

## PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL SELF-DETERMINATION OF YOUTH UNDER CONDITIONS OF THE MODERNIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** The authors emphasize that the modernization of higher education has a certain effect on the professional and social self-determination of youth. Based on the analysis of secondary empirical data, the authors note that the reform of the education system in Russia entailed the outflow of young people who are getting higher education today. Despite these indicators, the youth who aspire to get higher education have the

opportunity to get international mobility, access to online education, and internships at large enterprises, which allows them to build their life and professional strategies more clearly and competently.

**Keywords:** self-determination, professional self-determination, social self-determination, youth, students,

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higher education, modernization of higher education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education, experience, abilities of a modern person are of great importance for the socio-economic development of the state. The state contribution to human capital is an increase in the quality of the workforce, which in turn leads to an increase in the incomes of the population and an increase in the return on economic sectors. Education is a basic element of the country's development, human development, and the reduction of social inequality [18].

Turning to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of May 8, 2018 No. 204 “On National Goals and Strategic Tasks of the Development of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2024”, we note that among the goals of the state are the following: a focus on the breakthrough scientific, technological and socio-economic development of the Russian Federation, on creating opportunities for self-realization and disclosure of the talents of each person, which can be achieved through the modernization of vocational education, including through

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the introduction of adaptive, action-oriented and flexible educational programs [8].

The system of modern higher education in Russia is in the process of technological and technical updating [36]. These updates are dictated by financial, economic, institutional and organizational transformation mechanisms. Therefore, the professional and social self-determination of youth is a rather complicated process; it is difficult for modern young people to decide on the direction of professional activity and life strategy.

Since higher education in Russia is in constant reform, this system appears to be extremely important for effective formation of a mechanism for developing professional trajectories of youth, including tools for their adapting to the labor market [13].

It is youth that acts as a powerful resource for the development of Russia. Student youth is the future elite of the country, highly qualified specialists and experts in various fields of life. Since education, through the development of human potential, shapes and transforms society, and is regarded by international practice as an investment in the development of the

state economy, changes in the system of higher education cannot but affect the formation of life trajectories of modern Russian youth. That, in turn, determines the relevance of considering the problem of professional and social self-determination of youth in the context of the modernization of higher education [11].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Since young people are a socio-demographic and sociocultural group that simultaneously acts as a carrier of social innovations and a subject of social reproduction, this is of particular interest among researchers.

Many scientists are concerned about youth issues, among which it is worth noting the following developed areas: the subjectivity of youth [16; 37]; life and professional self-determination of youth [19; 29; 33]; value orientations of youth [38]; the social appearance of students [13; 22]; social health of students [11]. Of particular interest are the problems associated with the educational and professional trajectory of youth [6; 13]

One of the most important areas of sociological research is the transformation of modern higher

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education in Russia: analysis of the social functions of the higher education system [25; 11; 14]; trends in the modernization of higher education [17; 20]. The issues of the transformation of the higher education system are of interest to specialists in the field of sociology of education, since there is a general problem of the crisis state of higher education in many countries of the world from the standpoint of realizing the social functions of higher education in modern society. [11]. Insofar as youth, from the point of sociological analysis, is a socio-demographic group that seeks to acquire a certain social status by showing its subjectivity, it is important for our study to apply the theory of youth subjectivity, which emphasizes the development of youth as a subject of social reproduction with basic social functions: reproductive, innovative, translational [7]. Since the professional and social self-determination of youth is one of the stages of socialization of a person, we use the theoretical principles of the theory of socialization in our work [24]. Since young people live in an environment in which education and knowledge are the main resources that ensure success in life, it is especially

important to find new approaches to studying the problems of education focusing on the professional and social self-determination of young representatives of different social groups; to take into account the situation of modernization of higher education and to determine its life strategies in terms of obtaining and accumulating human capital [2; 11]. During the study, the program-targeted approach was applied to the analysis of professional and social self-determination of youth in the context of modernization of the higher education system [30].

Thus, the development of many approaches to the study of youth in Russian sociology allows us to affirm that youth issues retain their very high status. The analysis of research in the field of professional and social self-determination of youth allows us to find the connection that exists between the process of modernization of the higher education system and the problem of professional self-determination of student youth, which determines the purpose of this study.

### **3. THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

Education is a basic element of a country's development, human

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development, and reduction of social inequality. It is an effective mechanism for overcoming social barriers and increasing human potential. According to the Analytical Center of the Government of the Russian Federation, incomes of people who have higher education exceed the average. For example, the salary of employees with higher professional education is 14.4% higher than the average salary in the Russian Federation [9; 10].

One of the active participants in the educational process is youth. The most active and adaptive part of youth are students. Student youth have a special social value. Student youth are a resource of professional elite, professionals and experts, who will soon join the managerial staff at the administrative level [12].

It should be noted that education is aimed at human development, but it is not a direct guarantee of success in life. At the same time, determining the social status of youth, the chances of social mobility, access to public goods in the future, the educational process significantly affects their professional and social self-determination.

Considering youth from the point of the sociological dimension, we note that there is a wide variety of methodological and theoretical approaches to the study of youth, but there is no unity of interpretation, because they are rapidly changing their image and life strategies. That is, a given socio-demographic group is characterized by "spontaneity of choice." Nevertheless, not only spontaneity of choice distinguishes youth from other social groups. Youth possess group uniqueness and specificity in constructing their social reality [26]. In modern social conditions, young people are also focused on self-development, improvement of their social status through the adoption of cultural achievements, elevation of spirituality, intelligence, significance in society [37].

Touching upon self-development and social status, it is certainly impossible to get around such a group as student youth. In domestic sociological thought, the problem of the specifics of students as part of youth was actively developed in the 60s of the twentieth century. "Studentship is a mobile social group, the purpose of which is to organize, according to a certain program, preparation for

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fulfilling high professional and social roles in material and spiritual production" [31].

Education as a common type of student youth activity and their age-specifics allow us to create the identity space of students [1]. It is in the framework of the educational process that students form a social and professional "I"; youth takes a certain social position and develops a commitment to a certain type of behavior and professional strategies. In this regard, it is necessary to dwell in more detail on such concepts as professional and social self-determination of youth [13].

Based on the gradation of youth age limits proposed by VT Lisovsky, we also consider the social group of young people in the following groups: 15 - 17 years – adolescence; 18 - 21 –early youth; 22 - 30 - actually the youth [23]. The "early youth" period is relevant to this study, since actual self-determination and career guidance of the person take place in this period. Young people are educated on the chosen specialty or already actively involved in labor activities, often combining work with study.

It should be noted that self-determination of youth is one of the most important issues among modern youth issues, since this process means determining by young people their place in the structure of society, during which the motivational sphere of youth consciousness is formed, alternative development paths are selected, and adaptation to new conditions occurs [5]. Self-determination of young people is carried out in the process of formation and implementation of vocational guidance, acquiring a profession, adaptation in the labor market and in the field of labor relations, creating their own families, choosing a place of residence, forming positions in the socio-political and cultural-leisure areas of society [11].

The basis of professional self-determination is professional choice, goal setting, and a system of social and professional values [34]. Professional self-determination is a professional choice that is part of life's choice. In addition, any life choice includes [Romanov M.S. et al., 2017]:

- comparison of the likely positive and negative consequences of the choice, the anticipation of its results in the social and individual plans;

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- development of an internal position, a personal attitude towards the objective conditions that create the situation of choice;

- determination of the life prospects of the individual and the formation of life plans;

- determination of the line of behavior, including changing behavioral attitudes and stereotypes in accordance with the decision.

Professional self-determination is a structural component of social self-determination - "self-determination regarding the criteria for membership in a particular sphere of social relations and a certain social circle that are developed in society and consciously accepted by a person" [4].

Self-determination of youth is caused by the interrelationship of the social environment, life self-determination, life situation, and position. Social environment plays an important role in this process. A significant role in the process of social self-determination and the active inclusion of youth in the social structure of society and the system of professional relations plays the stage of getting education.

Going through the process of decision-making in professional and social self-determination, young people, as a rule, voluntarily or involuntarily, apply a set of certain strategies.

Since the system of higher vocational education in Russia is at the stage of social transformations associated with the need to move to a multi-level education system that forms the global educational space, the process of social and professional self-determination of youth is also subject to change.

Let us turn to the processes of reforming the higher education system in Russia. The process of globalization and technological progress leads to the emergence of new knowledge and accelerates changes in the education system. Education is transforming into a mobile and open system, where the role of formal education is declining, and the influence of non-formal and beyond the standard educational environment of education is growing, new forms of obtaining educational services appear, and the educational service itself is undergoing significant changes.

Currently, we are witnessing the trend of globalization and the internationalization of education. “The

strategy of internationalizing the activities of the university can have a different focus: providing students with access to foreign education through academic mobility programs; double degree programs; network forms of educational programs implementation; joint scientific activity through the implementation of joint research programs and projects with foreign universities; increasing the publication activity of university scientists in foreign publications; an increase in the number of foreign students and the demand for educational services of a university abroad; preparing students for entering the international labor market and for continuing education abroad through interaction with foreign organizations - employers and universities; enhancing the university’s position in international ratings by ensuring recognition of its reputation and status”[20].

Programs of the international academic mobility are widely used in many Russian universities. If we look at the program of the Higher School of Economics, many students participate in the competition for international academic mobility and spend a semester at a university in another country. Practice of spoken English is one of the

main motivation factors for students to get educational experience outside the walls of their own university. From the feedback of the HSE student who spent an exchange semester in Korea, we learned that it was also interesting to get familiar with a different educational system and the attitude of foreign students and professors to educational process, “When choosing a program, I was more interested in Asian countries, and Korea seemed to be the right choice. Korea is interesting for its not only culture and history, but for its technological development, a large number of companies producing equipment and electronics. Korea was also the most financially affordable option: a significant plus is the agreement between SeoulTech and the HSE, thanks to which we lived in a hostel free. A certificate of IELTS or similar exams, the passing of which is worth certain funds, was not yet a must”. Studying in another country, students develop communication skills, online learning abilities, see a different educational system [21], and gain international experience necessary for successful employment in the future.

Another trend in higher education, which should be noted, is the

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tendency of formation and development of the knowledge economy. As part of this trend, attention should be paid to the fact that Russia is now actively revising the State Educational Standard. Standards are becoming more practice-oriented, allowing students to receive not only deep theoretical knowledge, but also interact with employers in the learning process. The Federal State Educational Standard 3 ++ stipulates that at least 10% of employers - persons who carry out their labor activity in the professional sphere, corresponding to the professional activity for which graduates are preparing should participate in the educational process [27].

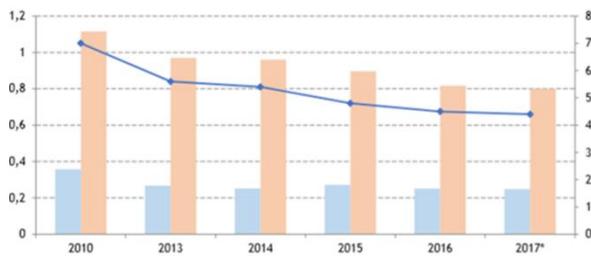
In addition to the practical orientation of the education process, the system of Russian higher education is aimed at creating conditions for systemic improvement of the quality and expansion of the possibilities of lifelong education for all categories of citizens through the development of the Russian digital educational space through the solution of the problem of creating a national platform for electronic education, which will provide access to a wide range of online courses for various audience [Project “Modern Digital Educational Environment”]. Distribution

of online courses in the educational process allows young people to be mobile and combine their study and work.

The reform of the higher education system affects the change in attitudes towards education on the part of youth. Turning to the research conducted by VCIOM (All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center) “Higher education - is it a social elevator or wasted time?” It is worth highlighting that over the past 15 years, education has been for Russians primarily a tool for successful employment (48% in 2004 and 44% in 2019) career advancement (28% in 2004 and 26% in 2019), as well as self-improvement as a professional (26% in 2004 and 22% in 2019) [35]. Education is surely considered by modern young people an indicator of success and career advancement - 61.7% of Russian youth adhere to an instrumental attitude to education as a means of achieving goals such as obtaining a diploma, prestige, and career advancement. Still, young people understand that knowledge and the process of obtaining knowledge (education) are necessary for preparing a

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person for life; therefore, they also recognize its terminal value (42.2%) [16,39].

It is also worth noting the fact that today Russians do not believe that education has a significant impact on the material well-being of a person. In addition, over the past three years, Russians are increasingly inclined to believe that the availability of higher education for all citizens is reduced (53% in 2016 and 63% in 2019). Against this background, the majority of respondents do not believe that all means are good for the sake of a higher education diploma, although 11 years ago this opinion was shared less often (51% in 2008 and 65% in 2019). Another 55% would think about the need for higher education if they had to pay for it. In 2008, there were 45% of these [35]. General trends in the attitude of Russians towards education and the conditions of tight budgetary constraints of recent years in the field of education affect the decline in the number of students and faculty as well as a decrease in the number of universities (Figure 1) [Bulletin, 2017].



-  Number of faculty in higher educational institutions (staff), million.
-  Number of higher education organizations, thousand units
-  Number of students in higher educational institutions, million. (Left scale)

**Figure 1. Change in the number of higher educational institutions, the number of students and faculty.**

There is an obvious downward trend in the number of students in higher educational institutions, which, apparently, will continue over the next period. However, despite these indicators, youth who are striving for higher education have many opportunities that the education system provides today; it allows young people to approach the process of self-determination more clearly and competently.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Thus, on the basis of the data we have analyzed, it should be noted that youth self-determination is one of the most important issues, since this process means that young people determine their place in the structure of society, during

which a motivational sphere of youth consciousness is formed, alternative development paths are selected, and adaptation to new conditions takes place. Modern higher education for youth is, to a certain extent, a prerequisite for professional and social self-determination.

The reform of the higher education system, first, makes young people wonder why it is necessary to get education, what value it has. As we can see, most young people prefer the terminal value of education, immediately weighing their chances of success in life. That is, the professional self-determination of young people often arises not from real interests of a young person, but from the opinion, which profession is more profitable to get for

further well-being. The trend of globalization and internationalization of Russian education allows modern young people to self-develop, reveal their abilities, gain international experience and establish communications with representatives of other states expanding their social ties.

The transition to a knowledge economy and the practice-oriented higher education allow young people to acquire professional competencies in full extent and to apply their knowledge during the internship proving themselves as competent specialists. The modern digital educational environment provides an opportunity for young people to receive the necessary information through distance education, allowing them to combine education with work, and enter the labor market after graduation with experience in the specialty.

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