To the Problem of Competitive Personality Concept

Bogoyavlenskaya Diana B.ᵃ*, Kliueva Olga A.ᵇ

ᵃPsychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education. 9, building 4, Mohovaya st., Moscow, 125009, Russian Federation
ᵇTver State University. 33, Zhelyabova st., Tver, 170000, Russian Federation

Abstract

The problem of making a competitive personality is particularly relevant to contemporary psychology since this factor is a determinative resource for competitiveness of the state. In modern psychological models the content of competitive personality has been revealed by means of a historically established and instilled in consciousness economic model wherein the competition is a stimulus for development, thus reducing the psychological content of the concept. It is represented by the ability to develop activity at one’s own initiative which ensures the generation and introduction of innovations and, in its turn, enables to anticipate and run ahead of the competition requirements.

1. Introduction

Transition to new economic relationship in the Russian society in late XX – early XXI centuries has predetermined the transformation of requirements to personality traits which were required to perform effectively in the competitive environment. Presently, the concept of ‘competitiveness’ has been developed in the paradigm of modern economics and management and appears to be the key notion in resolving of the organizational...
problems. Therefore the ‘competitive personality’ concept has aroused interest in the Russian psychology and educational science already since the mid-1990s.

The analytical review of the psychological and educational case studies of the problem has brought to light the ambiguity in comprehension and a multitude of models of competitive personality. Below we give consideration to various trends and approaches to the psychological content of the ‘competitive personality’ concept.

2. The ‘competitive personality’ concept

2.1. Economic model of competitive personality

When describing the structure and content of a competitive personality, some researchers only propose the list of its social and psychological traits, but in this particular case these do not form a single structure (V.I. Andreev, N.N. Sidorova, I.M. Ilkovskaya, M.I. Rozhkova, S.V. Chegrintseva). Other models only pinpoint one leading component, for instance the system of values (I.I. Shevchenko), the achievement motive, activity (S.D. Biryukov, E.V. Tokareva, E.L. Kholodtseva, J. Grayson, R. House), competency, motivation for acquiring key competencies (L.S. Shikina, N.A. Zhuranova, V.G. Vienenko, K.V. Saveliev, T.V. Kolgurina, I.V. Darmanskaya), creativity (G.A. Borovik), know-how of management and self-management application in professional activity (S.V. Zverev and T.V. Kolgurina) [1].

In many cases the economic development problem is associated with discussing the role of psychological factors in the perception and interpretation of social processes. The surveys by D. McClelland, H. Heckhausen, R. de Charms, G. H. Moeller have revealed that achievement motivation is a factor that predetermines the epoch of economic upswing [2], [1].

In the opinion by A.L. Zhuravlev and D.V. Ushakov [2], achievement motivation ensures competitiveness of personality in the areas of activity that require high exertion, constant surmounting, particularly in the entrepreneurship.

Some studies have proven that general intelligence has been the most powerful predictor known in the psychology for individual professional achievements. The general intelligence appears to be a more powerful predictor of economic growth that the market freedom, democracy, investments, various parameters of the education system, etc. R. Lynn and T. Vanhanen view national intelligence as a factor relevant to economic welfare of any country. However, A.L. Zhuravlev and D.V. Ushakov [2] emphasize: ‘The significance of intelligence finds a better manifestation in cognitively strenuous professions as compared to cognitively simple ones and the professions like those of ‘human-object’ and ‘human-symbol’ types. For the professions the success of which is related to the creation of a fundamentally new original product creativity takes the foreground. The role of creativity in the making of the country’s competitiveness is enhanced by the fact that the creative achievements in the society are distributed quite unevenly. An insignificant minority of the people produces the major part of the creative product.’

At the same time professional competency is inherently a human capital, thus ensuring competitiveness of the country. However, professional competency needs to be constantly updated and lack of some traits required for it to be adequately applied, rather than privacy of information is the worst hindrance for the improvement of such. Most advanced in this aspect is the approach by L.M. Mitina [3] (Conceptual Model of Developing a Competitive Personality). The author views the professional development model as a constructive path of a personality in a profession where conversion of personal living into the subject of practical transformation is the major psychological tool, and focus, competency and flexibility appear as integral characteristics being the object of development. The surveys in this area have activity and motivation for success in professional activity as the main characteristics in the structure and content of a competitive personality [1].

It can be acknowledged that in contemporary models the competitive personality content also embraces, apart from economic ones, also social and psychological factors. However, the impressed economic model of
competitive personality unambiguously suggests that competition is a stimulus for development. It is the availability of competition as rivalry, contest between the people, groups and organizations in the pursuance of similar goals, better results in a definite public sphere that is viewed as a prerequisite for making of the competitive personality, thus, as we believe, reducing the psychological content of the ‘competitive personality’ concept.

2.2. Competitive personality and intellectual initiative

At the same time, we recognize such trait of personality as ‘focus on cause’ to be decisive when considering competitive personality. The devotion to cause accounts for the human ability to develop the activity which is an inherent value, sometimes the meaning of life, at one’s own initiative, rather than by virtue of external circumstances. A whole cycle of studies has proven that this ability to develop activity at one’s own initiative may be deemed as the unit of analyzing the creativity and genius of a personality. The psychodiagnostic method of Creative Field has been developed to identify this ability [4].

By analogy with art, which appears to clearly differentiate between competency and art, in science the activity that is realized highly successfully but is always externally stimulated, may be deemed as the competency, rather than creativity. In that case the tasks being resolved by a person are viewed on the level of the singular since as soon as the desired has been achieved the process of thinking terminates. We call that level of activity the stimulus-productive one. If the activity is developed at the initiative of the subject, this causes the discovery of new regularities. This type of creativity is called heuristic in our typology of creation. Finally, on the next level (conventionally named ‘creative’) the discovered new regularity is theoretically grounded. This is a discovery on the universal level of analysis. Such analysis enables to reveal the essence of the phenomenon and provides the opportunity to predict qualitative leaps in its development. Hence, the method reveals the prognostic abilities [4], [1].

In the scope of the competition problem prognostic abilities guarantee the maximum advantage since they enable to outrun and be prepared for the situations that may emerge in the future. It is noteworthy that some authors regard the ability for development and prediction as the basis for competition (P. Heine, I.I. Schmalhausen, A. von Hayek, R.A. Fatkhutdinov) [1].

We believe that the ability for development of the activity at one’s own initiative stipulates for ‘composition of the subject itself’ (S.L. Rubinstein [5]), appears to be the backbone component in the competitiveness of personality, thus ensuring progressive evolution of the activity the innovative product of which permanently outruns the defined original conditions of competition.

3. The backbone factor for competitiveness of personality (results of the study)

3.1. Methods. Sampling

The above is evidenced by results of an experiment conducted using the methods for content analytical study of the free interview, the monographic method of personality examination, the Creative Field psychodiagnostic method. We have conducted a free interview with 1,000 representatives of various professions. The study covered respondents aged 16 to 70 (M = 36), 42% of the sampling being men, 58% being women. Out of 1,000 respondents, 16% have general secondary education, 36% - vocational secondary education (undergraduate education), 48% have higher education. By profession, 10% of the total sampling is made by directors of various levels, 39% are managers, 28% are specialists of different levels, 8% are students, 9% are school students, 4% are pensioners and 2% are unemployed.
3.2. The implicative model of the competitive personality

By analogy with other surveys wherein the content analytical study of the interview, expert evaluation of successful professionals and questioning forms the basis for further survey design and selection of the psychodiagnostic tools, we have reiterated this phase via content analytical study of the free interview in order to reveal sociopsychological traits in the image of the competitive personality for representatives of various professions. At our request the respondents described specific traits of a competitive personality, its advantages in the competitive environment. Under sociopsychological traits in the image of the competitive personality we understand a set of personality traits most significant for winning in the competition. By applying the terminological content analysis (data resiliency has the maximum deviation of 5%) we have obtained frequency arrays by percentage – hierarchical structures of business qualities, attitude towards labor, general focus of personality, attitude towards immediately surrounding small groups, attitude towards people (humanistic and communication characteristics), self-attitude, life experience, lifestyle, external parameters, behavioral habits, conditions contributing to competitiveness of personality, objective criteria for competitiveness of personality. Some dependencies between the units are not random (the method by Ch. Osgood), the nonrandom dependencies significance rate at 5% enables to single out galaxies of interrelated units [6]. Pursuant to the maximum quantity of statistically significant correlative relationships, the key features of the competitive personality are competency, flexibility and initiative that account for manifestation of other abovementioned business qualities that qualify the attitude towards labor. According to findings of the content analytical study, the general focus of a competitive personality is primarily characterized by willingness to be the first and the best in the competitive environment, conscious and active focus, ability to arrange one’s actions to achieve a target (purposefulness), interest in cause, work. The respondents have opined that on the one hand communication traits of a competitive personality include manners, sociability, humane attitude towards people, while on the other hand, to achieve a goal in the competitive environment admissible are conformism, artfulness, mendacity towards a rival. Along with a wide selection of sociopsychological traits respondents point out parameters of success in professional activity as an external criterion of a competitive personality (refer to Fig. 1). Professional success is a collection of positive results accumulated within the entire duration of a career, both in terms of psychology and in terms of objective professional achievements. E. Hughes, J. van Maanen, Ya.S. Hammer et al. [7] have offered the division into objective and subjective career types. Objective success is the positive result in a career that the surrounding persons may assess. As a rule, it is measured by such characteristics like salary or wage level, number of job promotions and level of the position occupied in the hierarchy of the organization. In the opinion of most of the researchers, objective success and professional achievements are the underlying components in competitiveness of a personality. Pursuant to the implicative model of the competitive personality, success criterion as an objective competitiveness indicator incorporates the similar characteristics of professional success described in the foreign surveys: salary or wage level (44%), career progress (17%), high level of the position occupied in the hierarchy of the organization (6%). We have established statistically significant nonrandom relations between the given semantic categories \( r = 0.5 -0.7, p < 0.05 \). But, unlike the Western model, such indicator as ‘professional achievements recognized by professional community’ (13%) has been typical of and showing higher priority for objective professional success of a competitive personality, as contrary to indicator ‘high position occupied in the hierarchy of the organization’ (6%) (refer to Fig. 1).
All those empirically determined components do not comprise a system. Their inclusion into competitiveness of personality is not theoretically justified in some of the surveys. In psychological studies of the problem many components overlap, thus duplicating one another to a certain extent, although they do not appear to form a single structure. Therefore, the issue of the tool for implementation of the human creative potential remains open and is confined to none of the above personality qualities and traits.

4. Summary

With the aid of the monographic method of personality examination (autobiographical questionnaire, interview, analysis of official documents) under criteria of objective success and achievements in professional occupation, from the total sampling we selected a group of most successful professionals who subsequently participated in the psychodiagnostic survey using the Creative Field method.

The results obtained indicated that the Creative Field method differentiates subjects with achievements, which subjects are not differentiated by outwardly objective success indicators.

On the one hand, the method singles out the essential characteristics of sheer competitiveness of personality inherent in our participants who attained the heuristic level, and simultaneously enables to more clearly set apart the factors at the expense of which the subjects of stimulus-productive type who are not competitive.

Results of the monographic personality examination have also been corroborated by the data obtained using the Creative Field method. Analysis of the professional success of the subjects with stimulus-productive level makes it possible to conclude that the common criteria of objective success and achievements in professional occupation are formal in nature, which vindicates quasi-competitiveness of a personality.

The study conducted in a considerable sampling of successful professionals allows to maintain that competitiveness of a personality is a backbone quality where the ability to develop activity in one's own initiative, i.e. creative capabilities of the personality, comprise the backbone factor, thus ensuring ability for innovations and a higher resource in the competitive environment.

References


