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THE IMAGE OF MODERN BUSINESS IN THE EYES OF STUDENTS

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In this article the author analyzes the image of business in the eyes of students and detects main social factors that can influence it. Business and its image is viewed and analyzed in the context of the social and professional priorities of students based on an opinion survey. Empirical methods of information acquisition were used – experimental observation, questionnaires and expert surveys, document study (statistical data, context analysis of Internet sites), and statistical methods of information processing. As the result of the study we have concluded that the image of business formed in the public consciousness is *ambivalent and paradoxical*, and can be explained by how business evolved in Russia in the 90's of the 20th century (shuttle traders, privatization of property and a typical misconception that all big fortunes in Russia were gained by dishonest means, etc.) Present-day condition of small and medium business (the fact that trade and the service sector prevail), mean there are big risks in business activity (financial, administrative and psychological limitations), with mental factors (traditional negative attitude to business in Russia) playing an important role. Nowadays, due to the problems with staffing in business it is necessary to change the negative image of business, which has dominated during the two recent decades. The main reason of this ambivalent perception of business by the students is non-conformity of the competence level of university graduates with the demands presented by businesses. The university education which students get is better suited for employment in large corporations, government bodies, research and educational institutions rather than small or medium business enterprises; few innovative techniques are used in modern education and it does not target 'business' skills (ability to work independently and take decisions, etc.) The author detected 2

groups of important factors that influence the students' vision of business and tells us why it is necessary to create a certain image of business among students who act as its labour reserve.

Scope of application: the paper presents a sociological analysis of the image of business in the eyes of students, and its social management function.

Keywords: social image, students' concepts, graduates employment.

ИМИДЖ СОВРЕМЕННОГО БИЗНЕСА В ОТРАЖЕНИИ СТУДЕНЧЕСТВА

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В данной статье автором анализируется сложившийся образ бизнеса у студентов и выявляются ведущие социальные факторы конструирования имиджа бизнеса в представлениях студенческой молодежи. Рассматривается место бизнеса в системе социально-профессиональных ориентаций студенчества и анализируется имидж бизнеса в профориентационных представлениях студенческой молодежи по материалам социологического исследования. В процессе исследования использовались эмпирические методы сбора информации – наблюдение, анкетный и экспертный опросы; анализ документов (статистических данных, контент-анализ интернет-текстов), статистические методы обработки информации. В результате, обосновано, что стихийно сложившийся в общественном сознании имидж отечественного бизнеса характеризуется *амбивалентностью, парадоксальностью, что обусловлено* особенностями становления бизнеса в 90-е годы («челноки», приватизация собственности в период 90-х годов прошлого века и укорененность в общественном сознании мнения, что все большие состояния в России нажиты нечестным путем и др.), с современным состоянием малого и среднего бизнеса (преобладание торговли и сферы обслуживания), большими

рисками в бизнес-деятельности (финансовые, административные, психологические ограничения), ментальными факторами (традиционное негативное отношение к бизнесу в России). Современные проблемы в области кадрового обеспечения бизнеса требуют изменения имиджа бизнес-деятельности, который сформировался в течение последних двух десятилетий.

Основная причина противоречий в восприятии имиджа бизнеса студентами лежит в плоскости несоответствия уровня подготовки выпускников вузов и требований к их компетенциям со стороны существующих бизнес-структур, а именно: подготовка специалистов в вузах ориентирована в основном на деятельность крупных корпораций, органов управления, образования, науки и т.д., а не на подготовку специалистов для работы в области малого и среднего бизнеса; современный образовательный процесс характеризуется недостаточной ориентацией на инновационные технологии в образовании, в недостаточной подготовке «деловых» людей (умеющих работать самостоятельно, принимать решения самостоятельно и т.д.). Автором выделено 2 группы наиболее значимых факторов для конструирования имиджа бизнеса в представлениях студенчества и обоснована необходимость управления конструированием имиджа бизнеса в представлениях студенческой молодежи, как трудового резерва для бизнеса.

Область применения результатов: В работе осуществлен социологический анализ имиджа бизнеса как функции социального управления в представлениях студентов.

Ключевые слова: социальный имидж; представления студентов, трудоустройство выпускников.

Creating a positive image of small and medium business is acute because it is necessary to devise methodological approaches to managing external communications at the universities. This will allow objective interpretation of the students' vision of business.

A specialist's image should be viewed as a complex of professional, social and personality characteristics that comply with the expectations of modern society. Therefore, universities need to detect these expectations to be able to meet the demands of the society. Looking at internal processes we inevitably conclude that this social image which appeared as a stereotype in public consciousness is the result of changes in the national identity.

At the moment Russia is holding the leading position in the world by the number of university students per 10 thousand people, however the quality of education has considerably dropped. University professors complain about low quality of school leavers' training. Employers in their turn heavily criticize competence level of university graduates (especially technical universities graduates) and have to spend thousands of dollars on the further training of a young 'professional'.

Opinion polls conducted in 2008 in Russia showed that the question: 'The shortage of what kind of specialists restrains the development of economy?' got the answer from most Russian entrepreneurs - the deficit of skilled labour, especially in economics and management - not money or raw materials or technology.

In other words, the country has a paradoxical situation when the number of socio-economic specialists is much higher than the market demands, but at the same time the demand for highly-skilled managers, economists and lawyers is much higher than the number offered.

In its turn, business as a social institution is not attractive for future professionals. University students do not view business as a safe place of employment. Thus, we can conclude that the image of a present-day employer does not correspond to the image of a modern entrepreneur. These problems with the image of present-day Russian business are reflected in the students' life strategies in the Republic of Bashkortostan.

We present the analysis of students' identification preferences. Students form a large socio-demographic group of the country's population, which can foster social

change and which possesses a considerable innovative potential that can be beneficial for the society. Students make a large social group and a big percentage of young people that represent 'the future of present', they take our present-day values to the future and thus determine it.[2, pp.76-77]

Modern business has a new image of a manager targeted at vertical mobility, self-sufficiency, material well-being, etc. These characteristics are very attractive for young students. Therefore, it is necessary to study new factors that influence the students' choice of profession. To promote business in the eyes of students it is necessary to position it right within their value system, to create a positive image of a manager that would comply with present-day social demands.

Questionnaire survey 'Employment Problems of University Graduates' conducted among senior students has detected certain problems in the image of modern business. The survey was conducted among the students of Bashkir State University, Ufa State Academy of Economics and Service and Ufa State Aviation University. The sample from 769 people represented various age and social groups.

The questionnaire showed that 97% of students would like to work for an enterprise and only 3% do business, which is not much.

Only a third of graduates would like to work for organizations who can offer jobs in their professional field (62% of respondents would prefer working outside their specialization area versus 31% - in their professional field). Graduates of Ufa State Technical Aviation University prevail among those who would prefer working for a company outside their major subject. Senior students of Bashkir State University prefer working for a company but outside their major subject. [3]. Therefore among factors that determine the negative appeal of organizations as potential employers can be errors of judgment by school leavers in the choice of future profession, quality of professional education, salary and working conditions in the future profession, career opportunities or difficulty with job placement in the profession. Opportunities for job placement in a profession depend primarily on the ratio between the demand at the labour market and the number of jobs offered. Thus,

graduates of a classical university with a fundamental education have more problems than graduates of other universities.

When recruiting the personnel companies take into account two most important groups of graduates' characteristics – their personal capital (professional competencies, which provide for their future as employees and the company's future) and social capital (social connections important for the employee and the organization). [4] Half of the graduates consider social capital the most important factor for successful employment. About 40 percent think that job placement depends not only on social connections, but also on professional competencies. This disparity in evaluations reflects an unfavourable situation in the labour market: many university graduates count more on their social connections than on their professional skills when seeking employment. This decreases their motivation when studying.

Table 1

**Main Characteristics of a Successful Business Person
 (number of people of the total number of the respondents)**

<i>Answers</i>	<i>Number of answers</i>	<i>% of the total number of respondents</i>
Business acumen and leadership skills	160	20
Work a lot, be goal-oriented	144	18
Start-up capital	160	20
Original idea	80	10
Social connections	104	13
Luck	64	8
Sound education	16	2
Support from Government and other organizations that assist small business	48	6
Relevant professional experience	24	3
Other	0	0

The survey shows high demands of the graduates in the social responsibility of employer organizations. The characteristics, which the respondents expect their potential employer organizations to have, range as follows (from 0 to 10 points). The most important characteristic is the high salary of employees; in the second place are employee benefits, in the third place - in-service education and the quality of produced goods and services. It is important that all the characteristics of social responsibility were graded higher than average, but timely and full tax payment, which is highly beneficial for the society, was placed last.

Table 2

**Social Responsibility of Employer Organizations
the Way Students See It (in points 0 to 10)**

Place	Social Responsibility Parameters	Average Score
1	High salary	8,4
2	Employee benefits	7,6
3	In-service education provided by the employer	7,5
4	Quality of produced goods and services	7,5
5	Help provided to disabled, children and war veterans	7,2
6	Job creation	6,9
7	Participation in environmental projects	6,6
8	Timely and full tax payment	6,4

According to a work technology criterion more than a half of graduates can be referred to X type (according to D. McGregor, employees of X-type do not like working, prefer being guided and seek safety ('frontline worker'). Those who seek fast career advancement and risky employment are twice less in number than those targeting long-term stable employment. Only one third of graduates hope that the qualification they get at the university will ensure long-term employment. The

majority of respondents prefer working for companies that could provide advanced training. According to the type of work behavior more respondents tend to follow instructions and to be guided and fewer prefer self-discipline, independence and taking initiative. Preferences on the latter criterion mostly depend on the type of profession. In some organizations initiative is encouraged while in others it could be forbidden or even punished. However, actual professional life depends not only on corporate culture or administrative rules, but also on the employee's wish to change the situation, take decisions and work on their own. In this way university graduates can present a good innovative potential for employers. Only one fifth of the graduates are ready to take risks and to be paid by per-performance (as opposed to fixed salary), which would depend on their initiative, creative input and productivity.

Therefore, there is a contradiction in the respondents' opinions. On the one hand, students associate business with an owner, who targets maximum income, can maintain life and work balance, and who is responsive to the changes in social environment. On the other hand, they see the entrepreneur 'suppressed' by high taxes, state and governmental officials, who lack understanding of the problems of modern business. Some students would like to start their own business and take risks. However, the answers they give about the kind of job they would like to do suggest the idea of a typical 'employee'. This means they have certain internal barriers and fears in connection with business.

The author has detected 2 groups of significant factors that influence creating the image of business in the eyes of students:

1. social factors (for example, social characteristics of business or potential employer like advanced training programmes, salary and bonus schemes, social package of employees, timely tax payments, social responsibility of business and the quality of goods and services);
2. psychological factors (the idea of personal characteristics of a business person - business acumen and sense of purpose) and external factors (support of the authorities, social connections).

The first group of factors influences interaction between universities and business and can help to improve their communications. The second group of factors can be influenced by the mass media that can play the leading role in creating the image of business in the eyes of students.

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