EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

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EDUCATIONAL TRACKS OF RUSSIAN YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION SYSTEM (ON STATE STATISTICS 2000-2017)

Galina A. Cherednichenko

Institute of Sociology FCTAS RAS, Moscow, Russia,
e-mail: galcher2211@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8005-9146

Abstract. Educational tracks of youth between successive levels of education system, from the basic to the higher one, is an important component of educational mobility processes. Their study on the basis of state statistics in the dynamics of two decades is the objective of the author. She has calculated and analyzed a number of relevant indicators from the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia (which are published since 2014 as raw data) and earlier materials that were officially provided by the Federal State Statistics Service.

The evaluation is focused on the changes in the enrollment in Basic and Secondary Schools (BS, SS) and subsequent distribution of students across educational tracks; enrollment in Secondary Vocational Education (SVE): mid-level specialist (MLSP) and skilled worker programs (SWP), distribution of students across modes of study and educational attainment at admission; enrollment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across modes of study, types of HEI ownership and educational attainment at admission to full-time and part-time classes. The data on the number of relevant age cohorts inform the analysis.

The evolution of educational tracks of youth and dynamics of number of students at all levels of education developed under the influence of the expansion of higher education and the demographic factor: the growth in the number of cohorts of relevant ages' young people until the late 2000s and then their sharp decline.

The first bifurcation of tracks occurs after graduation from BS, and it determines future paths of youth socially more fundamentally than a distribution after graduation from SS. The proportion of youth who, after BS, continued their studies at secondary one, was steadily decreasing (now

it is half of the contingent); the share of those enrolled in MLSP has tripled; the share of people going to study in SWP was halved; very few people immediately entered the labor market.
The track “BS – MLSP – HEI” was widely spread, which occurred in response to an introduction to SS in 2009 of the complex state exam, which opens access to HEI. An MLSP diploma allowed to enter higher education without this exam. There was a selection in SS and reduction in the number of students, which led to a significant change in the distribution of graduates: the proportion of students enrolled at HEI increased by 1,5 times and reached ¾, while the share of those who went to SVE decreased to the same extent and equaled 1/5.
Educational tracks leading to higher education are diverse, which is determined by the differentiation of HEIs structure and dynamics of characteristics of learning. Reaching the maximum number of admissions in the late 2000s was largely ensured by the growth of part-time education: its share began to prevail over full-time and only by 2017 the number of full-time studies over part-time one was restored. Applicants for full-time and part-time studies vary greatly according to the level of education they come to HEI. The predominant part of the full-time steadily accounted for graduates of this year’s SS. Individuals with the formation of SVE-MLSP prevailed among the part-time (up to 60% today); influx of people with the formation of SVE-SWP increased; the proportion of SS graduates, mainly from previous years, decreased from one third to 1/5. The likelihood of getting a state-funded or self-paying seat also affects educational tracks. The share of private HEIs, generally small, increased by the end of the 2000s, now it has decreased to 1/7 of the admission. The share of self-paying seats in state HEIs has grown (from 2/5 to more than half of admission). In general, almost 2/3 of young people (half before) go to study for a fee.
Keywords: Educational tracks, levels of education

Introduction

The educational tracks of youth through the education system present the most generalized picture of the educational mobility of young people. They reflect institutional opportunities that the national system creates for the next generation of youth, and the result of using these opportunities in the course of successive personal options. Thus, the study of educational tracks of the whole generation is inevitably closely connected with the themes of the functioning of different levels of the educational system, the problems existing here, contradictions and challenges.
Different countries and regions vary in their strategies of developing education and training systems and offering youth a wide range of post-

school studies, from skilled-worker programs to university education. Youth distribution across education and vocational training levels and educational tracks between them vary as well. The peculiarities of a country's education system have a considerable effect on its possibilities for socioeconomic and technological transformations, being one of the main instruments for increasing its competitiveness in general and that of each person in particular.

The statistical data on the educational tracks of young people between educational levels and modes of study inform basic and applied research concerning, in particular, their subdivision into those pursuing their studies at different levels, dropouts and labor market entrants as well as social, economic and cultural mechanisms underlying choices people make at the threshold of their independent lives. These data appear in ongoing discussions about the most important problems in General and Secondary Education, Secondary Vocational Education, Higher Education pertaining to their massovization or reduction, quality of education, differentiation of educational institutions, education policies, accessibility and inequality problems.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

Statistical data on education in Russia are underrepresented in international publications. A competent OECD statistical publication contains only six indicators on the subject (Education at a Glance 2017: 248-258). Few of them are also present in the database *The World Bank. Education Statistics*. (The World Bank). The latest edition of the data book *Education in the Russian Federation* (Obrazovanie 2014) containing substantial information on education in Russia was published in 2014. Concise data books *Indicators of Education* (Indikatoryi 2018) and *Education in Figures* (Obrazovanie, 2018) contain few data on the development of particular educational levels. No information is available on the educational tracks of youth. The present article is an attempt at filling this information gap.

Methodology

The author has made calculations based on raw statistical data posted since 2014 on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and primary statistics for 2000-2010 the Federal State Statistics Service has officially provided to the Department of Sociology of Education of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Statistical data on education in Russia collected by relevant corporate statistics may be used for extracting sociological meanings and implications and revealing sociological regularities, since such meanings and implications are implicitly contained in these data and determined by the social realities reflected in the quantitative assessments conveyed by the data. The analysis

employs descriptive statistics methods permitting to group data sets, describe their characteristics, identify relationships between variables, in particular, when analyzing chronological changes.

For easier understanding of the following text and possibility of international comparisons, a description of all levels of education in Russia conforming to the ISCED is presented below.

1. Basic General Education: 11/5, ISCED 244 (theoretical entrance age/duration, marches ISCED program three-digit code 100: 1st figure – level, 2nd – type of orientation, 3rd – access subtype).
2. Secondary General Education: 16/2, ISCED 344.
3. Secondary Vocational Education (SVE) – Skilled Worker Programs (SWP): 16-18/1-2,5, 454.
4. Secondary Vocational Education (SVE) – Mid-Level Specialist Programs (MLSP): 16-18/1-4, 554.
5. Higher Education: 18/4, 665. 18/5-6, 766. 22/2, 767.

Secondary General Education (Secondary School - SS) is equivalent to High School; the Higher Education system is represented by differently called Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): a university (for example, Lomonosov Moscow State University,), an academy (Tver State Medical Academy), an institute (Voronezh State Institute of Arts) or a school (Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences).

Results / Findings

Educational tracks of youth over the past two decades and mobility between them testify to a steady expansion of education systems in Russia. The dynamics of the number of students of all educational levels and, to a certain extent, the educational tracks of youth are greatly influenced by the demographic factor – the increase in youth cohorts of relevant ages until the late 2000s and their subsequent sharp decrease. In the educational trajectories of youth, social forces come into play upon completion of Basic School (BS) offering the following crucial tracks: the academic track taking a majority of students to SS, transition to SVE and entry into the labor market. The share of youth who followed the academic track was steadily decreasing (from 66.8% in 2000 to 47.3% in 2017); the share of those proceeding to SVE-MLSP increased considerably, from 11.7% to 32.7%; the share of students joining SVE-SWP decreased from 21.0% to 10.9%; and the share of those who dropped out of SS somewhat increased (from 2.7% to 9.0%). The institutional context of the education system permits a considerable part of the latter return to education later.

As for admission to SVE, only the number of full-time MLSP enrollees was increasing while admission to the other training programs remained relatively stable. The reason was the increasing popularity of the “BS –

MLSP - HEI" track. In 2017, MLSP graduates constituted almost one tenth of full-time HEI enrollees and nearly three quarters of part-time HEI enrollees. This track serves as an alternative social mobility channel for social groups with limited social resources. The pressure of this track partly stimulates the growth of the mass segment of Higher Education, which does not ensure its high quality.

A dramatic decline in relevant age cohorts against the background of increased demand for Higher Education and a number of other factors had a substantial impact on the dynamics of educational tracks Secondary School graduates followed immediately upon graduation. The share of HEI enrollees increased sharply (from 44.9% to 73.8%) while the share of SVE students decreased considerably (from 36.7% to 21.9%) due to another two important factors, namely, the introduction in 2009 of a Unified State Exam, complicated from the viewpoint of both methodology and control, which resulted in fewer students proceeding to SS, and dropout of those who chose the "BS – MLSP - HEI" track permitting them to enter HEIs without taking this exam.

Educational tracks of youth were directly influenced by the increasing demand for Higher Education and the above-mentioned demographic factor responsible for changes in HEI enrollment, which constituted 1,272,800 persons in 2000, 1,681,600 persons in 2007 (the maximum indicator) and 1,132,500 persons in 2017. In that context, relative HEI accessibility indices were constantly growing, initially due to the overall expansion of the Higher Education system and later owing to the demographic decline. In 2000, the number of full-time enrollees constituted less than one third of the number of 18-year-olds while in 2017 it increased to more than half of them. The share of full-time HEI enrollees (about 80% of whom were current-year SS graduates) constituted 29.5% of the conventional 18-year-old cohort in 2000, 33.2% in 2005, 41.6% in 2010, and 55.1% in 2017.

Educational tracks leading youth to Higher Education are diverse owing to differentiation and dynamics of the HEIs structure. Higher Education is provided in three forms, namely, Full-time studies, part-time studies and Evening classes, with the issuance of uniform certificates. Evening classes constitute a rather small share of enrollment (4%), therefore, it is important to scrutinize the correlation of Full-time and part-time studies. The 2000 prevalence of the former over the latter (53.2% vs. 38.9%) reversed in 2009 (43.9% vs. 50.1%) whereas by 2017 Full-time studies regained and even increased their preponderance (59.1% vs. 37.7%). In the 2010s, lower part-time enrollment was due to a decrease in youth cohorts, which also reduced competition for full-time seats. In recent years, the State has embarked on a policy of reducing part-time enrollment for a number of specialties

overabundant in the labor market. Against this background, some insight into the educational tracks leading to HEIs can be gained from the data on the substantially different educational levels at admission to full-time and part-time classes. SS (mostly current-year) graduates prevailed steadily among full-time enrollees accounting for 89.2% in 2000 and 88.3% in 2017. Meanwhile, MLSP graduates prevailed among part-time enrollees (48.1% and 59.1% respectively); the share of SS (mostly previous years') graduates decreased from 36.7% to 20.2%; and the share of SWP graduates increased from 2.1% to 12.5%.

Educational tracks leading to HEIs also vary as to the type of ownership of educational isntitutions and the share of self-paying seats. State-funded HEIs prevail. Enrollment in private HEIs constituted 11.8% in 2000, 17.7% in 2007 and 14.6% in 2017. The share of self-paying seats at state-funded HEIs had been steadily growing and reached 42.8% in 2000 and 50.3% in 2017. When added up, these indicators show that 54.6% of young people were enrolled in self-paying seats in 2000 and 64.8% - in 2017.

The great diversity of educational tracks emerged against the background of expanding Higher Education largely due to increasing proportions of part-time studies, self-paying seats at state-funded HEIs and availability of private HEIs. The development of these structural elements as well as, in no small measure, high educational attainment of students at admission have contributed to the phenomenon of "mass" Higher Education and its lower quality. Educational tracks of youth between educational levels and opportunities offered by the education system depend on an interplay of a number of factors including, along with the structure and institulization of the education system, strong demand for Higher Education among youth (no matter what kind of certificates they obtain). Young people select various tracks to attain their objectives.

Discussion

Some Russian researchers find that the distribution of youth after graduating from Basic School turns into the most important one influencing all subsequent trajectories of youth. This bifurcation plays a more substantial role than the "Secondary School to HEI" track in producing social inequality (Bessudnov, Malik, 2016). The sociological studies confirm that the "Basic School to MLSP to HEI" track has become popular in the past decade, especially among social groups with limited cultural and material resources. Some researchers emphasize that such is the social role played by MLSP, which is no less substantial than its instrumental mission (Konstantinovsky, Popova, *2018).* Others maintain that the current MLSP loses much of its basic function (training mid-level specialists) and turns into a bypass transit to higher education (Alexandrov et al, 2015).

Information about the diversity and increasing mass character of the tracks leading to higher education lies at the heart of many studies on the disproportions between Higher and Secondary Vocational Education, on differentiation of HEIs structure, on current shortcomings of Higher Education and ways of overcoming them (Kuzminov et al. 2013; Abankina et al. 2013).

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