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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND ON EDUCATIONAL CHOICE OF YOUTH

Higher education is becoming an integral stage in the life cycle of modern Kazakhstani youth, as education plays an important role in shaping the competitiveness of the young specialist. In the period of independence, the market of educational services of Kazakhstan is not only institutionalized, but also have been impacted by significant quantitative and qualitative reforms. Modern youth has a wide range of choices in the educational space, but nevertheless, according to the data of the Information and Analytical Center, only 12% of the total number of university graduates have done the job they were trained. Despite the expansion of opportunities affecting government regulation in providing the labor market with demanded specialists, the practice of successful employment is not only related to obtaining higher education, but is largely due to effective strategies of young people in choosing higher education. In this regard, the significance of the study of factors that are important for young people in choosing higher education is actualized. A sociological study of the strategies of young people in choosing higher education in all its versatility opens up new opportunities and prospects for their forecasting and regulation in accordance with the demands of the economy. This article presents the research findings of the complete process of choosing a higher education starting from educational plans to choosing university and specialty on the basis of the study among high school students and their parents.

Key words: higher education, choice of profession, university prestige, educational plans, the level of education of parents, professional aspirations of school leavers, the value of higher education.

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Білім беру мен әлеуметтік жаңғыру: отбасының әлеуметтік мәртебесінің жастардың кәсіби таңдауына ықпалы

Білім деңгейін жоғарылату жастардың өміріндегі негізгі кезеңдердің бірі болып келуде, әсіресе, еңбек нарығындағы бәсекеге қабілеттілік деңгейіне білімнің жоғары ықпалымен сипатталатын қазіргі қоғам шарттарында білімнің маңыздылығы жоғары десек қателеспейміз. Тәуелсіздік жылдары елімізде білім беру саласында сапалық және сандық өзгерістер кеңінен орын алуда. Жастардың жоғары білімді таңдау кеңістігі кеңейді, дегенмен «АҚ Ақпараттық-сараптау орталығының» мәліметтеріне сүйенсек, жұмысқа тұрған ЖОО түлектерінің барлығының ішінен тек 12%-ы өз мамандығы бойынша орналасады. Еңбек нарығын қажетті мамандармен қамтамасыз етуді мемлекеттік реттеу мүмкіндіктерінің артуына қарамастан, жұмысқа тұрудың сәтті тәжірибелері тек жоғары білімді алумен ғана емес, ал көбіне жастардың жоғары білімді таңдаудағы шешімдері мен кәсіби ұстанымдарымен байланысты екендігін қайта көрсетеді. Осы орайда жастардың жоғары білімді таңдауда қандай факторларды ескеретінін зерттеу маңыздылығы артып отыр. Жастардың білімдік және кәсіби ұстанымдарын кешенді әлеуметтанулық зерттеу оларды болжауға және экономика қажеттіліктеріне қарай бейімдеуге жаңа мүмкіндіктер ашады. Аталмыш мақалада мектеп түлектері мен олардың ата-аналары арасында жүргізілген зерттеу негізінде жастардың жоғары білімді таңдау үрдісінің барлық құрамдас бөліктері (мамандық таңдау, жоғары оқу орнын таңдау) зерттелінген.

Түйін сөздер: жоғары білім, мамандықты таңдау, университет рейтингісі, біліми жоспарлар, ата-ананың білім деңгейі, мектеп түлектерінің кәсіби ұмтылыстары, жоғары білімнің маңыздылығы.

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Образование и социальное воспроизводство: влияние социального статуса семьи на образовательный выбор молодежи

Получение высшего образования становится неотъемлемой стадией жизненного цикла современной казахстанской молодежи, что в определенной мере обусловлено тем, что образование занимает важную роль в формировании конкурентоспособности молодого специалиста. В период независимости Казахстан не только институционально трансформировал рынок образовательных услуг, но и провел значительные количественные и качественные реформы. Современная молодежь имеет широкий спектр выбора в образовательном пространстве, но тем не менее, согласно данным «АО Информационно-аналитического центра», из общего числа выпускников вузов, принятых на работу, только 12% устраиваются по специальности. Несмотря на расширение возможностей, влияющих на государственное регулирование в обеспечении рынка труда востребованными специалистами, практика успешного трудоустройства связана не только с получением высшего образования, а во многом обусловлена образовательными и профессиональными устремлениями самой молодежи. В связи с этим, значимость исследования факторов, которые являются важными для молодежи в выборе высшего образования, актуализируется. Социологическое исследование профессиональных ориентаций молодежи в выборе высшего образования во всей ее многогранности открывает новые возможности и перспективы для их прогнозирования и регулирования в соответствии с запросами экономики. В данной статье представлены результаты изучения полного процесса выбора высшего образования, начиная от образовательных планов до выбора вуза и специальности на основе проведенного исследования среди старшеклассников и их родителей.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, выбор профессии, рейтинг университета, образовательные планы, уровень образования родителей, профессиональные устремления выпускников школ, значимость высшего образования.

Introduction

Education becomes one of the main mechanisms of upward social mobility in modern conditions - it is a “tool” of distribution of individuals by status positions, and thus, eliminates the “construction” of direct inheritance of status. Despite the fact that many critics of education note the failure of the education system in the implementation of meritocratic functions and define it as a “means” of reproduction of social order in society, it is impossible to deny the fact that in modern societies the status is not inherited automatically. The importance of sociological research of higher education and choice of profession actualized in connection with the following trends:

First, many countries have a policy of increasing access to higher education. However, research findings show that despite ongoing reforms, aimed at raising participation in tertiary education of youth from “unprivileged groups”, social inequality persists (Reay, David and Ball, 2005). Thus, increasing access to higher education creates many opportunities, but not equal (Sianou, Kyrgiou and Iakovos Tsiplakides, 2009).

Second, inequality in higher education persists, as expansion is often accompanied by quality dif-

ferentiation and stratification of higher education. Thus, the “elite” universities are dominated by representatives of the middle and upper classes (Morley and Aynsley, 2007). As a result, the choice of university and profession is important, as it is the prestige and status of higher education and profession are significant than just getting higher education (Troiano and Elias, 2014).

Third, the educational choice is also significant, as the diploma of higher education is the determinant of the transaction to the labor market. The prestige of the university is “a certain guarantee of achieving managerial and professional success. The relationship between higher education and the labor market is characterized as “moderate meritocracy” (Baiba and Ulrich, 2007: 27).

In the international literature, sociological discussions on nature of higher education choice of young people originate from the 70 years of the XX century. In Kazakhstan, however, the choice has been the subject of active discussion only in recent years. The need to study this issue is a consequence of (1) the imbalance between the supply and demand of professional personnel, that is, the glut of young professionals in one industry and the shortage of personnel in another, (2) the expansion of paid edu-

cation, (3) the mass of higher education for young people, especially in the last decade.

The lack of empirical research on choice in the context of Kazakh society makes it possible to assume that the findings of this study will be interesting. The study of the features of the choice of higher education in all its diversity allows us to identify objective and subjective motives of choice and to study the degree of influence of family capital and to find answers to the following questions: What is Kazakhstan's reality in terms of the implementation of international standards of education? How do Kazakh youth determine their next steps after graduation? What are their educational strategies? Does social inequality matter in higher education choice of Kazakh youth?

Main part

Literature review. Attempts to understand the complex process of choosing higher education are based on economic and sociological approaches. Within the framework of economic approaches, choice patterns are explained on the basis of the concept of cost-benefit analysis, emphasizing the importance of only the financial component (Manski and Wise, 1983), without taking into account its indirect effects, which are reflected in low academic performance, low awareness of universities and educational programs, as well as the lack of educational experience among family members, etc. In addition, within the framework of economic approaches, the differentiation of choice in the context of social origin is not considered (DesJardins, Toutkoushian, 2005). Accordingly, the researchers have noted that non-economic, less tangible factors could also influence the choice (Paulsen, 2001). In order to eliminate such shortcomings, sociological theories consider structural contexts for a deeper understanding of the sources of differentiation of choice by social origin (Bourdieu, 1986).

The problem of inequality in education is systematically considered in Raymond Boudon's works «Education, opportunity and social inequality» (Boudon, 1974). Boudon raised the question of how educational non-equality affects the social. The answer to the question of what can be expected from the reforms in education depended on the solution of this question. Boudon's analysis is based on a «simulation model» describing the interaction of education and social stratification. The result of the analysis is that the reduction of inequality in educational opportunities does not lead to a decrease in social inequality, the expansion of access to educa-

tion simply leads to inflation of diploma of higher education in the labor market.

In our study, we used a three-stage model of Hossler and Gallagher, which combines both sociological and economic perspectives. According to this model, the process of choosing higher education includes three stages. At the first stage (comprehension) high school students decide whether they will receive higher education or not. At the second stage (search) information about universities and faculties is collected. The third stage (choice) includes the choice of specific University and educational trajectory (faculty, specialty) (Connor, 1999). In the article is presented the data of the study of the final stage of the process of choosing higher education - the decision on the choice of university and professional trajectory.

R. Boudon distinguishes between primary and secondary effects of family resources in education. The primary effects are directly determined by the influence of the economic well-being of families to the academic achievements of children (Goldthorpe, 1996). Children from families with higher income study better than their counterparts from low-income families. Since the families with higher income provide their children with the best conditions for the development of high educational capital (Dhesi, 2001: 16).

Materials and methods. This article analyzes the results of a survey conducted among graduate students and their parents. The study involved students from private and public, specialized and general education, urban and rural schools. Since the survey was conducted in the last months of the school year, it is assumed that among high school students formed certain educational plans after graduation and decided on the choice of university and profession, which gives us the opportunity to study the main motives of this choice.

Research results

The importance of higher education. Kazakh school youth attaches great importance to higher education as a way of achieving other life goals: 56.6% believe that higher education is a key prerequisite for achieving financial prosperity through high incomes, 56.8% – to acquire a widely demanded profession, 50.5% – to make a professional career. Higher education is not essential for finding friends (13.4%), a way of changing residence (4.5%) and extending studies (3%). Consequently, for today's youth higher education is a necessary condition for a successful social biography and is considered as

a kind of investment in the future status position. The younger generation believes that a higher level of education makes the individual more competitive in the labor market and increase opportunity to be employed.

Form of education: paid or free. Two indicators determine economic accessibility of higher education: the possibility of studying on a fee basis and the possibility of using different forms of preparation for admission. In general, according to the sample, the majority of families (61.4%) are ready to “invest” the child’s education

(self-assessment), but for 14.5% - paid education is generally unacceptable and 14.5% can allocate a little money from the family budget for education, but they are not sufficient for education in the country’s universities. The sharp difference between the possible costs and the cost of education at the university is manifested in rural families. Willingness to provide education on a fee basis is expressed not only in large cities and the capital, but also in rural areas (58.3%). However, in large cities, this figure is higher by almost 20% and is 76.2%.

Table 1 – Availability of paid education in different social groups

Total sample	14,5%	14,5%	61,5%
Single-parent families	12,5%	12,5%	75,0%
Rural families	25,0%	16,7%	58,3%
Urban families	4,8%	9,5%	76,2%
Metropolitan families	18,2%	18,2%	63,6%

The possibility of a school graduate to study at the university on a fee basis is differentiated in terms of income of parents. Thus, for 28.6% of low-income families to teach their child at the university on a fee basis is completely unacceptable. While, for 94.7% of high-income

families, the priority is the quality of education, not the cost. They are ready and have the resources to «invest» their child’s education. High incomes of parents expand the child’s opportunities to obtain the desired higher education, including on a paid basis.

Table 2 – Opportunity to study on a paid basis in the context of monthly family income

Answer options	Income level			
	Low	Below average	Average	High
Paid education is unacceptable for us	28,6%	22,6%	15%	-
It is possible to study on a commercial basis in a certain amount	42,9%	16,1%	15%	5,3%
The most important thing is getting a quality education in a prestigious university, regardless of the cost of education	28,6%	61,3%	60%	94,7%

Analysis of the possibilities of using different forms of preparation for admission shows that in the context of the settlement of statistical differences in the indicator of additional training is not revealed. The data are presented in table 3.

However, the opportunities for additional education on a fee basis are slightly inferior to young

people in small and medium-sized cities. Among them, 46.9% attend paid additional classes, while this figure in large cities is 56.2%. Even in rural areas, this figure is slightly higher. This is due to the relatively high cost of paid training courses in small towns against the background of «affordable» training courses of low quality in rural areas. The data are presented in table 4.

Table 3 – «Are you preparing in addition to the unified national testing?» in the context of the settlement

Answer options	Youth of large cities	Youth of small/medium-sized cities	Youth of the countryside
Yes	65,2%	64,8%	69,5%
No	34,8%	35,2%	30,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4 – The form of preparatory training in the context of the settlement

Settlement	On paid basis	Free of charge	Both
Big city	56,2%	43,2%	0,7%
Medium/small town	46,9%	50,0%	3,1%
Rural area	50,7%	47,8%	1,5%

Choice of the university. The choice of the university is socially determined, as it is carried out in different spatial, temporal and social contexts, which have financial and symbolic dimensions (Connor, 1999). The prestige of the university to some extent represents the quality of education and affects the competitiveness of its graduates in the labor market. The prestige of the university allows potential employers to assess the qualifications of their graduates. This practice is widespread as it is the most affordable and cost-effective way to assess the level of qualification of a young specialist without work experience.

The emergence of specialized schools and private schools differentiate the level of knowledge and create new restrictions for graduates of secondary schools, in particular in rural areas. In villages and small towns, the choice of graduates is determined or often limited not only by family resources, but also by the amount of starting educational capital of the school graduates themselves. Starting educational capital is formed at school, and largely depends on the quality of school education. In this regard, it is important to analyze the accessibility of higher education through the school education.

During the research, we grouped universities by prestige into “top”, “medium” and “weak” on the basis of the national ranking of universities, the education fee and popularity of the university among the population of Kazakhstan. Also to this classification was added a separate category - foreign universities.

Analysis of the relationship between the type of school and the choice of higher education institution shows significant differences. High school students of secondary schools do not demonstrate intentions to study in foreign universities and many of them have not yet decided where they will go to study, while high school students of private schools show strong aspirations to study in foreign and prestigious domestic universities and do not even consider studying in low-ranking universities. Professor of Education at Cambridge University D.Reay argues that young people from unprivileged groups choose universities with low academic prestige, as they feel familiar with such an environment and believe that it will be easier for them to get used to (Reay, 2001). Bourdieu considers this self-exclusion as an indirect influence of social origin on the choice of higher education (Bourdieu, 1986). Data on the choice of university by type of school are presented in table 5.

Table 5 – Type of high school education and choice of university номер таблицы уточните

Type of school	Top universities	Medium	Weak	Foreign	Difficult to answer
Secondary school	28,2%	13,8%	10,8%	-	47,2%
Private school	35,8%	7,1%	-	35,7%	21,4%

During the study, the analysis of factors that are taken into account by school youth when choosing a particular university was carried out as well. In terms of importance, the leading three include such criteria as prospects for quality education (61.4%), an interesting specialty (51.7%) and low pay, opportunities for free education (46.8%). It is significant that the quality of education in the public opinion of young Kazakhstan is designed by certain universities and their “brand” and three less important criteria include a convenient, close location to the place of residence (27.1%), the provision of a hostel (26.1%) and the presence of a military department (22.5%).

Choice of speciality. The decision to choose a specialty is an important part of the process of higher education choice, which leads to certain faculties and departments. Professional choice is influenced by macro- and micro-level factors. At the macro level, important are the mechanisms of social stratification in society and their role in education, at the micro-level, the social status and education of parents, academic performance, motivation, type of settlement, etc. In the study specialty were grouped into five educational trajectories:

1. Humanities, legal and social sciences, including the faculties of literature, journalism, philosophy, sociology and art.
2. Science, including faculties of mathematics, physics, chemistry.
3. Health care, including medicine, dentistry, pharmaceuticals.
4. Technical, including architecture, engineering, polytechnic faculties.
5. Economic, including faculties of economics, finance, management.
6. Military professions, including aviation.

The analysis of professional preferences of students of graduation classes in the context of gender demonstrates a strong contrast in the choice of professions of technical profile, fields of science, health and military affairs. For instance, among girls who want to engage in science is reduced to almost zero, while among boys this figure is 4.5%, and boys than girls are characterized by the aspirations of the choice of technical professions, every third young man plans to study in this direction. Thus, the desire to study in engineering and technical areas is manifested among boys. The proportion of girls wishing to work in the health sector is five times higher than among of boys. In other educational trajectories there are no significant gender differences in educational aspirations, except for military affairs. Those wishing to work in this area, as expected, are three

times higher among boys than girls. Gender differentiation is associated with the concepts of ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Arnot, 1999), and engineering professions are defined as male, and professions as primary school teachers and nurses as female, as they enable women to combine work with household responsibilities.

Consideration of the educational level of parents, in particular the father, provides an opportunity to better understand the social differentiation in the choice of higher education. Students whose fathers have higher education (bachelor’s degree and higher) are more likely to choose technical and economic professions. The main reasons for the choice are the opportunity to have connections, high earnings, access to power and the realization of potential. High school students, whose fathers do not have higher education, often choose humanities, and their choice is determined by the possibility of employment in the future.

Family income was classified according to national standards into “high”, “medium” and “low” levels. High school students whose family income is high tend to get economic and management specialties, their choice is determined by the possibility of self-realization, and this professional trajectory is defined as a vocation for their self-esteem. High school students from middle-income families demonstrate a focus on technical professions, while their peers from low-income families show aspirations to work in the medical field.

In scientific literature, the success of professional self-determination is associated primarily with the content of motivational formations that underlie it. According to the survey, 37.8% of respondents purposefully prepared for the chosen specialty. Not unimportant aspect of professional choice is the score of the unified national test, every third respondent made a decision on its basis (33.3%), every fourth makes a choice when applying, in this regard, it is important to familiarize the graduate and his parents with the characteristics of the chosen specialty (25.6%).

The study assessed the school success of students, their family resources and school resources. On the one hand, the results of the analysis show that the education system does not prevent young people from the lower social strata, on the other hand, educational inequality exists. It is formed before school. Manifestations of such inequality are called “primary class effect”. In addition, people from socially vulnerable groups are more likely to choose educational trajectories that lead to positions with low social status, which is not explained by

their academic success - this is a secondary class effect. The researchers explained this behavior by the different habitus of social groups. The study showed that the processes outside the education system have a much greater impact on the educational chances of a school graduate than the processes in educational institutions.

Conclusion

The study shows that there is a differentiation in the choice of higher education, which is rather expressed not in the availability of higher education in general, but in the inequality of opportunities for quality education and training in prestigious universities, including foreign ones. The effects of family capital in the choice are indirect: privileged groups have more opportunities to obtain additional information about universities and the order of enrollment, to develop high educational capital, to use paid training services, to study in private schools, etc. The gap between the level of school preparation and the requirements for university entrants contributes to the development of the institute of paid training services in the country, in particular tutoring. This trend increases the economic differentiation in the training of prestigious universities and obtaining an educational grant, as the use of private tutoring services involves additional costs from the family budget. While obtaining an educational grant for training requires a set of high scores on the entrance exams to the university. In addition, the policy of prestigious universities requires a high score even from applicants who want to study on a fee basis. Speaking about the effects of family capital, we

pay special attention to the possibilities of admission to certain universities, rather than opportunities for training in a particular specialty, as training in a similar specialty is carried out, both in prestigious and in non-prestigious universities. And accordingly, the indicator of the quality of education in the labor market is the rating and brand of the university of education.

The specificity of the modern process of professional self-determination is its dynamism: self-determination today has an operational nature and accompanies a person in all active economic activity. Traditionally, the sociological approach considered the problem of professional self-determination at the micro level, i.e. the subject was a person. However, in the transition periods in the development of society, the focus of research is transferred from the individual to the social group. Based on this, we define the specifics of the sociological approach to the problem of professional self-determination as the self-determination of a social group in the changing conditions of macro and micro environment. This process is characterized by stages and specific tasks determined by the level of social development of the group.

High school students are a special social group at the stage of primary professional self-determination. At this stage, they carry out theoretical (pre-experimental) acquaintance with the world of professions, form professional intentions and choose the appropriate sphere of professional training. We come to the conclusion that the primary professional choice of school students is focused primarily on social self-determination - the desire to take a certain position in the social and professional structure of society.

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