and innovations do not significantly affect the most acute problems of Russian teachers.

Modernization of the health care system in Russia is also associated with problems of remuneration of medical personnel, increase in the workload, and an excessive regulation of doctors' responsibilities. The studies show that about half of the medical staff has additional work; the usual working week of Russian physicians exceeds the traditional week by 32%. Modern Russian doctors remain dissatisfied with their position and income. Reform in the health care system has increased the differentiation between different groups of medical personnel in terms of income and prestige observed at the level of professional specializations.

It should be noted that not only in Russia but also in Western countries the modern development of the areas where socially-oriented professionals are engaged is associated with large-scale reforms that are linked with radical institutional changes. However, these changes (at least short term ones) do not result in the formation of stable balance and are increasingly characterized by deinstitutionalization, which becomes the cause of precariatization (Dobbins, Plows, & Lloyd-Williams, 2014). Education reforms increase the workload (Cheung & Man, 2012) and adversely affect the professional identity of teachers (Hall & McGinity, 2015). The position of doctors in European countries is better than that of teachers. Mainly young doctors are at risk of getting into the precarious zone (Ilfie, 2017).

In Russian society, the remaining inadequate level of material and social support for teachers and doctors amidst the effects of economic crises, institutional reforms of education and medicine that precariatizing professional position of public sector employees can adversely affect the quality of work, identity and career strategies of these socio-professional groups.

3. Research Questions

Thus, the subject of this article is the career orientations of Russian teachers and doctors in the context of reforming educational and healthcare institutions and precariatizing social and labour relations in society.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to analyse career orientations of the representatives of socially-oriented professional groups of Russian megalopolises in the conditions of precariousizing social and labour relations.

5. Research Methods

The research empirical base was the materials of a sociological study conducted in 2017-2018 in Russian cities, specifically, Moscow, Rostov-on-Don, Kazan. Moscow is the capital of the Russian Federation with a population of more than 12 million people. Rostov-on-Don is the largest city in the South of Russia, the administrative center of the Southern Federal District and the Rostov Region. The population of the city is 1.1 million people. Kazan is the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan being a part of the Russian Federation. Kazan population is 1.2 million people.

Method of sociological research is a mass survey on a standardized questionnaire. Sample survey is quota-proportional.

The following specialist were polled in Russian megacities: 1) 948 teachers of Moscow budget schools, 618 teachers from Rostov-on-Don and 488 teachers from Kazan; 2) 468 doctors working in Moscow, 402 doctors in Kazan, 400 in Rostov.

6. Findings

The study outcomes record the influence of precariatization of social and labor relations on the professional consciousness of teachers and doctors. Following the selection of precariatization signs that have developed in the scientific literature, we can say that a common place in the socio-professional positions of these professional groups is a significant level of anxiety about incorporated values being stable work, stable earnings, confidence in the future and building professional and life career.

The materials of a mass survey of urban teachers showed that school teachers are most concerned about the risks of increasing workload without wage growth (the total percentage of “very worried” and “rather worried” options is 71% in Moscow, 84% in Rostov-on-Don, 73% in Kazan) and job losses (78%, 62%, 49% respectively). Concerned teachers questioned the risks of wage cuts or delays (58%, 48% and 41%). Another 55% of Moscow teachers, 41% of Rostov and 35% of Kazan teachers fear a forced transition to part-time employment.

The results of a sociological survey also show regional differences in career expectations of socially oriented professional groups. For respondents, the priority characteristics of the teacher's profession are the content of work corresponding to personal qualities and abilities (love for children, ability to translate knowledge, pedagogical competence, etc.). Teachers in the capital rate career chances higher (31% of Muscovites, 13% of Rostovites, 11% of Kazan citizens) and place emphasis on the prestige of the profession, intellectual development and professional development opportunities as effective, diverse and increasing the possibility of fulfilling career expectations. There is also such a significant factor as confidence in the professional future, long-term chosen profession (Table 01).

Table 01. Distribution Of Teachers’ Answers To The Question “What Is Essential You In The Work Of A Teacher?”

Answer Options	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-On-Don
1. Love For Children, Desire To Work With Children	56	63	78
2. Ability To Transfer Knowledge, Love For Your Subject	53	62	78
3. Profession Corresponds To My Abilities, Skills	49	61	69
4. Opportunity To Provide A Decent Standard Of Living	31	23	11
5. Profession Is Valued In Society	34	13	11
6. Opportunity To Make A Career	31	11	13
7. Continuation Of The Professional Dynasty	31	14	12
8. Independence, Freedom Of Activity	28	21	27
9. Stay In A Sufficiently Cultural Environment	34	32	48
10. Creative Nature Of The Profession	34	40	59
11. Opportunity To Bring More Benefits To Society	36	35	50
12. Obtaining Certain Benefits (Big Summer Vacations, etc.)	38	46	33
13. Avoiding Unemployment	46	30	30
14. Opportunity To Gain Respect, Recognition In Society	22	22	26
Totally	521	470	543

Empirical measurements show a pronounced degree of teachers' loyalty to their place of work. 70.9% to 84.6% of teachers in different cities (the cumulative percentage of answers "rather agree" and "completely agree") would recommend their school as a good place to work from. Rostov teachers are the most satisfied with the place of the work. Satisfaction with work as a whole is even higher: 76.2% among Moscow teachers, 87.1% among Kazan teachers and 81% in the Rostov segment. Against this background, satisfaction with career prospects is lower: 64.5% in the capital, 58.5% in Kazan, and 61.1% in Rostov-on-Don. It is worth noting that the full degree of satisfaction with the prospects for a career in school is two times less common in the Kazan segment (Table 02).

Table 02. Distribution of teachers' answers to the question "To what extent do you agree with the following statements?"

Statements	Totally disagree			Rather disagree			Rather agree			Totally agree		
	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don
I am satisfied with career prospects in my work.	8	9	15	28	33	24	47	49	46	18	9	15
I would recommend my school as a good place to work.	7	3	4	23	9	11	51	59	44	20	30	40
Overall, I am satisfied with my work.	4	3	5	20	10	14	54	65	61	22	22	20

Thus, research materials show that, despite the difference in wages in metropolitan and regional schools, Moscow teachers are more often concerned about the risks of precariatization. Whereas, career prospects are rated slightly lower by regional school teachers.

In the field of health care, there is a situation when Moscow doctors are more concerned about the risks of precariatization than Kazan and Rostov doctors. The overwhelming majority of the interviewed doctors working in budgetary medical institutions in the cities under review fear growth in workload without an increase in wages (the total percentage of "very worried" and "rather worried" options is 95% in Moscow, 63% in Kazan, 69% in Rostov-on-Don). Another 89% of Moscow's doctors, 57% of Kazan doctors and 75% of Rostov doctors are concerned about the risk of losing their jobs. The outlook for cuts or delays in wages is a concern for 89% of doctors in the capital of the Russian Federation and half the number of doctors in Kazan (43%) and Rostov-on-Don (56%). As well as the risks of transition to part-time job, another two-thirds of the respondents of the first group (76%) and much fewer respondents are concerned with it in the second (35%) and third (45%) groups.

The survey of doctors also shows that for doctors as well as for teachers, the most important in the work is the content of labor, corresponding to their abilities and values. For doctors having the opportunity to make a career is more important for Muscovites than Kazan and Rostovites. Independence of professional

activity, ability to develop intellectually, remain in the environment of like-minded people are more important from the point of view of Moscow and Rostov doctors, and to a lesser extent significant for Kazan doctors (Table 03).

Table 03. Distribution Of Doctors’ Answers To The Question “What Seems To You Essential In The Work Of A Doctor?”

Answer Options	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-On-Don
1. Profession Corresponds To My Abilities, Skills	78	49	67
2. The Desire To Help People, Promote Their Recovery And Improve Their Well-Being	65	69	69
3. Continuation Of The Professional Dynasty	48	35	25
4. Opportunity To Provide A Decent Standard Of Living	37	18	45
5. The Profession Of A Doctor Is Valued In Society	51	38	25
6. Opportunity To Make A Career	42	21	21
7. Independence, Freedom Of Activity	36	9	29
8. Staying In Like-Minded Environment	42	18	55
9. Opportunity To Develop Intellectually And Improve In The Profession	51	22	66
10. Opportunity To Bring More Benefits To Society	68	51	55
11. Receiving Social Benefits And Benefits From The State	32	6	22
12. Avoiding Unemployment	27	8	21
13. Opportunity To Gain Respect, Recognition In Society	32	27	35
Totally	610	371	535

The majority of the doctors surveyed are satisfied with their career prospects but satisfaction rates are higher in the capital than in the regions (71% in Moscow, 66% in Kazan, 53% in Rostov-on-Don). Most doctors are satisfied with their work as a whole (83% of the respondents of the first group, 91% in the second and 87% in the third) and would recommend their hospital as a good place to work (83%: 82%: 72%, respectively) (Table 04).

Table 04. Distribution of doctors’ answers to the question “To what extent do you agree with the following statements?”

Statements	Totally disagree			Rather disagree			Rather agree			Totally agree		
	Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don	Moscow		Moscow	Kazan	Rostov-on-Don	Moscow		Moscow	Kazan
I am satisfied with career prospects in my work.	9	7	17	20	27	30	50	53	38	21	13	15
I would recommend my hospital as a good place to work.	4	4	14	14	14	15	61	48	40	22	34	32
Overall, I am satisfied with my work.	4	2	3	12	8	11	59	74	59	25	17	28

7. Conclusion

As a result of the analysis, it can be concluded that for teachers and doctors the most important in their work is content of work, corresponding to their abilities and values. Against this background, metropolitan teachers and doctors are more likely to evaluate career opportunities in the profession higher than in provincial cities. As well, satisfaction with their career opportunities, in general, is lower for teachers than for doctors.

The results of a sociological study also record the effect of precariatization on the professional well-being of the studied professional groups. The teachers and doctors interviewed in megalopolises are concerned about the risks of increasing workload without wage growth and loss of work. In the health sector, there is also an enclave of precariatization risks in a regional environment, when, according to doctors' estimates, influence of precariatization in the capital is stronger than in the provinces.

Thus, changes in career strategies of socially oriented professional groups are recorded, including the risks of precariatization: reduction of the influence of professional self-realization factor, awareness of weak career prospects due to the peculiarities of career space in the mentioned professional segments.

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