
ARTICLES IN ENGLISH

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CORPORATE YOUTH POLICY: THE APPROACH OF RUSSIAN INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES***

This article examines the ways in which social support is provided to the young employees of companies in Russia. Through analysing the data of comparative monographic research, the purposes, priorities, tools and effects of corporate policy toward young people can be revealed. The authors arrived at the conclusion that the increased interest of the Russian business leadership toward their younger staff can be explained not only within the general context of modernization. It also is a response to the overall ageing of company personnel and the specific challenges of reproducing labour in the industrial sector of economy. The latter point can explain the selective character of corporate youth policy and its preference toward solving more pressing and current staff shortages. The most serious obstacles to the effective realization of young people's potential in corporate social policy are weak communication and the lack of effective support mechanisms for innovation on the part of workers and specialists, which could create a link between innovation and the desire for professional and career growth.

Keywords: corporate social policy, youth, industrial enterprises

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Today, corporate youth policy is understood as a set of actions aimed at attracting, retaining and integrating those young employees with the level of qualifications needed by the organisational structure of the company. Furthermore, youth policy aims at furthering their development and raising the effectiveness of their working practices.

The increased focus on the problems of young people, as an object of social policy, can be explained by their special role in social reproduction. On the one hand, young people can be seen as a more enterprising and innovative segment of society. On the other hand, they can be seen as one of the more vulnerable groups in the labour market. Today, the problems of corporate youth policy are often examined with regards to the Luxembourg Process, which can be described as the implementation of state policy in the labour market, supporting the training and education of young people and driving active employment schemes. In accordance with the national welfare systems across the world, corporate involvement in the workings of the labour market can be voluntary or obligatory. It is within this framework that company policies in wages for young workers and corporate conceptions of social support and the conditions and safety of labour are examined (Ryan 2001; Lodemel, Trickey 2002). The values, ambitions and expectations of young employees are taken into account within the context of the concrete conditions of in the company and the variety of age groups present (Rhodes 1983; Siegel 1993; Devlin 2010). In attracting young people, much significance is attached to the successful propagation and careful handling of the employer's brand (Barney 1991; Gratton 2000; Turbani 2003). Organisational citizenship behaviour and engagement can be seen as a modern method in the formation of corporate commitment and consolidation of young employees in the work place. (Bowler 2010; Grant 2009; Soane 2013). Among the wide range of institutional factors working to the disadvantage of young people on the labour market, two stand out; a lack of support from the older generation and the absence of the social capital and experience needed for working in the company (Dietrich 2007; Martin 2009; Williamson 2012).

In Russia, this issue has led companies to reassess their social policy toward enterprises to young people. Youth policy has taken on special importance in the context of discussions on how demographic change is impacting on the availability of labour resources. The issue also looms large in debates over the modernisation of Russian economy and society. Given the context of modernisation, new corporate policies aimed at young personnel go hand in hand with the general need to counteract demographic decline and attract young people to their sector.

The unfavourable demographic situation in Russia has a serious influence on condition of youngest segment of labour force: the quantity of young people employed in the economy from 1992 to 2010 reduced almost directly in proportion to their number in population overall; from 18.3 million to 17 million, which is a reduction of 7,2% (Based on: Economic Activity 2006: 45; 2010: 40; Survey of population 2010; 2011).

Among those employed in industry, young workers make up around one quarter, which is close to the average in the national economy as a whole. (24,5% across all age groups). Beginning from 2007, the share of young people in the extractive industries rose by 5,3%. On the other hand, in manufacturing things remained stable with only a 0,4% reduction, which was achieved completely at the expense of the under 20 age group (Based on: Youth in Russia 2010: 104; Russia in figures 2010: 94; Economic activity 2010: 64).

One of the factors attracting young people to industrial enterprises is the new tendency on the part of business towards providing social support to its young employees. It should be noted that employment in Russia does not enter the sphere of state regulation and young workers are a social group who remain outside of the social-structural parameters of state social policy. In state policy documents referring to young people, the term "youth" is most often used to describe a period that precedes professional self-realisation and full participation in the social division of labour. It was only from around the middle of the 2000's, when the Russian economy began to show signs of recovery from the consequences of the Yeltsin reform period, that this deficiency began to be remedied by corporate social initiatives aimed at young people. Some observers have explained the return in the importance of providing social support for employees as part of the maturing of "Russian capitalism" (Gorshkov, Lebedev, 2005: 49). Others interpret these steps as the correction of failures in state social policy, especially with regards to underinvestment in the human capital of the country (Blagov 2004).

Presently in Russia there is significant variety in corporate behaviour in the implementation of youth policy, which can be explained by the diversity in technological standards and organisational features of Russian industrial enterprises. In addition to this, there are enormous territorial variations in the living standards of the population throughout Russia (Shishkin (et al) 2005; Polishuk 2006; Chirikova 2007). Given this the following questions arise: are there common tendencies in corporate youth policy throughout the country? Which tools of social policy are companies using? What factors drive them to interact with young people?

The methodological and empirical basis of the study

The degree of consistency in the actions of business and the widespread proliferation of some methods over others can show how actual corporate practises toward young people have changed and highlight possible future developments. The methodology of monographic research, on which this study is based, gives us the opportunity to provide a detailed reconstruction of the ideology and work practice used with regards to young people in individual enterprises. It is on this basis that approaches to more large-scale work can be subsequently developed¹.

¹ Field work was conducted in St. Petersburg by V. Il'in, M. Il'ina (case 1), in Perm by E. Plotnikova, I. Germanov (Case 2) and in Raizan by L. Cheglakova (case 3).

This article is based on data from a longitudinal study of three industrial enterprises. The study was carried out within the parameters of a comprehensive research programme at Higher School of Economics over 2011 to 2013. The main objectives of the study were to provide a comparative analysis of the various aspects of social and labour relations in industry, one of which was the study of young people as a subject of corporate social policy. The used data includes material from six group discussions with young workers and 15 focused interviews with both line and personnel managers. Experts were asked about the level of initial professional preparation, the potential of young workers, the wages and social benefits, education, training and promotion policies, mechanisms of including young people in management and labour relation systems. The main themes of the focus group were centred around work motivation in enterprises, work ethic and the principles of working in a team.

In accordance with the main aims of the study, the choice of enterprises was made with a view to obtaining accurate representations of actual working practices with young people in the more advanced part of national industry. The chosen enterprises stood out in three ways. Firstly, they have large-scale operations with high-tech production methods. Secondly, they are among the largest national and transnational corporations and correspondingly have made use of more advanced and modern methods of management. Thirdly, all three can be considered as examples of successful businesses from the point of view of their good reputation on the market, their economic stability and their social indicators, which is reflected, particularly by a high level of wages and the presence of a social benefit package. One of the enterprises specialises in oil refining, while the other two are part of the mechanical engineering industry. The inclusion of mechanical engineering enterprises in the study was important from the methodological point of view: while they possess an industrial social organisation and structure similar to the oil and gas complexes, they are deprived of the specific advantages inherent to the extractive industries.

Properties of the enterprises

*Case 1. The Turbine Factory (T3)*¹ – This factory is part of one of Russia's largest holdings in the mechanical engineering sector. Founded in 1857, their main activities include the production of turbines for power stations. The number of employees in the factory at the time of the study was 3706. The share of young people in the enterprise was 31 %. The main document regulating the policy of the factory and the holding towards young people came in the form of a collective agreement, which, in the appropriate section, reaffirmed the main objectives in working with young people and measures to achieve this.

¹ Names have been changed.

Case 2. The Motor Works Factory (M3). This factory is part of a corporation that represents the defence industry. In existence from the 1930's, it specialises in the production, maintenance and repair of aero engines and gas turbines. At the moment of writing, the number of staff was 5374. The share of young people in the enterprise was 21,2%. In 2011, a document called "Youth Policy" was approved at the enterprise, bringing together in one programme various measures for working with young people.

Case 3. The Oil Refinery (N3) – This enterprise was founded in 1960. In the current period it is one of Russia's leading oil corporations. On the regional labour market N3 is one of the country's most attractive employers, despite the fact that employment at the refinery entails dangerous and hazardous working conditions. At the time of the study, 3142 people were working at the refinery. The share of young people in the staff overall was 33,4%. Programmes for young people were implemented as part of general corporate policy, which is aimed at providing a single, unified standard in the regulation of social and work relations.

There is disagreement on how to understand the term "young people". Russian statistical practise defines young people as being from 15 to 29 while in international documents the age range for young people is lower; from 15 to 24. This complicates the process of making correct comparisons between countries. In the documents of corporate youth policy for the enterprises studied here, young people are defined as below the age range of 30 to 35.

Reference points and tools of youth policy at the enterprises

At all the enterprises studied in this research, the implementation of youth policy can be connected to staffing problems. These issues are, first and foremost, linked to the growing tendency of an ageing staff and difficulties in reproducing the work force. The management has come to realise the seriousness of the problem from the start of the 2000's, when the Russian economy started giving signs that was recovering from the consequences of the Yeltsin reforms. Gradually, uncoordinated efforts coalesced, in one way or another, into a more systematic approach to attracting, adapting and consolidating young people in the work place. Work with young people was declared to be one of the priority areas in human relations. Even in the period of economic recession from 2008 to 2010, when overall social spending was significantly reduced, youth programmes were not cut, with the increase in the share of young people on the active payroll of the enterprises by 5–10% being one of the more positive results from the implementation of youth policy.

Efforts aimed towards the revitalisation of youth policy is in line with the strategic thinking of corporate management, who must work out plans for the future and bolster the reputation of their company. Various company departments implement this policy, either independently or in partnership with trade unions,

when the interests of the management and the unions in defending the rights of age groups do not contradict each other in this question. The main tasks of the union include working out the details of this policy and ensuring the agreement is applied beyond the immediate period and that all young people are supported, rather than just specific groups. The unions are interested in improving social support measures for young people in collective agreements, and in ensuring that the proposed benefits and services become obligatory for the management to provide in the future. In some cases the unions achieve this but, in general, business avoids giving guarantees in this area and is cautious of rigid systems in allocating social benefits. This position is clearly formulated by the management team:

We work flexibly in this area. At the moment there is a need here for innovative development; so we focus on measures to attract young applicants and further their integration into the company. In the future, new problems will arise and we will change our focus accordingly. There is no need to develop a rigid programme, which, having been confirmed in writing, would take away our freedom of movement. (Human Relations Manager, T3).

Attracting young people to the enterprise

One of the more noticeable tendencies in the drive to attract young applicants is the restoration of contacts with specialised institutions in primary, secondary and higher education. Programmes of cooperation with educational bodies at all levels include three similar elements: (a) the provision of career guidance; (b) material support of employees while they continue their studies, often in the form of grants or reimbursements for the cost of educational services; (c) the organisation of practical training and internships.

As career advice begins in schools, promotional campaigns are directed at removing the negative connotations of working in industrial plants and the creating a more attractive brand for the employer:

Among some kids that haven't visited us there is a view that a factory is something ugly and terrible. Furthermore, they often think the people that work there are awful too.... and then they come and visit and see there are lots of young people working here and it really isn't that bad at all... (Personnel Officer, T3).

The strategic direction of human relations policy to young people is seen in training and education, which is aimed at young engineers most of all. The main thrust in this is to encourage interaction with relevant universities that offer industry-specific training. In hiring a preference is given to graduates from vocational schools, with whom collaborative agreements are concluded. It is expected that there is a better chance that these young people will survive the period of adaptation in a new workplace and secure themselves a permanent place at the enterprise.

Over the last few years, programmes have been developed with the aim of reducing the overall age of the staff. This "rejuvenation" of the personnel is achieved by creating vacancies according to definite professional specialisations that the company requires. This has been achieved through rotation on the internal labour market. The process whereby older personnel leave the company by natural causes occurs place rather slowly. Therefore, the policy of attracting young people to the company is accompanied by efforts to push out those workers closer to pension age. This is done through awareness campaigns and the creation of economic incentives to quit the company:

We started by providing incentives for older workers to leave the company, as there was a strong ideological rationale for this. We were convinced that this choice had to be made in the end... young professionals must be hired... Otherwise there would be nobody to pass knowledge and expertise to, so we had to think about this... a person is thinking of leaving anyway, all we do is provide a cash incentive so that decision is finalised and the person can be encouraged to help prepare and train their replacement before they leave... (Head of Staff Motivation, M3).

Adaptation at the enterprise

For the adaptation and consolidation of young people at the workplace, a whole range of measures have been implemented, linked mainly to the provision of additional social benefits for young employees. This includes an increased chance to improve one's qualifications, the inclusion of young people into administrative activity and the encouraging of innovative activity. Although different tools to further adaptation are used for different groups of young people, in all cases companies take an interest in the adaptation process; often by hiring consultants, professional advisors, trainers and others to assist them in this.

In order to smooth the adaptation of recently hired workers, the practice of mentorship has been reintroduced. This sees a young professional, arriving at the enterprise for the first time, working closely an experienced colleague, who can directly carry out training and take the opportunity to supervise their work. Allowances are made for unique requirements of each individual worker's adaptation period. However, special adaptation programmes are available only for young professionals. One example of this is the "Three Horizons" programme (TH), which establishes a single standard in the development of young professionals in all departments during the course of their first three years of work. This system is comprehensive; it includes educational components, help with adaptation, skills development, incentives for involvement in corporate activities, innovation and final assessments. A contract is agreed with every participant ("Contract for the Development of Young Professional") and is reinforced by a mentor, who supervises the young person.

As mechanical engineering enterprises are more limited in terms of their resources, specialised programmes of adaptation are carried out only for priority categories of workers, who are selected in line with the requirements of the production line:

Genuine adaptation programmes are pretty expensive, so we targeted a smaller group of workers, those, like design engineers, who are most important to us in the first instance. (Human Resources Development Manager, T3)

For workers, the adaptation period represents a time when one must get used to the various elements of their probationary period, when tutelage from a more experienced employee remains virtually the only instrument providing training in working operations and helping with adaptation to the specifics of production in the given enterprise.

Social Support

Given the specific requirements of young people, there has been a restoration of some measures of social support for certain groups of young workers. Traditionally, such a state of affairs was accepted practice in the Soviet period; assistance was provided for young families, including one-time pay offs in the case of special events such as childbirth or marriage. One segment of young workers the management pays special attention are those who have served in the army, seeing them as graduates from the "school of life":

We keep those who have come to us from the army very close to our hearts. They have spent three years out there and have really come into their own as people as a result. Foreman, T3).

Enterprises invest more in them and create mechanisms that enable the employee to return after military service. This includes a special ceremonial send-off, material support while serving, guaranteed employment after the completion of military service and special agreements that secure the status of the employee in the production line after his return.

When considering the needs of young people, all experts interviewed mentioned the housing provision as one of the main factors assisting the incorporation of younger workers at the company:

The main problem of all young people is housing... It is important that the company provides some kind of social support in this area... if the it provides this pretty much anyone will be ready to give their right hand to work there...(Deputy Chief of Shop, M3).

It should be noted that corporate housing programmes have never been accessible to all and, in the crisis period, were actually frozen. Having lost much of their community infrastructure facilities during the Yeltsin reforms

(including dormitory rooms), enterprises cannot solve the housing problem of young workers completely by themselves. Assistance from enterprises generally consists of providing more valued workers hailing from the suburbs or other regions with special compensation to help with the apartment rent. While, strictly speaking, these benefits are not specially marked out as being for young people, they remain, in practice, the main beneficiaries of this compensation.

Another problem is linked to the existing rift in wages between young workers and more experienced workers who have been at the enterprise for a longer time. This gap can be significant for a variety of reasons; for example the low starting salary of young workers or the absence of a whole range of bonuses tied to length of service at the enterprise. As such, an important part of social support is the effort to level out the difference in incomes for young workers with special additional bonuses. This could be, for example, a bonus for reaching the first six months or year of employment or a bonus to compensate for reduced working hours in workers under the age of 18.

Assistance upgrading qualifications, further education and career growth

A shift back towards the upgrading qualifications and education as a priority in social policy is noticeable in all the enterprises we studied. Given a labour deficit in the skilled workers categories and typically high rates of staff turnover (the latter particularly affects mechanical engineering factories), enterprises consistently expend much energy on the training and re-training of their employees, in order to meet the accepted standards of the production process and provide quality in their work. There is much variety in the instruments used to upgrade the qualifications and knowledge management of young workers but, in the main, it varies according to the extent of resources invested into this area by the enterprise.

In the case of mechanical engineering factories, training has, in the main, a selective character. The system for upgrading the qualifications of young workers (for example the upgrading of one's skill-category) is in many ways personalised: there is no set requirement of length of service being tied to when skill-category should be upgraded. A good worker, in the view of experts we interviewed, can raise their skill grade in a year, while it could take poor workers years to achieve the same promotion. By investing in the educational capital of its workers, the management does not always seek to meet the needs of the worker. Hypothetically speaking, the initiative to upgrade one's skill category could come from the individual worker or foreman. In practice, however, upgrading is carried out on a more compulsory basis, even if it is made to appear voluntary. Another problem is that the upgrading of skill-level does not bring an automatic promotion of one's wages category:

Every year we conduct assessment whereby all workers can claim for an improved wages category. There are even times, when we raise someone's skill category without actually paying them the extra, like if we only expect to receive the result of the training much later (Human Resources Development Manager M3).

The upgrading of the qualifications of professionals is more varied in form: it includes training, competitions for the best design work but, at the same time, bears all the hallmarks of more ad hoc selection and is, in part, not linked to the specific career development needs of the individual.

In the oil refinery industry, corporate training has a more systematic character. Training and upgrading qualifications is more akin to a planned business process, carried out in strict accordance with key benchmark indicators. The system of upgrading qualifications includes not only engineers but also workers, who are both obliged to pass annual testing on their knowledge and skills. Having displayed satisfactory results in these tests, they are then sent on short courses in the company's in-house training school.

Wide differences are observable between companies in regards to the question of further professional education. Given both the deficit of engineers and the relatively limited allure of the engineering workplace, enterprises are forced to approach the further education of workers flexibly, even accepting the need to provide incentives to study. Assistance in professional education is centred on the point that young workers must combine work and study. For those who obtain training while remaining on the production line, an individualised routine of working must be established that regulates such things as the length of working week, shift duration and the start and end time of shifts. For those who obtaining training that forces them to be absent from the workplace, regulations ensure that they will still receive the average wage of the factory while away. Additional assistance for these employees includes partial payment of education fees in vocational schools, colleges and universities, including the postgraduate level. This, undoubtedly, is not a service that is made accessible for all employees. It is a grant to the individual employee, who receives it only as a result of their existing skills in specialist fields that the company suffers a deficit of.

In the N3 enterprise the situation is totally different; the practice of obtaining education is being removed from the organisation's sphere of responsibility into the one of personal concern for one's own individual development. The company is interested in the first instance in reducing its costs by rationalising production methods and processes in subsidiary enterprises. The personal desire on the part of workers to obtain additional professional education carries a cost that must be born by line management and other workers. For line managers, the training of workers means the organisational challenge of coping their absence from the production line, which will increase the intensity of the workload for those not attending the training. In the case of young

professionals, organisational costs are also high and can cause tension with line managers. However, as this process is initiated from above, foremen and managers are forced to accommodate themselves to it. In the majority of cases, young people pay for their own training, and resort to various underhand methods to make up for their absence in the workplace while they are in training. However, a great deal of those who turn to such means end up having to leave the company.

Achieving career growth is closely linked with upgrading one's qualification level. For workers, career growth in the context of an industrial enterprise means upgrading one's skill-category, as salary and prestige in the workplace depend on this aspect. Promotion from one skill-category to another requires much time, patience and hard work, which not every worker can handle. Another option for career growth is promotion up the hierarchy as the opportunity to become a team leader or a supervisor can exist even for those without special training. Those workers who have the necessary ambition and leadership qualities may be targeted for promotion up the career ladder by the management.

One way to hoist oneself up the career ladder is participation in competitions that demonstrate professional mastery among young workers. Such events are provided for in collective agreements or in special programmes. In enterprise M3, for example, the winners of such competitions earn the right of admission to a special talent pool that will entail the privilege of improving one's qualifications and studying in higher education institutions at the expense of the company. However, in most cases, participation in professional skills competitions operates more as a means of providing rewards and recognising achievement than stimulating career growth. In accordance with the results of the competition one-off rewards were given out (N3) or monthly payments as high as 30% of overall salary were provided, as well as material support for special health care requirements (M3).

For young professionals, a career is about growth by categories and grades or involves progressing up the administrative ladder to become, for example, team leader. The former is easier to achieve if the of its benefits can be demonstrated to the management or if training can be completed. The latter is somewhat harder to achieve; as a rule there is only a limited amount of positions that are not already occupied by senior colleagues. Promotion demands serious efforts on the part of the young professional; he or she must not only deal with the sheer quantity of tasks in their daily workload but also at the same time invest in upgrading their qualifications and starting new innovation projects.

Among the more traditional career management techniques used in industrial enterprises, one of the more interesting is the talent pool method. For an enterprise with a smaller reserve of workers this method is not appropriate due to the lack of long-term plan of development of production. For successful oil refining enterprises, on the other hand, there is little value because, as far

as career factors are concerned, they have more of an accomplishment-based than an ascriptive character (if we take into account the prestige of the obtained education) Only in one of our cases (M3), where the enterprise stands firmly on its two feet and has moderate free resources do such methods "work".

While industrial enterprises currently invest in the process of upgrading qualifications and providing education and career growth of valued employees through the various means described above, it should be noted that their task does not include protectionism for young people as a whole or social capital investment in all young applicants across the board.

The inclusion of young people in innovation and management

This study was also interested in methods that could be used to attract young people to management and increased innovation. It would be fair to say, however, that cultural factors present in each company have more influence in the effects and quality such measures, rather than it being directly dependent on the resources spent in achieving it.

Reacting to the signals from the top management on the need to develop innovation, in recent years there has been an increasing introduction of special measures, such as innovation projects, systems of continuous improvement, scientific and technological competitions and conferences on research and development and production methods. With the help of these programmes, young professionals can, in developing projects of various kinds of technological proposal, use their knowledge and abilities to make a name for themselves in the company. The expert we interviewed pointed out that due to the heavy workload of managers, these programmes are often conducted in a purely formal sense, on paper. That is not to say that on occasion seriously interesting projects and enthusiastic people are not discovered:

... we highlight age groups, which have the potential to jump straight through several levels of the hierarchy here at once and feel what it is like to be in a management role or professional position, to understand the kind of environment managers work in, what they do, what it is like to take decisions and feel responsibility... (HR Manager, M3).

Bodies facilitating representation for young professionals include youth councils or the councils of young professionals; these are fairly traditional structures that allow the mobilisation of representatives of age groups into community work and promote involvement in innovative activity and management. Youth Councils are kept informed of the plans of management, take part in the preparation and implementation of events for young people. These could be professional skill competitions, Spartakiads and mass cultural events. It should be noted that the activities of youth councils in mechanical engineering factories are more successful than in oil refineries, where they have a more official character and are, as a result, less popular among young people.

Companies use various forms of attracting young people to management, addressing both new and traditional cultural patterns of the Soviet period. These include the appointment of young caretakers for a temporarily absent manager, internships, and so-called «Substitution Day»¹, which is held in the form of business games. However, in general, according to the opinion of line managers and specialists of functional services in enterprises, the formation of social capital in the form of management skills and the ability to innovate requires more resources (in time, organization, money and solidarity) than the employer is willing to invest at this stage.

The general and specific features of youth policy in enterprises

It must be remembered that a general understanding of the need to develop and implement corporate social policy for young workers, as a key factor of innovative development, has only begun its formation in Russian companies. Nonetheless, in as far as this understanding achieves actual realisation it (i) relies on traditional, simplified views of social policy measures as a supplementary means of retaining employees in the company and contains almost no measures aimed at enhancing the creative potential of the group, (ii) does not embrace enough groups of young workers, which is important in the conditions where it is necessary to ensure a high quality of work at all stages of the production cycle. In the implementation of social youth policies there has been a consistently on-going selection of priority groups. Intragroup differentiation occurs due to narrowing down in the groups of employees who are beneficiaries of individual programs such as corporate education, training and career support and additional remuneration. Young engineers and future managers remain the most alluring target for corporate investment, which is reflected in the social programme spending and selectiveness shown in the choice of tools employed when working with them.

It should be noted that the idea of an egalitarian social protection programme is alien to many modern managers; even with the declaration of equal opportunities within youth groups, a tailored approach is more widely practiced, which is defined by the needs of the business and the personal qualities of the employee (loyalty, ability to work hard, etc.).

One of the most serious obstacles to the effective use of the potential of young people is poor communication, especially with the upper management levels. There is also a lack of mechanisms to support innovative activity in workers and professionals, which could create a link between innovation and the desire for professional and career growth. Another serious deficiency is the lack of defined and transparent rules for employee access to career resources

¹ A day during which younger employees shadow senior employees – "Den Dublera" in Russian

such as training, retraining and improving skills. There is also an insufficient use of modern methods and institutions to implement these tasks.

The priorities of youth policy are determined mainly by the need to bring the company back into line with changes in the labour market: the profile of social policy largely reflects the desire to solve business problems first and foremost, rather than any commitment on the part of the employer to ideas of social responsibility or social quality. As such, the specifics of its implementation depend largely on the current objectives of the enterprise.

Mechanical engineering factories currently face problems more related to the reproduction and conservation of human resources rather than its development. Therefore there is an emphasis on the functions of social protection; with social and professional development being promoted only selectively. In oil refineries, an industry sector with more favourable conditions, social protection in corporate social policy is minimized as far as possible, with the main focus driven toward the delivery of training and the development of staff abilities.

Corporate culture plays a very important role, as it moulds the specifics of youth policy in given cases. It can strengthen the solidarity of different generational groups or it can force them to compete. In the case of mechanical engineering enterprises, social policy is modelled more on the reproduction of tools and retains many of the cultural aspects dominant in Soviet enterprises. And this was reflected in a more liberal style at the expense of the freedom of manoeuvre given to line managers, less obsession with regulations and trust in the relationship between young workers and older colleagues. This type of culture creates the conditions for links to forge between generations, giving young people the chance to feel like part of the factory, stimulating a sense of prestige in the industrial worker or engineer.

In oil companies, a culture of competition and rigid corporate standards predominates. This, in contrast to mechanical engineering firms, limits the cultivation of social capital, undermining not only trust between social groups but also among generations. This creates the conditions for alienation of groups from each other and from their own labour, which ultimately harms the strategic objectives company to consolidate employees and create a sustainable social structure in the workplace. Many of the instruments of youth policy can end up taking on a very formal and generic form. In such circumstances, the real needs of young people, such as personal development or interesting work, may remain unmet, with social policy continuing to be ineffective as a long-term project in the lives of young people.

Over the course of the last decade, Russian companies have had to struggle along with an increasing scarcity in the availability of skilled labour. In this paper we have tried to describe how, through the use of social policies, Russian companies have sought to resolve the problems associated with the hiring and integration of young people into the ranks. This is being carried out in large

enterprises with a strong soviet flavour and it is these companies which make up the main part of Russian industry. We suggest that today the goals and content of youth policy continues to reflect the traditional logic of one's career within an organization; consolidating one's position in the team and the company, stability over mobility and flexibility, social guarantees in place of a high salary. The suitability of such strategies in meeting contemporary demands of young people, whose social reference points were formed within the context of a market economy, remains an issue of key importance. This is clearly emphasized in the work of Human Resource Management.

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