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THE YOUNG PEOPLE ATTITUDE TO SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problems of training scientific personnel in the transition to the digital stage of information and technological development. The formation of the readiness of graduates for scientific activity and the role of an expert is complicated due to an increase in the intensity of students' mastering of skills and competencies that are in demand in the new digital culture system. The purpose of this study is to analyze the attitude of students to science in modern society, to identify readiness for scientific activity during the educational process. To achieve this goal, sociological methods of collecting information are used in the form of an online survey, group interviews, and analysis of secondary data. The general background of trust in science in society is highlighted as an important factor in the formation of students' interest in scientific activity. In this regard, the data on monitoring public trust in scientific experts conducted in Russian sociological centres are analyzed. The results of the study in the youth environment of Russian universities showed a significant interest of students in science, a willingness to actively participate in scientific developments during training. However, a relatively small proportion of students see for themselves a real opportunity in the future to do science after graduation. In conclusion, the decline in the overall institutional trust in science in Russian society are emphasized.

Keywords: Scientific activity, expert knowledge, trust in science, youth, information society.

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1. Introduction

The expansion of the technosphere in the modern global world is accompanied by the formation of new areas of activity (Vasileva, 2018) and a new social class, for which the historical role of the driver of social progress has been prepared. The technological structure of the fourth industrial revolution substantially alters professional competence, brings to the forefront technical knowledge and high awareness of the subject promotes the deprofessionalization of established professions and brings expert knowledge and expert status to a new level of significance. The transition to the digital stage of information and technological development is associated with a significant increase in the public interest and, in particular, youth in science, expert knowledge, and technical skills. In the media, on social networks, scientists and experts share ideas of their developments, and meetings with experts in dialogue format are held at public venues. The scientific field is increasingly in the focus of attention, which is associated with ongoing changes in the communicative space between the public, scientists, experts, and practitioners and the emergence of new forms of scientific communication (Trostinskaia, Popov, & Fokina, 2018).

The prospects for technological progress are determined by the preparation of the next generation for active entry into the system of scientific and technological activity (Klyuev, Poznin, & Zubko, 2019; Matveevskaya & Pogodin, 2018; Dolgova, Rokitskaya, Bogachev, & Nurmiev, 2019). An indicator of this process is the level of education, as well as the formation of youth attitudes to science and expert knowledge, the active participation of students in scientific developments and projects, the development of new technologies (Bylieva, 2018; Bylieva, Lobatyuk, & Rubtsova, 2018). The study of young people's interest in science and expert knowledge, assessing the readiness of future specialists for scientific activity is an urgent task for forecasting and modeling the educational environment of the university.

1.1. Literature review

In the 21st century, the role of scientists in society acquires a dual character, combining a teacher and a mediator, which entails the parallel development of two types of scientific communication: the popularization of science itself (reconstruction of theories, projects, implementations for the public) and the conduct of a metadiscourse related to science policy, financial support, professional community perspectives, case studies and experiments (Peters, 2014).

The role of engineering knowledge is associated with the completion of technologies to their specific implementation in production (Patalas-Maliszewska, Śliwa, & Kłos, 2019) is fraught with risk, based on the intuition of experts and their creative search. The need for sound forecasts and willingness to bear responsibility are becoming an integral part of the modern engineering field. This stimulates interest in identifying new aspects of the communicative field, formed by the dialogue of scientists, engineers, and other specialists, and contributes to the formation of new social systems. According to Yanitsky (2019), the main direction of social dynamics and its scientific and technical tools is hybridization, which is a "fusion" of different-quality agents, structures and processes of social action, and is embodied in socio-biotechnical systems (p. 16).

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Modern society is characterized by a demand for clearer contours of development prospects in the context of information and technological growth, which leads to a revision of the science role in the modern world. In this regard, the problem of trust in science is becoming relevant, affecting the specifics of the non-linear processes that are taking place, the emergence of new phenomena that encourage the revision of scientific concepts (Zborovsky & Ambarova, 2019, p.180). Along with this, false knowledge is spreading, manipulating the opinions of citizens in social networks, which to some extent is a consequence of the dispersion of knowledge and poses the problem of the actors' unwillingness to respond adequately to changing reality (Zarubina, 2017).

The high competition of various theories and technologies, claiming to solve global and socially significant problems, strengthens the role of expert knowledge and the responsibility of scientists (Polyakova, 2009; Sierra-Alonso, 2000). Experts act as carriers of the norm, they work as a filter that separates science from "non-science", "useful" science from "useless". Schütz (2004) identified three ideal types: "expert," "layman," and "well-informed citizen" (p. 572). Today, the range of roles of the expert knowledge carrier is expanding significantly, but the expert is only one who is socially approved in this capacity. A well-informed citizen is in the intermediate area between the expert and the layman. He can form an informed opinion as a result of the search and processing of large amounts of information. This increases his chances of participating in expert activities, the range of which is expanding. The need for expertise arises in the process of making responsible decisions, associated with their possible consequences, many factors of influence on the process of innovation. At the moment, there is a transition to a "decisionist" model of relationships, in which scientists and experts are responsible for their decisions and proposals, and politicians for setting goals and making these decisions. The decisionist model supports the expert's high status, his inclusion in politics and social communications.

2. Problem Statement

In the twentieth century, there was a turn towards practical knowledge, in the context of which Merton (1973) formulated the basic regulatory elements that scientists adopt in the course of professional socialization. They are an imperative of scientists' activity, their combination forms a functional system that ensures the production of knowledge. The ethos of scientific activity according to Merton is formed based on four principles: universalism, collectivism, selflessness, organized skepticism. Merton's model produces the ideal type of scientific community. Giddens (2011) emphasized the ubiquity of trust in experts and expert systems as a feature of modern society. The trust exists until it is deliberately debunked by conducting counter-examinations or spreading a regime of general distrust (p. 220). However, in the new century, the production of scientific knowledge was influenced by bureaucratization, science was faced with a contradiction between disciplinary and organizational identity, which exacerbated the problem of moral standards.

The question of the mutual influence of expert activity institutionalization and trust in science remains open and insufficiently studied. This question is important for our study since it forms the social background of the youth's attitude to scientific activity and the role of an expert, the readiness for which is formed by the university. The examination carried out by scientists cannot be value-neutral. Revealing the essence of a scientific problem, scientists give an assessment of opportunities, weigh decisions,

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actions, consequences. In this sense, the examination is based on responsible behavior, associated with the skills of forecasting and design, which are now included in the scope of professional competencies acquired by the graduate.

The general characteristic of trust in science, formed in public opinion and disseminated among young people, is an important indicator of the informational influence on students' attitudes to scientific activity.

3. Research Questions

The research questions of this article are determined by the tasks of intensive development by students of the skills and competencies that are in demand in the new technological structure, as well as the formation of the graduates' readiness for the role of expert. To elucidate the general background of professional training of young people for scientific activity, it is important to identify students' interest in science and the level of confidence in new technologies. In this regard, it is important to determine the students' propensity for scientific and practical development, to test new equipment and technologies, to identify the dominant ideas of students about the specifics of scientific activity and the role of an expert in modern society.

The attitude of young people to science and scientific activity depends not only on a personal interest in cognition or design, on the desire to actively participate in projects, but also on supporting the generated interest by universities, creating the necessary developing conditions for this.

4. Purpose of the Study

Research Objectives:

- assessment of students' views on the role of a scientist and expert in the modern world,
- analysis of students' attitude to scientific activity, which student can implement during the educational process,
- a comparative analysis of the trust level in science in the youth environment.

Specific tasks in achieving the goal of the study are related to identifying students' interest in science and new technologies, the social role of a scientist, the willingness of young people to do science, and assessing the conditions of scientific activity.

5. Research Methods

To solve the tasks in this study, we used methods of a sociological survey among students of Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (online survey in 2017, group interviews in 2019) and a method of comparative analysis of sociological data (Levada Center, RCSPO, HSE). In a comparative analysis of students' attitudes toward science and scientific work, statistical data from a sociological study among MSU students were used (Yurasova & Sudas, 2005), as well as among students of the Nizhny Novgorod State University in 2013 (Shorygin, 2014).

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In a comparative analysis of the level of youth's confidence in science and experts, the Levada Center polls (September 2018) and the HSE monitoring data were used (2016, data of sociological monitoring of RCSPO 2010 - 2017).

6. Findings

6.1. The study results of students' attitudes to scientific activity

In 2017, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University conducted a sociological survey on the topic "Scientist through the eyes of students" (random sample of 256 students, online questionnaire survey method) (Razinkina, 2017). The survey showed that polytechnic students are ambivalent about the prestige of a scientist in society: 37% say prestige, while 46% deny prestige. Only 18% would like to devote their lives to science at all, while 53% would not do this (29% had difficulty answering).

The associative series with "science" was led by concepts: "progress", "knowledge", "scientist". The general mood of students was characterized by the answers to the question of whether young people should be involved in science: 84% of students are sure that this should be done. And almost as many respondents (83%) indicated that they are actively participating in the university's scientific activities. Among them (34% of respondents) have their scientific publications, and 24% answered that they intend to engage in scientific work in their specialty.

The students' view of the problem of their attitude to technological progress, revealed during an interview with students of SPbPU (March 2019, 134 students) is indicative. When asked whether the problem of the technological future is relevant, 75% of students answered positively against 13% who expressed the opposite opinion.

The optimism of students regarding technological progress was shown by the following answers:

- I believe in technological progress - 30%
- I believe in technological progress in certain areas - 38%
- I believe, but I doubt that technological progress will solve the "sick problems" of society - 22%
- Progress is objective, but it carries huge losses and serious consequences - 6%
- I do not believe - 1%
- Difficult to answer - 3%.

To the question of whether students trust modern engineering and technology, the following assessments were obtained (Table 01):

Table 01. Students' level of confidence in engineering and technology

I trust	I trust completely	I do not trust in everything	No, I don't trust	I do not know
7%	40%	35%	10%	8%

It turned out that the same proportion of students (37%) had a normal attitude to new technologies, but they were worried about the possible crowding out of people at workplaces by robots. Doubt on this issue was expressed by 18% of students, and 7% are ready to fight to prevent this. Thus, a rather alarming

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attitude of students towards the future was revealed against the background of faith in technological progress.

In September 2019, among the junior students (1st and 2nd year) of Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (random sample, 411 people), an interview was conducted to identify intentions to engage in science and research. The scatter of responses expressing students' intentions is presented in Table 02:

Table 02. Students' interest in scientific activities

№	The answers	%
1	Yes, if there was a decent reward for it	12
2	Yes, if regardless of payment, it was interesting to me	30
3	Rather, yes, but only if the market was ready for implementation	17
4	More likely not (I'm not ready for this yet / other reasons)	23
5	No, it's not for me	12
6	Difficult to answer	6

The data obtained reflect the students' interest in science, as well as the balanced attitude of students to scientific activity related to the problem of the remuneration of scientists and researchers, as well as the speed of implementation of the R&D. The readiness of a third of students to be included in science is also indicative.

6.2. Comparative analysis of student survey data in other Russian universities

The attitude of students towards science and scientific work, as well as the prospects for students to enter the professional world of science, were previously studied by sociologists among MSU students (Yurasova & Sudas, 2005). The intention to engage in scientific work was shown by 47% of students, and the absence of such - 40% of students.

Researchers were interested in the question of whether the image of a scientist with a set of characteristics that follows the principles established by R. Merton in an activity is a guide for students. Sociologists made the following conclusion: the developing Merton model continues to act as a guide. So, in the views of MSU students, science is associated with research, knowledge, discoveries, cognition, as well as with progress, development, and technology. Education also takes its place in a series of associations. Students note a drop in the level of education in society as a general trend (13.4% of respondents). The ideal image of a scientist is made up of characteristics: immersion in science (32.5%), versatility (14%) and broad horizons (12%), intelligence (13%), as well as the ability to be ahead of others (17%), interest in own business (12%), high qualification and financial security (10.8% each). It is noteworthy that the scientist is seen by students not only immersed in science and divorced from life, but real, able to secure their rightful place in the modern world (Yurasova & Sudas, 2005, p. 80).

In many ways, similar estimates were obtained by sociologists of the Nizhny Novgorod State University, who in 2013 surveyed students. For university students, a scientist is, first of all, a smart and extraordinary person, behind whose back there is a lot of knowledge and experience. This scientist has self-confidence and creativity, is endowed with wit and a sense of humor, demonstrates an understanding

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of another point, which increases his attractiveness as an interlocutor (Shorygin, 2014). Most students believe that the profession of a scientist requires high qualifications (85%) and allows you to realize yourself and your ideas (76%). The applied and heuristic potential of science as a profession is seen by 70% of young people, and the high status of science as a profession in the eyes of UNN students is undermined mainly by its low funding. Those who consider the profession of a scientist as prestigious make up 35%, and highly paid - 23%. Moreover, in senior years, the opinion on the prestige of the scientist profession is becoming more common among students. However, according to this study, most of the respondents are negative concerning the continuation of scientific activity after undergoing training at a university (Shorygin, 2014, p. 48). Entry into the practical sphere of science by young people is characterized by a low percentage of interest. So, about 15% of young specialists named science, higher education and IT as their most preferred occupation (Gvozdeva & Gvozdeva, 2018, p. 121). The gap between the motivation of young people and their actual employment in these areas suggests that government institutions are not ready to stimulate them effectively.

6.3. Comparative analysis of the public trust level in science

The general situation in Russia with public trust in science and expert knowledge is very contradictory, which has already been noted for a noticeable period by Russian monitoring centres. Confidence in science is manifested through a positive attitude towards it, a pronounced interest in scientific knowledge and its products, as well as a willingness to follow the recommendations of scientists and implement the results of scientific research (Kravchenko, Noskova, & Temnitsky, 2018, p. 95). For the general public, the broad coverage of scientific results and their implementation in public life remains the basis for maintaining confidence in science.

Confidence in academic experts correlates with trends in institutional trust. According to Levada Center polls (September 2018), institutional trust in Russia is undergoing significant changes, reflecting a decline in government trust and an increase in trust in the army and special services, while trust in traditional and new media is almost unchanged (Institutional trust, 2019).

As follows from the latest Edelman Trust Barometer report, among informed citizens, the level of trust in institutions in Russia is at the level of 29% (against an average rating of 52% in the world). Against this background, there is a growing interest of the population in the news: the number of those who read the newsweekly or more often and share them on social networks has increased over the past few years from 26% to 40%. Confidence in search engines is also growing, while trust in social networks has not changed much and does not exceed 43% (Russians trust institutions less and less, 2019).

According to the HSE monitoring in 2016, there was a general trend of increasing confidence in science and technology: from 59 to 68% of Russians surveyed note the benefits of scientific and technological achievements. Young people under 34 years old trust science most of all: 73% (against the average rating for all respondents -67%); people with higher education also trust science more often: 71 (versus 67%). The same categories of citizens are more closely following the news of science and technology, in the know about the latest scientific achievements (Science and society: authority and trust).

The decline in confidence in scientific results is associated with the rapid updating and obsolescence of scientific knowledge. According to RCSPO, from 2010 to 2017, the indicator of trust in

workers in the scientific field ranged from 66% to 79%. However, today most Russians (59%) think that scientists are hiding the truth from us. The most distrustful are people who have not completed school (77%), while among people with higher education this indicator is lower 45%. Sociologists noted an interesting fact: 42% of Russians believe that scientists know the truth, and 41% say that they are sincerely mistaken (Science and society: authority and trust…, 2018).

The attitude of young people to scientific activity is formed against the backdrop of the demand for scientific knowledge and the general situation of trust in it. The indicated processes show that the field of communications and emerging models of relations between scientists and society today are becoming significantly more complicated. To maintain confidence in themselves and their scientific results, scientists must develop a language of communication, actively interact with society, explain research results and their practical significance.

7. Conclusion

The expansion of the social institutes of science in modern society is associated with the need to predict the preparation of the intellectual and social environment of the university to form an active attitude of students to scientific activity and interest in expert knowledge.

The results of the study of students' attitudes to scientific activity show the instability of youth assessments on issues of the present and future science, the difficulty in choosing a scientific career, as well as the inconsistency of public opinion about confidence in science established by surveys. The contradictory situation with trust in science and experts correlates with a fall in overall institutional trust in Russian society and non-linear processes of development of the scientific field itself. The emerging multi directionality of confidence vectors against the background of the demand for scientific knowledge in the modern information field negatively affects the attitude of young people to scientific activity.

In the process of studying at the university, students declare their readiness to actively participate in scientific work, demonstrate awareness of the possibilities. However, not everyone connects their career after graduation with scientific activity. As the main practical problems of science, they single out funding and support from the state and stakeholders and doubts about the speed of implementation of scientific developments.

Surveys and analysis of secondary sociological data allow us to conclude that Russian students, however, are characterized by the significant interest in science and the activities of scientists. In the students' view, the real image of a scientist with institutionally sound professional and personal characteristics meets the ethos of modern science and the requirements of practice.

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