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Basic approaches to defining the essence of the “social capital” concept

Background concept of the formation of the concept of the SC is associated with the release of the subjective component of social and economic relations. These ideas are incorporated in the work of classical economic theory of Adam Smith, K. Marx, K. Menger, A. de Tocqueville, Herbert Spencer, E. Durkheim. Among the Russian-speaking scientists we can distinguish N.A. Berdjajev, A.I. Herzen, M.I. Tugan-Baranowski [1, 2]. The study of different forms of capital is typical of the neoclassical theory of the historical school, economic sociology, which can be traced in the works of G. Becker [3], M. Weber [4], M.S. Granovetter [5], T. Schultz [6] and other. Formulation of the main provisions of the theory of the social capital is associated with the names of scholars such as P. Bourdieu [7], J. S. Coleman [8], G. Lowry [9], R.D. Putnam [10], J. Sealy and L.J. Hanifen [11].

Modern foreign scientists A. Inkeles, G. Kulinich, M. Smith adhere to the neoclassical approach, explaining the nature of the social capital of individual utility maximization of people in interaction with each other. D. Redzhepagich, P. Stubbs approaches to the study of the social capital from the standpoint of local communities, explaining the provision of the additional competitive advantages.

As part of the institutional approach the study of social capital based on the study of the properties of social networks due to the state of the institutional environment. This approach is used by R. Burt [12], S. Knek [13] and other researchers.

The social capital is actively studied by foreign sociologists: R. Inglehart [14], T. Claridge [15], J. Nagape [16], P. Paxton [17], A. Portes [18], R. Rose [19].

The difficulty of defining the essence of the social capital (SC) is associated with the current lack of the common understanding of the term “capital” in the economic science. Generalized semantic content is reduced to the treatment of capital as good in general, contributing to an increase of good things, and the capital is not necessarily in favor in kind. The main feature of the capital is to generate income to the owner. In neoclassical economics understanding of capital as a resource to be invested in order to profit is the dominant concept that in its time was the cause of the economic analysis of categories of “human capital”, “intellectual capital”, “organizational capital”, “consumer / client capital” and which corresponds to the modern theory of social capital.

A comparison of the basic properties of the physical, intellectual, human and social capital, select the generic criterion of capital: capital is the accumulated stock of wealth previously produced. Capital determines the cost of production and profitability. In accordance with these characteristics, the SC, along with the physical, intellectual, and human, really is a form of economic capital.

The general properties characteristic of all of these forms of capital are limitation, the ability to invest in anticipation of future income, self-expansion of value, the ability to create good, participate in the formation of value, liquidity, ability to convert.

At the same time, there are a number of features of various forms of capital. The differences lie in the essential content, which affects the incarnation, natural essence, transferability, specificity of formation, changes in consumption and methods of measurement. For example, physical capital has a material nature and values and embodied in the material, human and intellectual capital combines tangible and intangible nature, and embodied in individuals and property, the SC has an immaterial nature, embodied in the structure of relationships between people.

From the point of view of a particular embodiment, physical capital is totally alienated, intellectual and social – is partially transferable, and human capital is not alienated. For the same reason, the physical features of the formation of capital is to convert the materials forming the intellectual capital and human – to convert individuals and formation SC – in transforming relations between individuals. During the consumption of physical capital is not consumed, but wears out, unlike the other three forms of capital which have the property of self-expansion during consumption. The ability to measure is fundamentally different, if physical capital is estimated primarily based on past investment in quantitative terms; all other forms of capital are estimated on the basis of past investments and on the basis of future earnings, with both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Availability in multiple forms, solid relationship of the three forms of capital – intellectual, human and social – results in the fact that the accumulation of intellectual capital is closely linked to the level of the SC. This knowledge is transmitted and accumulated only where there are established relationships of ritualized gift giving; the underlying economics of prestige and quality of the transmitted knowledge depends on the level of trust in these relationships. The SC contributes to the accumulation of human capital: an accumulation of experience is due to the interaction between people, proper human development.

At the same time, the level of intellectual capital contributes the development of the SC: with its unique knowledge and information, economic agents are able to quickly develop the socio-economic relations. Similar situation is with human capital: people with more advanced communicative, social competencies, with more experience and professionalism are able to form intense relationships.

Some researchers discover the relationship between the SC and the physical capital, arguing that most people associate the possibility of high returns are not with professional skills, and as with the will and determination, inclusion in social networks.

Thus, the SC as an economic category is a blessing – both consumer and industrial. As good of manufacturing, it is a special kind of social resources, the involvement of which in turn contributes to the economic growth of value added.

An analysis of the semantic content of common definitions of the SC – in terms of identification with the other forms of capital, determine the nature, characteristics and conditions of the formation, implementation mechanisms, the effects of the operation – makes it possible to fix the ambiguity in its interpretation of the social capital at display some similarities.

Thus, the identification of the SC with social networks, norms, rules, values, trust, etc., do not actually acts defining the essence of this phenomenon, but merely points to the sources or factors of its formation.

Among the authors that produce the basic essence of social capital, there is unanimity: the SC is called an asset, resource, a set of socio-economic relations, and the ability and so on.

The reference, in determining the SC, the effects produced with it (contributes to a more efficient economic activity of subjects facilitates certain actions of individuals, gives rise to the action, etc.), do not show the phenomenon in its pure form. In addition, most of the authors consider only the social effects of the SC, losing sight of those that can be attributed

to the economic sphere – reducing transaction costs, contribution to the cost of production, social rent, the right to credit, etc.

The determination the nature of the mechanism of implementation of the SC is practically absent in the studies, which is seen by us as a lack of substantiation of definition.

It stands out as the following description of the process of implementation of the SC: the adherence to the norms and values, conscious and purposeful use of the sources of social capital, increasing the impact of other resources.

These contradictions sharpen the urgency of the problem of immersion into the essence of phenomena, understanding its inner content, separating the essence from the sources, the definition of a mechanism for implementing, more precise identification of the economic effects of the SC.

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