

Human capital in the structure of total capital of a personality: sociological aspect

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In the late 20th – early 21st century, the theory of capital, with an enormous contribution to its development belonging to P. Bourdieu, had been used more often. The necessity and possibility of a bolder use of the theory of capital in the analysis and estimation of the situation in different spheres of public life is substantiated in the article. In particular, in the project “Paradigms of Education: Sociological Approach”, which was started in 2008 by sociologists of the Institute of Social Investigations at Daugavpils University, a significant part was assigned to the theory of capital. It is aimed at elucidating how different factors of capital influence the life strategies of the young and which paradigm of education meets the challenges of the 21st century. The objective of the investigation was to overcome the fragmentariness of the use of the theory of capital. To achieve the objective, an extensive classification of the types of capital has been worked out; the indicators of their measuring have been introduced. As to the novelties of the investigation, they are as follows: determining the volume of total capital and of its separate types, the age specificity of real and desirable resources and their use while realizing life strategies, the basic factors that determine the total capital of a personality and the dynamics of its structure in different age groups of the present youth. On the whole, the empirical data have proven the hypothesis that the volume of capital of a personality depends on the level of education, income and on the life strategy. The increase of total capital may be found in all three age groups of the young aimed at the strategy of success.

Key words: resource, capital, total capital, the young, life strategy

INTRODUCTION

Methodology of applying the theory of capital in empirical investigation

The notions that are traditionally considered to be economic ones, such as money, market, capital, investment, income, etc., were widely used by sociologists at the end of the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century. The theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2000) is impossible to be imagined without considering the notion of “capital”.

While investigating social reality, P. Bourdieu suggested using two fundamental approaches at the same time. The first approach is structuralism, which is viewed by the author as the principle of a double structuring of social reality:

- a) a social system has objective structures, which do not depend on people’s consciousness and will; moreover, they can stimulate various activities and social orientations of people;
- b) the structures that are formed by social practices of agents.

The second approach is constructivism; it is based on the idea that people’s activity is determined by life experience, socialization process and acquired the ability to behave in

different ways; in total, they form peculiar matrices of social activity, thus allowing a social agent to be a practical operator who constructs real objects (Bourdieu 1987).

Agents' disposition to a particular activity mainly depends on the instruments they possess. In order to classify the instruments with the help of which agents can satisfy their needs, P. Bourdieu introduces the notion "capital". According to his idea, agents (individuals or institutes) are characterized by the volume of capital; agents determine the structure of the space (e. g., economic) in proportion to their specific weight, which depends on the specific weight of other agents (i. e. all the space).

Accordingly, capital becomes the "leading structures" that allow individuals and institutes achieving their objectives. The bigger the volume of capitals, the more diversified they are, thus making it easier for their owners to achieve the objectives.

In his work "Social Space", P. Bourdieu distinguishes four capital groups: economic, cultural, social and symbolic (Бурдьё 1993).

Almost all types of capital possess the ability to convert; e. g., if a person has a symbolic capital, he / she can go up the social ladder, thus achieving a social capital. Only culture capital is relatively independent. Even if an individual possesses a large volume of economic capital, it is not so easy to get also cultural capital.

Capital conversion is implemented by means of a special exchange pyramid which depends on public culture, market situation, or on the demand for this or that capital in it. It is necessary to differentiate among the notions of "resource", "assets" and "capital". A resource is a potential, an "emergency" tool. Assets are a demanded resource; during the exchange process, they will have a positive influence on the owner's situation. Capital is able not only to accumulate, convert into money and reproduce itself, but also to create a new added value. Capital allows the agents to get power over those who have less capital or have no capital at all. It is evident that the behaviour of the individuals who possess a large volume of capital differs greatly from the one of those who have less of it.

According to P. Bourdieu's concept, there are three positions of capital:

- 1) incorporated,
- 2) objectivised,
- 3) institutionalized.

The volume and structure of capital are not so complicated to measure empirically. It is possible to say that P. Bourdieu's theory may be practically applied.

Usually, sociologists use only fragments of the theory of capital, analyzing mainly social inequality, social structures, problems of political leadership. However, such aspects as the role of different types of capital, their conversion mechanisms, main strategies of their reproduction are analyzed rather rarely.

Latvian sociologists pay a lot of attention to social capital, the indices of which are evaluated very low even if compared with neighbour countries. In the article "Latvian social capital: situation and modern tendencies" (2001), the author of the present article has made a conclusion that "*an insignificant volume of Latvian social capital is the result of the policy domineering in society, where mutual suspicion, distrust and angriness are widespread. Agents of social life in political sphere, politics and discussions ignore logical arguments more and more often*" (Mensikov 2001).

In 2006–2007, sociologists from Latvian universities implemented a considerable project "Latvia. Review of National Development. Human Capital: My Gold is My Nation?". According to the authors of the project, human capital includes all skills and abilities that

influence the potential of economic and social activities (see Fig. 1). In the sociological research conducted within the framework of the project, various aspects of human capital were analysed, such as the quality of a person's life, value orientation, public and economic activity, person's legal capacity and participation in social life, person's attitude towards his / her health and habits enhancing a healthy way of life, tendencies of internal and external migration, etc.

As a result of the review, the following conclusion has been made: human capital in Latvia is used inefficiently. Inhabitants of Latvia rarely use their creative potential in activities related to innovations and business administration.

Nowadays, in our opinion, employing the theory of capital, it is possible to conduct fundamental research. It is necessary to try to give an empirical evaluation to the role of the total personal or group capital, a correlation among and the role of different types of capital, to analyze not only social inequalities, but also the way of life the young choose, the development of the education system, of the life quality of inhabitants and other issues.

Empirical research of the total capital of the young in Latvia

In 2008, sociologists of the Institute of Social Investigations at Daugavpils University implemented the project "Paradigms of Education: Sociological Approach"; the theory of capital was widely used in it. An extensive classification of the types of capital was worked out; the incorporated, objectified and institutionalized situation, stratifying systems, assignment types, measurement types were characterized.

Due to extensive conversion opportunities, a person has to choose where to invest time, money, work, and patience. In this respect, it is possible to speak about strategies of a person's life. Usually, researchers distinguish between two strategies: achievement strategy and survival strategy. Stable orientation towards the accumulation of a particular type of capital often becomes an object of the strategic choice, thus determining a person's activity in the long-term perspective.

In our research, total capital and its eight types according to the respondents' self-evaluation were measured. A respondent evaluates each type of his / her resource using three indices:

Economic

Land and other immovable property

Bank investment

Personal business

Cultural

Up bringing

Wide outlook

High intellect

Human

Higher education

Profession

Work experience

Social

Connections with important people

Participation in a public organization, party

Many friends

Administrative

Leading position

Work in the parish council

Ability to lead

Political

Leadership in a public organization, party

Latvian citizenship

Status of a deputy, politician

Symbolic

Good reputation at study, work place

Popularity in the municipality and beyond it

Ability to offer something new and to get others interested in it

Physical

Good health

Ability to manage stress and psychological load

Beauty, being attractive

Only the resources that bring benefit are considered to be a capital. That is why each respondent specified what benefit he / she got from his / her resources.

Of course, the situation is more complicated, because the respondents could fail to reflect their resources precisely, thus failing to specify the benefits. However, the only way how to stay aside from the complicated reality is to simplify the situation in an artificial way.

In the given sociological research, during the data analysis, in correspondence with the basic objective, two main types of young people, on the basis of their orientation towards adaptation strategies, were singled out:

(i) people who are oriented towards survival strategy, who agree to be poorer, but with a guaranteed level of income, without any risk;

(ii) people who are oriented towards achievement strategy, who want to be richer, are risky, use their initiative.

The factors that determine the success of the young during the transition from education to employment on the labour market, their wish to achieve a high quality of life, to find harmony with the outer world which gets more and more complicated, keep changing very fast. It is not easy to achieve it; official statistical data prove it (unemployment, crime rates, premature death and other problems among the young).

When scientists mention these facts, they fail to specify good reasons for these phenomena (on the background of the ambitious plan of social economic development), as well as to reveal the factors and particular mechanisms, the behaviour parameters of which get reflected in younger generations. In the historical perspective, it will be reflected as a low-standard position in a particular group of inhabitants and candidates' problematic situation in the middle layer in another group.

While working on the document "Latvia 2030. Latvian long-term development strategy, 1st edition", it was emphasized: "The notion of capital is used in a wide sense and includes the elements that cannot be measured in money directly. Our main capital is people, their skills, knowledge and talents" (*Latvija 2030*). The authors of the long-term development strategy emphasize that "... in spite of the decrease in the number of people and the public getting old, it is vital for Latvia not to decrease the value of human capital and to increase its productivity. Usually, this capital can be increased by investing in the general public education (e. g., to be competent in sophisticated IT environment), in the basic, secondary and higher education, as well as in the education of adults, including working places in the sphere of education" (*Latvija 2030*).

There is a practical need for political, social economic and pedagogical instruments which would allow improving the life strategies of the young with the aim to optimize and reduce the great social economic differentiation and the related life quality problems of Latvian inhabitants. It is also important to analyze the external conditions, evident and latent obstacles, in order to improve the social dialogue with the young, their schools and parents, because it is connected with the critical situation in the education system, the problems of patriotism and development of ideals.

A sociological survey was conducted in June 2008. The subject of the research was three age groups: people 15–19, 20–24, 25–29 years old from the Demene and Naujene parishes. The number of respondents was 326 young people, as well as 110 parents of 15–19-year-old teenagers.

The object of the research was the volume and differentiation of total capital and its types; specific features of achieving available and desirable resources in different age groups

and the use of resources in the implementation of life strategies; the basic factors that determine a person's total capital and the dynamics of its structure in different age groups. The objective of the research, according to the above-mentioned aspects of the object of this research, was as follows:

a) to specify the evident and latent factors, as well as particular mechanisms that ensure the influence of particular factors on the accumulation and structure dynamics of a person's total capital;

b) to pay special attention to the factors that influence the way the young choose life strategies and are related to the accumulation and use of total capital;

c) to evaluate the volume and structure of total capital, taking into consideration the needs of the state social economic development, as well as the diverse requirements of the young.

According to several researches conducted in Latvia, it is possible to assume that the main obstacle in the development of total capital is a relatively low share of the people who are oriented to achievement strategy. An additional hypothesis: the volume of a person's resources and capital depend on the education, as well as on the income level in the family.

The novelty of the present research is the use of the theory of capital, with the help of which it is possible to determine the volume of a separate type (economic, social, etc.) of capital, as well as the volume of the integrated capital.

The second novelty of the research is determining and conceptualizing the factors that influence the life strategies of modern young people.

The third novelty is an attempt to specify the particular mechanisms that ensure a correlation between total capital and the dynamics of its structure and success (failure) in the implementation of the life strategy.

The fourth novelty is as follows: the genesis of the total capital of the young was empirically determined (revealed) as opposed to the total capital (volume, structure) of the parents.

In order to measure the volume of capital, a general index was elaborated on the basis of the answers to the questionnaires (which reflect all types of capital).

The level of capital conversion was measured by means of mutual correlation analysis (the higher the correlation among different types of capital, the higher the level of conversion). The correlation analysis measures the degree of correlation, meanwhile the direction of conversion is determined employing the factor analysis.

The theoretical substantiation of the research and the suggested operational parameters of capital in the sociological measurement allow determining (1) in what way various types of capital influence the life strategies of the young; (2) what should be taken into consideration in the education system while organizing education and upbringing according to the requirements of knowledge society; (3) what kind of education paradigm meets the challenges of the 21st century.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In general, empirical data confirmed the suggested hypothesis: the volume of a person's resources and capital depends on the level of education, family income, as well as on life strategy (see Table).

The young people who participated in the survey, in general, indicated nine and their parents ten kinds of resources. After young people become older, continue education, get professional skills and experience, the volume of resources, or more precisely the realization of their presence, increases (from 8 resources among those aged 15–19 to about 11

among those aged 25–29). However, the increase in various resources was not noted in the respondents' evaluations (especially as concerns political and administrative resources). Even young people with higher education indicated only about 13 resources (out of the 24 available).

Table. Characteristic features of resources and total capital in different social demographic groups of the young, June 2008, n = 326, points

Respondent groups	Resource			Capital		
	Total (group average)	Minimum	Maximum	Total (group average)	Minimum	Maximum
Total	8.9	1	20	8.2	0	47
Gender:						
male	8.8	1	20	7.8	0	38
female	9.0	1	18	8.4	1	47
Age:						
15–19	8.0	1	19	7.4	0	45
20–24	9.5	1	17	8.6	1	37
25–29	10.8	2	20	9.9	1	47
Education:						
lower than secondary	8.1	1	19	7.0	0	45
secondary	9.2	1	17	8.5	1	47
higher than secondary	11.1	1	20	10.2	1	37
Of them – higher education	13.2	3	20	12.0	3	19
Strategy:						
survival	8.5	1	18	7.7	0	47
achievement	9.4	1	20	8.8	0	45
Family income per person per month						
low	8.2	1	18	7.5	0	45
average	9.6	1	17	8.5	1	15
higher than average	9.8	1	20	9.5	0	47

Source: the table was elaborated by the authors while analysing results of the sociological research "Education Paradigms: Sociological Approach".

The evaluation of resources and of the benefit obtained from them (growth of capital) among the young people and their parents is similar. Usually, the young indicate the physical (physiological), cultural and symbolic resources that belong to them. The parents often indicate physical, cultural and human resources.

The most significant difference in the evaluations of resources between the young and the parents is a considerable predominance of human resources in the evaluations by the parents:

- higher education – 16% and 33%;
- work experience – 36% and 81%;
- profession – 34% and 83%.

Often, parents indicate the economic resources that belong to them:

- land or immovable property – 22% and 57%;
- bank deposit – 12% and 27%.

Moreover, both the young and the parents equally seldom mention the third economic resource – “personal business” (respectively 5% and 6%).

It is also more characteristic of the parents to mention the growth of cultural resources: upbringing – 76% and 85%, wide outlook – 58% and 69%.

The parents reduce the evaluation of “physical resources”:

good health – 74% and 60%;

ability to manage stress and psychological load – 68% and 56%;

beauty, being attractive – 73% and 59%.

The parents more seldom indicate such social resource as “many friends” – respectively 85% and 69%.

Both the young and the parents participating in the survey have “the lack” of political (except for Latvian citizenship) and administrative resources. Even such index as the “ability to lead, to manage” was indicated only by 35% of the young and by 32% of the parents. “Leadership in a public organization” was mentioned by 5% of the young and by 9% of the parents.

The most unexpected finding in the respondents’ answers was the differentiation of the benefit (capital growth) from this or that resource. The respondents often indicated that a resource “did not give any benefit”. The young mentioned it in relation to the following resources: “status of a deputy, politician” – 31%, “member of a public organization, party” – 30%, “private business” – 30%; as to the parents – “member of a public organization, party” – 53%, “work in the parish council” – 55%, “leadership in a public organization” – 43%, “private business” – 36%.

The respondents usually relate “income” with economic, administrative and human resources, “moral satisfaction” with cultural, physical, social and symbolic resources, “social status” with political resources. The respondents have especially similar views on the evaluation of physical and cultural resources, which are mainly connected with moral satisfaction. For instance, the young are morally satisfied by such physical resources as good health (indicated by 52%), ability to manage stress and psychological load (62%), beauty, being attractive (60%). For the parents, physical resources have a significant influence on the moral aspect: good health – 67%, ability to manage stress and psychological load – 69%, beauty, being attractive – 67%.

The young evaluate cultural resources only in relation to moral satisfaction: upbringing – 53%, broad outlook – 51%, high intellect – 43%, whereas the parents usually evaluate moral satisfaction in relation with cultural resources: upbringing – 68%, broad outlook – 71%, high intellect – 54%.

It is worth mentioning that only two indices out of 24 – “higher education” and “profession” – were assigned all three possible benefits: income, social status, and moral satisfaction.

In respondents’ mind, “social status” is “further away” from other resource indices. The young relate its presence and growth to such social resource as “connections with important people” (24% of respondents), as well as to political resources: “Latvian citizenship” – 35%, “leadership in a public organization” – 17%, “status of a deputy” – 12%. The parents have similar evaluations: “connections with important people” – 30%, “Latvian citizenship” – 34%, “leadership in a public organization” – 14%, “status of a deputy” – 18%.

The empirical data show that the growth of total capital is obvious among those who choose the achievement strategy in all three age groups (see Fig. 2). The parents’ evaluation of total capital is similar to that of 25–29 years old young people (survival strategy: among 25–

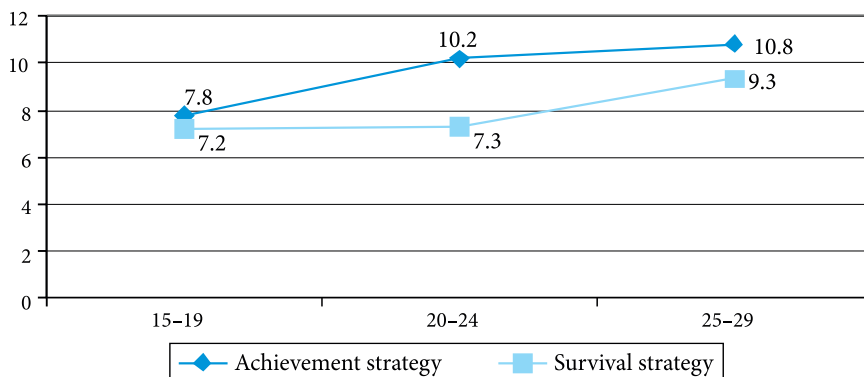


Fig. 1. Total capital among the young according to life strategy, June 2008, n = 326, points
Source: elaborated by the authors while analysing results of the sociological research "Education paradigms: sociological approach".

29 years old young people – 9.3%, among the parents – 9.1%; achievement strategy: among 25–29 years old young people – 10.8%, among the parents – 11.5%).

Unfortunately, the share of the young who are oriented to the achievement strategy does not constitute even a half of the number of the respondents (46–48%), and since 1999 this index has not changed (see Fig. 2).

In general, among the young, it is possible to see relatively strong correlations (conversion) between physical and cultural capital (Spearman's correlation coefficient $r = 0.425$) and between cultural and human capital ($r = 0.351$) which in turn has the strongest correlation with economic capital ($r = 0.363$). Notably, economic capital has the strongest correlation with administrative ($r = 0.363$) and social ones ($r = 0.485$) which have the strongest correlation (conversion) among all the measured interrelations ($r = 0.613$).

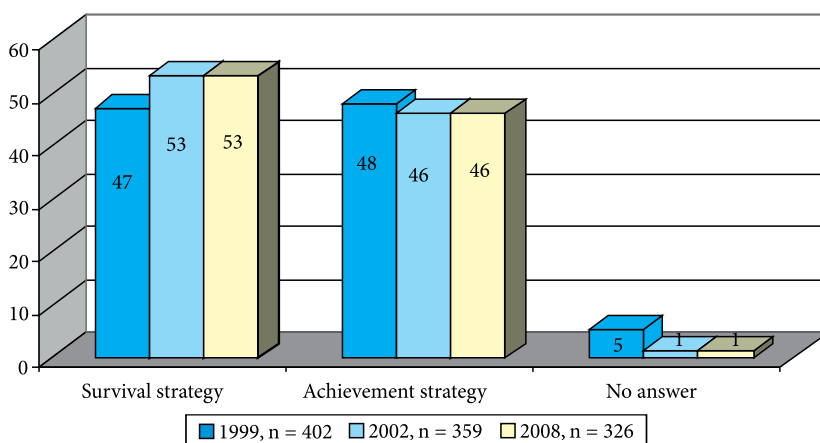


Fig. 2. Distribution of respondents by strategy, %

Source: elaborated by the authors while analysing results of the sociological research "Education paradigms: sociological approach".

It is important to emphasize that the young did not see any strong correlation not only between the economic and physical capital, but also between the economic and symbolic, or political, capital.

With age, the young see the following dynamics in the correlations among different kinds of capital:

- conversion of physical capital into cultural capital becomes stronger (from $r = 0.395$ among 15–19-year olds to $r = 0.524$ among 25–29-year-olds);
- conversion of cultural capital into human capital becomes stronger (from $r = 0.288$ to $r = 0.456$);
- a correlation between economic and human capitals becomes weaker (from $r = 0.429$ to $r = 0.185$);
- economic capital keeps a relatively strong correlation only with administrative and social capital. In other words, conversion of human capital into economic capital, as a rule, takes place indirectly since human capital is first converted into social and administrative capital.

The parents' opinion about the correlation among different kinds of capital is rather similar to that of 25–29-years-olds. However, there is a significant difference: conversion of human capital into economic one in parents' opinion is not only stronger (especially between administrative and social ones), but also takes place directly.

The respondents' (both the young and the parents) symbolic capital is the result of conversion of all other types of capital; especially it concerns administrative capital (in this case, the young have $r = 0.501$ and the parents $r = 0.667$). Thus, a weaker correlation of symbolic capital with the volume of economic capital was determined, especially among 25–29-year-olds ($r = 0.289$) and the parents ($r = 0.279$).

In the total massive of respondents, there was a significant correlation between total capital and feeling successful ($r = 0.296$), the length of education ($r = 0.285$) (see Fig. 3). In its turn, feeling successful had a strong correlation with life satisfaction ($r = 0.472$), with education satisfaction ($r = 0.397$) and with health satisfaction ($r = 0.350$). During the analysis, a correlation between total capital and orientation towards achievement strategy ($r = 0.122$) was also detected. A strong direct correlation between personal income and family income ($r = 0.414$), as well as between the length of education and personal income ($r = 0.305$) was revealed.

It would be interesting to determine what happens with the factors that have either direct or indirect influence on the formation of personal total capital among the young transiting from one age group into another.

In the group of 15–19-year-old people, as well as in the whole massive, there was a strong correlation between total capital and feeling successful ($r = 0.312$), education satisfaction ($r = 0.251$), life satisfaction ($r = 0.196$), and length of education ($r = 0.183$). In its turn, the length of education correlates with personal income ($r = 0.191$) and family income ($r = 0.190$). In the group of 20–24-year-old people, there was also a direct correlation between total capital and feeling successful ($r = 0.350$), the length of education ($r = 0.349$); moreover, with age, the tendency becomes stronger. In this group, a strong correlation between total capital and orientation to achievement strategy appears ($r = 0.324$).

In the group of 25–29-year-old people, like in the previous age group, there was a strong correlation between total capital and orientation to achievement strategy ($r = 0.269$). The second significant correlation of total capital is with family income ($r = 0.189$), which has a strong correlation with personal income ($r = 0.491$).

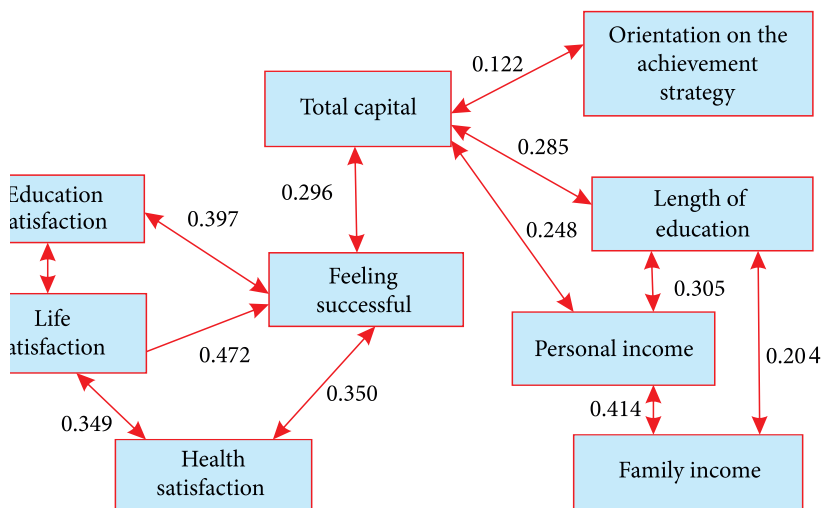


Fig. 3. Correlation of the basic factors influencing total capital, all the young, June 2008, $n = 326$

Source: elaborated by the authors while analysing results of the sociological research "Education paradigms: sociological approach".

Thus, with age, the role of orientation towards achievement strategy in relation to total capital becomes stronger.

CONCLUSIONS

Usually, sociologists use only fragments of the theory of capital and analyze mainly social inequalities, social structures, problems of political leadership. Latvian sociologists pay a lot of attention to social capital, the indices of which are evaluated as very low.

In 2008, sociologists of the Institute of Social Investigations at Daugavpils University implemented the project "Paradigms of Education: Sociological Approach"; a significant part of it was assigned to the theories of capital; the situation in the education system was described, and practical decisions aimed at raising the quality of education were elaborated. An extensive classification of the types of capital was worked out; the incorporated, objectified and institutionalized situation, stratifying systems, assignment types, measurement types were characterized.

The research was focused on total capital, the volume and differentiation of its types, on the specific features of achieving available and desirable resources in different age groups, their use in the implementation of life strategy, on the basic factors that determine person's total capital and the dynamics of its structure in different age groups.

On the whole, the empirical data have confirmed the hypothesis that the volume of personality capital depends on the level of education, the level of income and the life strategy. The increase in total capital was noted in all three age groups of the young oriented towards the achievement strategy.

As to the structure of total capital, in all age groups of the respondents three types out of eight were dominant: cultural, physical and human capital. All the groups of the

respondents showed less interest in political (except for Latvian citizenship) and administrative capital.

A relatively strong correlation (conversion) between a person's physical and cultural capitals, as well as between cultural and human capital is empirically proven. A person's economic capital has the strongest correlation with administrative and social kinds of capital which have the strongest correlation (conversion) among all the measured interrelations. Conversion of human capital into economic one, as a rule, takes place indirectly, since first it is converted into social and administrative capital.

Thus, if a young person or his / her family (even with a high cultural and human capital) fail to possess social and administrative capital, this actually becomes an obstacle for material (economic) welfare; however, if achievement strategy appears, it encourages migration. That is why it is worth noting that the decrease in orientation to achievement strategy among 25–29-year-olds is stimulated not only by the change of strategy due to difficulties in its implementation (especially due to the lack of social, administrative and human capital), but also by the implementation of achievement strategy on other territories (in other cities, countries).

The respondents themselves do not relate economic success to cultural, physical, social and symbolic capitals; however, they see a positive influence of economic, administrative and human capital on their income.

The young with a large total capital more often indicate the strategies of feeling successful, higher education and orientation to achievement. However, the volume of total capital among 25–29-year-olds has a stronger correlation with family income than in all other age groups, although the length of education influences total capital along with such factors as feeling successful, health, education and life satisfaction in general.

The parents showed an even stronger correlation of total capital with family income and with the length of education (with feeling successful and healthy, education and life satisfaction in general). In its turn, a positive connection of the orientation towards achievement strategy with total capital was related to the length of education.

The young evaluated 12 suggested success factors; the following factors got an especially high evaluation: "ability to work in a team" (3.46 out of 4 points) and "good education" (3.34). In modern conditions, cultural capital, social studies and the humanities get a special role again.

In the conditions of a growing significance of knowledge economy, the quality of education becomes more and more important. The humanities are assigned a significant role, since they will assist in solving complicated problems in the future. A successful transition from education to the labour market presupposes transition of the young from the passive survival strategy to the achievement strategy, from the lack of demand and poor life to the high life standards. Of course, the young cannot make it alone; that is why a significant growth of the total capital (first of all social, administrative and political ones) should become a strategic objective of the state and society. The new education paradigm has to achieve this objective.

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