

Choice of Employment Career by Russian Students in Modern Labor Market Conditions

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: The relevance of this study is due to the problems with a mismatch of educational institutions and the needs of the labor market with the processes of deformation and de-professionalization of labor force, increasing number of university graduates and unmet labor market needs for skilled workers. **Methods:** The main research method has been a questionnaire, allowing holistically exploring opinions and judgments of modern Russian students about their career expectations and intentions. Based on the results of empirical research conducted on the basis of the Far Eastern Federal University, the basic motives of students' choice of specific areas of training have been considered, expectations and intentions with respect to their future professional activity, self-fulfillment and career building have been analyzed, created under the influence of modern attitudes to education as a social institution, understanding of culture consumption of educational services and the imbalance of supply and demand in the labor market. **Findings:** Main attention is paid to the situation in today's society, namely when the educational services market does not meet the requirements of society, economy; it is detached from the labor market, preventing the formation of the optimal variant of the employment structure in modern society. In this regard, the aim of this study is to examine the career expectations and intentions of students at FEFU. The authors colligate the further prospects of the development of cooperation of the labor market and educational services with the fact that employers and other university services consumers will be actively involved in the development of requirements for the future graduates' training, which will result in improving the quality of educational services provided to graduates, corresponding to the relevant requirements of the market and region and the balance of demand and supply of labor. **Applications/Improvements:** The article materials are of practical significance for specialists working in the field of education, as well as expand the opportunities to increase the efficiency of interaction between potential employers and students.

Keywords: Effectiveness of Education, Labor Market, Market of Educational Services, Professional Self-Determination, Professional Values, Youth

1. Introduction

The current state of Russian society is very contradictory, and is characterized by multi-directionality of development vectors, when the country is among the world's largest economies, but in terms of labor productivity it lags behind them in 2-3 times. Also, the Russian Federation labor market has two mutually exclusive trends: employment difficulties and labor shortages. How is this possible and what gives rise to this situation?

Since 2001, in Russia there is a constant decrease in the working-age population, resulting in a labor shortage¹.

It can be assumed that in these circumstances, modern youths should not collide with difficulties when applying for a job. It should be noted that the labor market demand for workers of different skill levels depends on the social, economic, political and other conditions prevailing in society at a particular point of time. Thus, 90 years of the twentieth century were marked by changes in all spheres of Russian society; during this period there was a transition to market relations in the sphere of labor and employment. At this time, in our opinion, a new understanding of the value of education, the concept of career and personal professional development began to be formed. The critical state of the economy has led

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to changes in labor market needs, a rapid increase in unemployment and the release of a large labor force. Many occupations lost their prestige, while there were a number of new, previously unknown, which led to the demand of new professionals. This situation was especially difficult for the youth, a whole generation has lost the value of vocational education and profession, as both lost their influence on the amount of income, which could not but affect the career performance, expectations and intentions of young people.

On the other hand, the market of educational services quickly reacted to the current situation on the labor market. Firstly, the paid sector was created (as a sector in the state institutions as well as the creation of non-public commercial institutions), which gave the opportunity to anyone who wishes to get higher education. Secondly, there are new educational programs that meet the modern spirit of the time. Third, the educational process began to introduce new forms of learning (e.g. distance learning). This all led to the supplantation of specialists relating to all levels of training of “unfashionable” areas from the educational institutions, involving the use of skilled worker labor, and also to some devaluation of both higher education, and diploma confirming it. As a result, there appeared an increase in the employer’s requirements for potential employees, namely, the mandatory presence of the diploma, regardless of vacancies, labor market glut by unclaimed experts, inadequate orientation relative to getting an education and to their future career, trade with documents on education, the lack of labor supply in entire sectors of the economy.

To date, the orientation to getting only higher education is not just survived, but has acquired a mass character. On the one hand, there have remained a relatively high number of graduates, and the number of graduates of secondary vocational education decreases; and on the other side, the labor market is not satisfied in the need for skilled workers. Accordingly, this leads to the fact that the real market is forced to look for manpower, which can close the void by resorting to the use of migrant labor. As a result of this trend, some sectors of the economy were completely filled with foreign nationals, for which the Russian labor market is quite attractive. Thus, we can say that in the modern Russian society there is a demand for higher education on the part of students and their parents on the background of the continued acute labor market demand for skilled workers.

In connection with the challenges imposed by modern society in general, and the new challenges faced by youth and education sector, a considerable number of empirical studies analyzing the interaction between educations, labor market and social behavior of young people have appeared²⁻⁹. Both in Russia, and in foreign science there are a significant number of national and international studies on various aspects of the problem relating to the choice of a professional career by students in today’s labor market. These are works by Ya. V. Didkovskaya, M. V. Pevnaya¹⁰, G. Ye. Zborovskiy, Ye. A. Shuklina¹¹, S. A. Druzhilov¹², A. N. Kochetov¹³, R. Mihail¹⁴, M. Suditu¹⁵, E. Richițeanu-Nastase, C. Staiculescu¹⁶, L. Mateescu, A.-M. Neagu¹⁷. Several studies have raised issues related to the need to evaluate students’ career guidance¹⁸, personal and social aspects of professional identity¹⁹, the relationship between the individual profile and the professional choice of student²⁰.

However, in our opinion, there are no studies that would allow carrying out comprehensive analysis of career expectations and intentions of students enrolled in higher education institutions.

2. Methodology

In order to explore what new attitudes concerning the value of education appear, how intentions, expectations and plans of modern youth studying at the university change, the authors have conducted sociological research on the basis of the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU). The purpose of the research was to study career expectations and intentions of FEFU students.

The object of the study were students of 1-5 courses (N = 1200) educated on the basis of 9 schools of the Far Eastern Federal University, which allowed ensuring participation in the study of students from different areas of training. The subject includes opinions and judgments of modern Russian students about career expectations and intentions. The basic method of gathering sociological data used in the research process is a formalized questionnaire.

3. Results and Discussion

It is impossible to analyze professional intentions, expectations, plans and the situation on the labor market and consider only the modern system of higher

education; it more appropriately to build the analysis in the framework of lifelong learning, understands this as a relationship between all levels of learning and sharing the concept of learning throughout life. It is in the school years that professional intentions and expectations are formed or should be formed that the next time education must be transformed into a future professional employee.

The study has revealed that nearly three-quarters of students (74.3%) of all areas of training and various courses report a conscious choice of future profession and almost the same number of students are planning to work in their specialty after graduation. At the same time, a survey of students studying the basic motives of choosing a future profession in university has revealed that only less than a quarter of respondents (21.3%) began preparing to enter the Far Eastern Federal University on a particular profession in advance before the graduating class at school; the majority took this solution already in the graduating class. These data suggest that, at first, a fairly hasty choice made furthermore under the pressure of circumstances can hardly be considered as deliberate and prudent; and secondly, that many students already in the first year understand that that they have chosen specialty to which “their heart isn’t in it”. Perhaps some of them have already decided at the initial courses to change the chosen specialty; but others have to study up for “wallpaper degree” or parents’ peace of mind, of course, it is not necessary in this case to talk about the high motivation to professionalism in the chosen profession.

If, however, to rank motifs to choose their future profession and higher education institution, the first place will be taken by “an opportunity to make a career and to realize themselves in the profession” (42.7%), next in the descending order are “the prestige of the profession in society” (39.1 %), “the level of the proposed salary in the future” (36.3%), “employment opportunities in the future” (23.5%), “the social significance of the profession” (18.3%), “a small competition for “the profession, confidence in admission” (11.2%), “existing set of universal state exam” (7.8%), “the choice of this specialty by a friend” (5.2%) and the search for answers for the important questions for themselves (3.7%). Overall, the data do not strongly disagree with the results of similar studies of other authors; which allows making an assumption about the existence of a nationwide trend in the motives of choosing a future profession, it is that what leads students to the university.

But it does not matter whether or not an applicant has

guessed about the relevance of the chosen specialty in the future if during the years of training, he/she has mastered the profession, but has grown accustomed to it. Based on the three-component model of the psychological profession that has been offered by S.A. Druzhilov,¹² the process of student’s professionalization can be followed, which contains the following components: a) the professional environment model; b) the professional activity model; c) the subject’s activity model– a professional self-concept.

If we exclude from the data obtained the first year students’ answers, more than 90% say that they imagine well how a workplace for their specialty looks like, but also note that the university has given them the opportunity to get acquainted with it during practice. Quite a large number of respondents indicate that they have an accurate idea of what is the professional work related to this specialty. But only 45% of seniors have tried themselves in the profession, and have had the experience of independent performance of professional orders.

Higher education institution should lead the student through at least two stages of professional development: introduction to the profession and its development, and the best option would be to seize also the step of identifying of specialist with profession. It is assumed that during the years of study at the university and practical training, students complete to form their expectations about the chosen profession and in accordance with that to build their future career, such as getting another education, leaving the adjacent area, trying to realize themselves in it. But, unfortunately, seniors having passed several practical trainings in workplaces do not have any information about the need for this profession in the labor market and about the level of the existing payment in the labor market. Only half of those students surveyed by the authors (50.8%) are aware of the amount of wages in the professional sphere; while answering the question about the desired amount of future monthly plans, students mentioned the amount of 10-15 thousand rubles, exceeding the actual demand in the labor market.

On this basis, we can conclude that even students, who are planning to work in their specialty after graduation, do not have real intentions and strategies of building their professional careers. Consequently, they cannot predict their future career, but just have a desired image, the way to achieve this goal, which are clear neither to them, nor to others. Thus, only 63.7% of senior students reported

that they are familiar with the labor market needs in their profession, and here we must note that this is the students' personal opinion, which may not completely correspond to the reality.

It is necessary to come over to the evaluation of the proposed strategy of behavior after graduation after understanding the underlying motives of receiving higher education and the demand for the profession awareness. If in the Soviet time, there was only one strategy – to begin work immediately (an exception was the family creation and child care), then today we can speak about a whole set of such strategies; they include the following strategies: to start work immediately after graduation, to go to the next level of higher education, to get a second degree (often not related to the first), to relax and look around, to create a family and childcare. Thus, 88.9% of interviewed seniors plan to go to work, while keeping in mind the wage labor in public or commercial organization. Self-employment through opening their own business is considered as a strategy for the future professional career by only 4%. Some of the students have not yet decided what to do after graduation: whether they will look for a job or continue training, devote themselves to the family, or allow themselves to relax. Among the alleged strategies of searching job, answers dispense as follows: “by pulling strings, through the influence” (47.3%), “by their own, through advertisements, websites” (66.8%), “through commercial recruitment agencies” (48,9%), “through public service employment” (3.7%), part of the respondents have not yet decided on their strategy in the labor market.

Students differently evaluate their chances to find a job after graduation, since only 6.2% of graduate students have a clear idea of where and how they will work, and 17% decided how they will be looking for work. It should be noted that these data differ from course to course, increasing a bit together with receiving education and entry into the profession (13.4% of the first year students compared to 17% of future graduates). But this is understandable, after going through a series of practices and side jobs during the training, the students began to better understand their position in the labor market. It is worth noting the present days' realities– more than half of the students (53%) worked part time, temporarily or permanently during training and only few associated side job with the received profession. If we talk about the rest, 42.4% believe that they will find the desired work and be

ready to put in for that strength and energy, but they do not have exact algorithm of behavior in the labor market after graduation.

We note that 37.9% of students plan to continue their education after receiving the “first” diploma. Of course, for today's students an additional education is available to be continued at higher levels of education – Master's or postgraduate studies. But this form of continuing education is considered by only 13.6%, the remaining 24.3% are willing to “change” their profession, plunging into another, an adjacent one, or to the activity that does not relate to the already received education at all, seeing in getting the education a new opportunity to improve social status, rather than a means of personal cultivation. It can be assumed that a quarter of the respondents who did not have clear desires when choosing a degree for admission to the university, as well as some of the students who did as they consider the wrong choice are ready to proceed with the “unwanted” first higher education, considering it as one of the stages for “coveted” second education in the future. Thus 23.8% of respondents are planning to continue their education in another area. Unfortunately, we have to agree with the opinion of A.N. Kochetov¹³ about the emergence of a generation of “lumpen-specialists”, which deliberately chooses work not in their specialty received at university. And these are not isolated cases, but a whole generation for whom such strategy has become the norm.

4. Conclusion

Talking about the phenomenon of over education, characteristic of the modern Russian market, it should be noted that it leads to de-professionalization in the labor market, when it is not important to get a profession and qualifications, but just high education is needed. According to existing data, more than half of the workers in our country do not work in their specialty, which is caused by different reasons: disappointment in their specialty, impossibilities of career growth, discrepancy in the employer's requirements and others.

With the introduction in 2011 of multi-level training according to programs of FSES in higher vocational education, it is assumed that employers and consumers of other university services will be actively involved in the development of requirements for the training of future

graduates, which will ultimately lead to the graduation of experts corresponding to the requirements of the market and the region, with the simultaneous improvement of educational services quality. Speaking about the quality of education, it is necessary to differentiate two aspects – regulatory and market qualities, because only their unity suggests the quality of education in general. In addition, these aspects make it possible to evaluate different periods of professional formation of the young specialist: normative – in the learning process, market – after the learning process. Regulatory quality is ensured by the quality of standards as regards the higher vocational education, training and work programs, as well as their implementation. At the moment, we can speak about an attempt to create common global standards in the field of higher education, which stems from the so-called Bologna Process designed to establish common educational standards. Market aspect is less obvious and more difficult to be unified, but at the same time it is more significant because it helps assess the competitiveness of the young specialist in the labor market. Thus, some graduates of educational institutions can count on more attention on the part of the employer, in case the employers believe in the level of training in their university. But the fact that the personal qualities and individual talents of the young specialist will often be weightier than that obtained “wallpaper degree” should be taken into consideration as well. This aspect is also affected by the indicator of “demand-offer” for a specific specialty; over-graduation of specialists of any specialty leads to a small demand for them in the labor market, exacerbating course competition, but at the same time leaves some of them out of work that does not mean the poor quality of education attained.

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