

18th PCSF 2018
Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future

**MEDIA MATRIX OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION ACTORS
AND FORMATION OF FUTURE SPECIALISTS**

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Abstract

This paper is the result of the author's inquiry of the sociological dimension and sociological expertise in order to reveal the parameters, content and vector of the media matrix of higher education actors in the Russian society as a combination of mental and behavioral attitudes that determine the stance on the future specialist in the context of professional socialization. Based on the fact that Russian higher education entered the Information Age and the media and communicative space was shaped, the author concludes that the dominant media matrix, on the one hand, is inclusive, and it is the result of media influence on the sentiments of higher education actors for the shaping of consumer standards; and on the other hand, the higher education actors act in the media and communicative space, including information potential, which determines the turnaround in the training of future specialists as a deferred priority, and at the same time, localizes in the leading segments of higher education.

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Keywords: Future specialist, information resources, media matrix, media and communicative space, Russian higher education actors.



1. Introduction

There is an inevitable question arising as part of the discussion on the ways of developing a qualitative and accessible education in Russian society not only about structural, organizational, and institutional changes, cognitive and professional orientations of future specialists, but also about how the media environment, images, moods, assessments created by the media, the press, TV, and web structures influence the profession selection. It has been stated that the hierarchy of professional preferences of young Russians contains invariants of “fashion” and “success”, and it is based on the frequency of images and positivity / negativity of emotions caused by the future profession.

Russian sociologists noted that the understanding of professionalism as awareness of public duty, loyalty to serving the state and sacrificing for the fulfillment of prescribed duties has gradually disappeared. The supremacy of the image of a pragmatist specialist, aimed at the ability to “earn”, apply professional skills for the sake of well-being and career, formed a different structure of expectations compared with the matrix of the Soviet specialist. There is a trend of “being in demand” and competitiveness, assessing the chances of finding a profession amid the implementation of the adaptive life strategies. Higher education remains low-profile, a background factor, and it is present only as a passing reference. Naturally, this results in a “gap” between the real demand of the society for specialists with a high mobile and creative potential and a media matrix that stimulates the choice of “easy” professions that do not oblige regular activity and professional self-improvement.

In view of this, there is a need to study the educational and sociocultural realities reproduced by media activities, to define the role of the media matrix as a set of mental and behavioral attitudes (dispositions) affecting the professional culture of a specialist (Aladyshkin, Kulik, Michurin & Anosova, 2017; Gashkova, Berezovskaya, & Shipunova, 2017; Kolomeyzev & Shipunova, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

The existing contradictions between the expectations proclaimed in the Russian society for the training of future specialists in the system of higher education actualize the search for meaningful and structural components that determine the state and procedural nature of training a specialist in the future in the context of professional socialization.

The media matrix considered as a mental and social concept of perception by the higher education actors of the image of the future specialist becomes a key factor of both external influence and development of media educational activities in the system of higher education.

The analyzed problem needs conceptual comprehension and it is based on judgments and generalizations contained in foreign and domestic sociology, as well as the provisions developed by the Russian expert community. The solution of these tasks is connected with the conceptual prerequisites for studying the media matrix in the formation of professional culture, its influence on the image of the future specialist in the sentiments of young people and professionals in higher education, the boundaries and prospects for using the media space in implementing the goals of sound academic background that makes Russian society competitive and dynamic in the modern globalized world.

3. Research Questions

Russian media makes the actor of higher education dependent on not so much traditional media as Internet communications, given that 75% of Russians are active users of online environment (Gorshkov, 2016, p. 342). The orientation toward professional socialization “passes” through the interpretation of the symbolic universe of higher education, through the meaning and import attributed by the higher education actors to the goals and priorities associated not only with cognitive needs, but also with socially adaptive priorities. In other words, the media matrix, as a constant of youth strategies in the area of higher education, is motivational and, at the same time, contains a request for independence in the form of a communicative search.

Thus, a set of research tasks is shaped to identify: 1) the content and focus of the media matrix of the educational space in the Russian society; 2) the variability of the opportunities of higher education actors within the implementation of the media matrix; 3) peculiarities of formation of communicative interest of higher education actors, acting as subjects of educational strategies; 4) prospects for mutual understanding of higher education actors under the influence of the mainstream media matrix; 5) the framework and conditions of their own personal agency for the purpose of professional socialization within the current media matrix.

4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to analyze the media matrix in the Russian higher education. Achieving the stated research objective will make it possible to understand the processes in the media and communicative space in the Russian higher education, which is in a state of bifurcation, choosing the alternatives ensuring “catching-up development” or “innovation”.

5. Research Methods

Implementation of the objective of the study involves application of the principles of a structurally constructivist approach aimed at investigating the constitution of the relations of higher education actors in the media and communicative space. Based on the fact that the mainstream media matrix establishes the paradigm of the status and cultural differences of higher education actors and influences the conversion of cognitive and professional preferences into the structures of the social space of higher education, it is necessary to emphasize that the media and communicative space is not only part of the social area of higher education, but also the sphere of social nomination and social potential of higher education actors.

The prevailing value for understanding the media matrix of higher education, as able to “impose” manners of action and thought, based on the authority of the media and web structures, is the method of “junction of the objective and subjective”, in which the media matrix can be described as a “habitus”, and the media and communicative space is described as a social field. Consequently, the media matrix reveals signs of subjectivity, which is formed as “preconceptions” in relation to professional socialization “spontaneously”, regardless of what can be qualified as a purposeful impact. On the other hand, considering the media matrix as a combination of mental and behavioral dispositions, as ways of self-regulation and self-organization of higher education actors that affect the evaluation of professional socialization in the ranking of reactive, socially-fixed or terminal attitudes, it can be said that empirical identification of media

matrix of higher education actors is possible with an asymmetric study of media space as an objective factor and communicative dispositions of higher education actors reproducing the ability to traditional situations.

Explicating these provisions, it can be said that the structurally constructivist approach presupposes a multidimensional measurement of the media matrix, which determines the perception of professional socialization at the personal and group levels, and is an instrument of professional capitalization, linking higher education actors with different types of social resources.

The methodology of the study is determined by the inclusion of the duality of the habitus and the field, the structure and the action in which the media matrix is “constant”, from the perspective of the movement towards the professional socialization of the specialist of the future.

6. Findings

The set objective of forming a specialist in the future has become a common place to confirm the progressiveness and adaptability of modern higher education. The making of a specialist of the future is influenced both by the external factor - the media and communicative space of society; and the internal trend is the media matrix of higher education actors. Modern higher education is experiencing the inclusion (intrusion) of multidirectional media influences. On the one hand, the emergence of new forms of social and economic participation related to the phenomenon of the information economy, e-democracy, the creative class is beyond any doubt; on the other hand, one may note the transformation of cognitive and professional attitudes of higher education actors, which are characterized by the emergence of a new type of communicative interactions creating the risks of consumerization, individualization, the loss of the ability to work collectively, the “relaxing effect” in relation to the performing process discipline.

As a result, most young Russians avoid the prospect of a professional career in the traditional spheres of economic activity, preferring the sphere of finance, management, service, and organization of leisure time. This reflects the objective trend of change of professional preferences and professional choice of the young people, but one cannot but admit that the absence of alternative technological and informational breakthrough of the Russian society requires the rehabilitation of the scheme of “public” professionalism associated with professional duty and public utility.

The media and communicative space of the Russian society is segmented, determined by the state of the sociocultural environment influenced by excessive inequalities. Basically, parallel spaces have been formed in which group models of communicative interaction and media (information) interest are realized. On the surface, the accelerating information flow is practically broken up into “streams”, that is the social and socio-professional strata of the Russian society have unequal access to media resources. On the other hand, the fixed social and socio-territorial differences, confirmed by the different level of communicative competence of high-resource and low-resource social layers of capitals and regions (Capitals and Regions, 2018, p. 72-73), lead to a conclusion about the common signs and conditions of the media and communicative space in the Russian society.

The interest in obtaining information on the status and prospects of higher education depends on the attitude to higher education as an upward social mobility mechanism. But to a greater extent higher education in the Russian society is perceived as a “train ticket in an unknown direction”. On the one hand, there is a mainstream disposition in relation to higher education as a starting condition for entering

adulthood and a procedure for social nomination, which certifies the modality of the individual; on the other hand, in the conditions of differentiation of the Russian higher education, there is a certain “unsteadiness” of attitudes toward higher education as a professional choice and a professional career.

Therefore, a paradoxical attitude to educational strategies in which the media matrix implements a “relaxing” value is demonstrated; it sets for a simplified perception of higher education, in which the set for a diploma is the main reference point and allows the youth as a collective actor not to concentrate on complex professional tasks and interests. The corridor of opportunities for higher education actors based on the current hybrid media matrix, which is oriented towards a combination of consumer and cognitive interests, depends on the level of information competence, as evidenced by the higher level of success of people from megacities living in a more saturated communicative environment than the Russian provincials. Inhabitants of a megacity receive in one and a half to two times greater volumes of the information on the basis of access both to web resources and using various traditional sources of communication.

The media matrix, as the habitus, the subjective aspect of the media and communicative space of higher education, recognizes the real barriers to the formation of a specialist of the future and demonstrates dependence on mythologized ideas about the prospects of a young specialist. The Russian researchers note that the existing opportunities and limitations in the educational process arise out of the system of basic secondary education and have an invariant character associated with family and social capital (Konstantinovskiy, Vakhstein, Kurakin, & Roshchina, 2006). Amid the current media matrix, which cultivates consumer success, the basic differences are amplified, the chances of gaining the status of a highly professional specialist are fluctuating depending on the awareness of belonging to the groups of “glamorous life”.

In such a situation, the media matrix becomes a resource for strengthening the position of the higher education actor or a barrier to readiness for professional socialization. It can be said that the media matrix of higher education actors contains “predetermination” in assessing the difference in the chances of realizing a professional career and forms the degree of confidence in the future. This is manifested in the fact that in higher education, the rule of communicative inequality operates, when the resources of accessibility to communication and communicative competence become important indicators.

With respect to professional socialization, it is found that access to communication, the level of information use determines the choice of ways of professional socialization. Obviously, the low-resource group of higher education actors, which includes mainly the youth of the “mass” provincial universities, is aimed at abandoning prospective professional socialization, including the use of global information sources, contacts with foreign peers, and studying in the universities abroad.

While the Russian higher education has been actively involved in the Bologna process since the early 2000s, and the necessary organizational, structural and vocational qualification changes have been made, most of the higher education actors have low territorial mobility (10-12% of students study at the foreign exchange programs) (Plaksiy, 2012). A comparative analysis of the implemented schemes of professional socialization by the higher education actors makes it possible to assert that, in spite of the inapplicability of the traditional professional pathway “school-university-collective”, there is reason to

believe that professional socialization is considered in its minimalist version, including the requirement to “have a diploma” and to have communicative skills necessary for the reproduction of modal employment.

There is a growth in the segment of “specialists of the future” of higher education actors in the Russian higher education sector, which are aimed at being in demand as having high and unique technologies and having chances for professional success as part of realizing their own creative potential. This is not a declarative statement, as there is a tendency of involvement in the field of projectivity, research inquiry, work on joint business projects, organization of small research groups operating on social and commercial orders.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and enterprise of 6-7% of advanced higher education actors in Russia (Libin, 2012), if there is no analogue of the “Silicon Valley”, one can talk about involvement in the creative business (information technology, medical technology, organization of leisure and entertainment, the invention of marketing tools). Articulating the myth of higher education as a preparation for “rapid success” requires the formation of a culture of communicative immunity, attitudes towards understanding the media matrix in the context of stimulating the resource of independence of the higher education actor, understanding the differences between cultivating a beautiful life and the realities of achieving success in the professional sphere.

This position lies in the fact that despite the change of the vector of the Russian higher school rejecting of the values of “academicism and fundamentalism” towards pragmatism and competitiveness, it should be remembered that there is a request for a communicative interest of higher education actors in the formation of a strategy of permanent professional growth; consolidating the position of “lifelong education” meets certain difficulties, since professional socialization in the Russian higher school encounters an interruption barrier upon the entrance of a young specialist into adulthood. In other words, when vocational training is completed, there are difficulties in finding the structures for improving vocational training, as only 15% of Russian business structures have formed “corporate universities” focused on advanced learning or reorientation of young specialists (Education for Business in Russia).

Apparently, it is caused by the superiority of the position of “cost cutout”, when higher education is given the role of a “donor” rather than a partner in shaping the professional potential of the Russian economy. Vocational educational projects implemented by the Russian mega-corporations (Gazprom, Lukoil, Norilsk Nickel) provide current needs for renovation and replacement of the professional structure, but do not affect the improvement of the quality of professional socialization in the higher education system. The missing element can be described as a link between higher education and the functioning of business and economic structures. Amid intense competition in the labor market, the criteria for professional socialization in the Russian higher education are shifting in favor of job opportunities, and this circumstance changes the media matrix.

Assessing the prospects for mutual understanding of higher education actors under the influence of the mainstream media matrix, it should be noted that the level of “pragmatic” solidarity is reproduced which is associated with the set for a diploma and limiting prospective professional socialization. In this context, there is a tendency for the growth of the influence of the centers of long-term professional socialization, which is expressed in the nomination in public discourse of research universities, the introduction of the

rating and audit practice of the Russian universities according to the criteria of the international classification.

This aims at supporting the training of future specialists as a condition for financing and providing organizational and legal preferences to the leading universities. On the other hand, one should pay attention to the fact that there was no stable media and communicative space, in which the “balance of powers” would be formed according to the criteria for training future specialists. Based on the results of sociological research, it can be concluded that there has been a mutual understanding of the need for changes related to the adaptation of the Russian higher education in modern conditions in order not to fall behind the trends in the modern educational process dramatically.

At the same time, one cannot assert without any qualification that an alternative media matrix has been formed in the media and communicative space of the Russian higher education, addressed to the society not only as the cultural and educational but also the social transforming mission of higher education. Globalization and the development of “education without borders” cause concern not only for the “brain drain”, but also for the conditions of access to modern communication technologies, which is impossible without the renewal of intensive exchange with foreign partners.

Based on the fact that the media communication space of the Russian higher education is segmented, defined by the inequality of access to information resources of higher education actors in the “capital” and “province”, one can say that under the current media matrix the asymmetrical formation of subjectivity appears. The “traditional majority” takes over, which focuses on the mass specialist of the previous industrial period with the parameters of discipline and adequacy of knowledge.

The consequence for the media and communicative space is, in the first place, the supremacy of functional communications related to the hierarchy of higher education. At the same time, since the “stereotyped” professional pathways are not updated, the communications fall under the influence of “disintegration”, become narrow-grouped or are associated with an individual communicative choice.

In this sense, we can state that there is a modification of the communicative behavior of the majority of actors in the Russian higher school. While there is a stability of the consumer attitudes supported by the current media matrix, the insufficiency and limitations of the set for a diploma are recognized, which requires a transition to scenario thinking, the inclusion of mechanisms for preemptive adaptation. The rule of communicative self-sufficiency does not work in a crisis, as the formation of new forms of communicative communication becomes urgent.

Apparently, the attitude for training of specialists of the future is not only the inclusion of new knowledge and information technologies; the problem of professional socialization, aiming to train professionals of the future is characterized by the search for a research partnership, cooperation, constructive dialogue and self-organization, contributing to coping with the objective contradictions of professional socialization.

It can be assumed that the massive negative identification based on the success and employment on the basis of yield and profitability is still irremovable, but the reflective evaluation of higher education actors of the prospects of self-realization in the modern society and economy is formed. The adaptive approach becomes obsolete, because it is based on the perceptions of higher education actors, connected exclusively with individual efforts.

7. Conclusion

In actual life, the media and communicative space of higher education contains rules and assumptions regulating communicative interaction and access to information resources. The situation in which there is a rule of exchanging ideas and achievements with a constant competitiveness is too idealistic, based on the existing professional pathways of higher education actors. It seems more likely that the current media matrix is replaced by attitudes toward pragmatism for the survival and development of higher education. In this sense, the reformatting of the media and communicative space, which includes independent and academic information structures, gains unconditional importance. Higher education actors can be aware of themselves as specialists of the future if the space of research inquiry and scientific competition is actualized.

Thus, the media matrix that rules the Russian higher education does not reflect the demand for professional socialization in the context of the formation of a specialist in the future. The apparent trend of substitution by practical pragmatism is also transitional; but sufficient conditions are created and centers for “building the future” are established at the level of “advanced universities” and the introduction of new styles of management of the process of professional socialization. Every fifth Russian university displays willingness and makes certain efforts to compete in the field of high technologies and training of competitive specialists.

The specialist of the future seems to be an ideal orienting point, correlated with the understanding of higher education as the leading force of social and economic development and positioning of innovations, in which the effective involvement of breakthrough social and information technologies is possible.

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