

Accessibility of higher education for population of Russia: what the results of the studies show

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Are the problems of accessibility of higher education pertinent for our society?

Current status and prospects of higher school lately draw particular attention of specialists, politicians and many citizens of our country. Considerable and apparently contradictory social, economic and institutional changes take place in this field.

We witness intensive development of the system of higher education. From 1989 to 2002, number of people with higher education grew by 1.5 times¹, and that of students by more than 2.1 times². Russia occupies one of the leading positions worldwide as for relative number of students³. This growth is mainly due to development of pay schooling.

During the nineties, public expenditures for education dropped, as per minimum assessment, by not lesser than two times in real value, and, in spite of their growth in the last four years, have not reached the level of 1991 yet. Public schools expanded student enrolment on conditions of full compensation of expenses from year to year. A broad network of private universities where education is dispensed on pay basis only rapidly emerged. While in 1993 the share of students learning on the account of the budget made 93.62%, in 2002 it was 50% only (40% of the entrants to public schools)⁴. The amount of private financing of higher education in 2002 exceeded 50% of total amount of both budgetary and extra-budgetary money.

On the background of growing enrolment to universities, mainly on a pay basis, population's expenses at the stage of preparation for entering universities (payment for preparatory courses and training with coach) is observed. This reflects growing gap between the requirements for knowledge sufficient for successful and even excellent results at secondary school and those for the level of knowledge set forth by higher schools. Some studies testify to considerable informal payments directly at the stage of selection for university⁵.

In parallel to growing number of graduates from universities, indices of their employment in profession they receive remain very low. That means that the existing distribution of the available budgetary money for training specialists in various professions in higher school is not efficient. The system of higher education made up in Soviet time, which undoubtedly has had many achievements and strong points, hardly suits labor market under formation.

These problems of development of higher education and the ways of their solving have recently given raise to sharp discussions. In general, there is already an understanding of necessary reforming of this field, first of all in its institutional and economic component. The routes of such reforming have been defined in "Guidelines of long-term social and economic policy of the Government of Russian Federation» approved by the Government of Russian

¹ Main results of the All-Russian census of the population of 2002. Goscomstat of RF, 2003.

² The white book of Russian education. M.: MESI publishers, 2000. Statistical collection "Education in Russian Federation". Ministry of Education of Russian Federation, GU-VSHE, CISN, 2003.

³ In 2000, Russia counted 327 high-school students per 10,000 people. In 1995, in USA: 333, in Canada: 331, Great Britain: 234, Germany: 228, Japan: 217 (A.V.Poletaev, I.M.Savelieva. Demand and offer of services in the field of secondary and higher education in Russia. M., 2001).

⁴ Russia in figures. 2003: Brief stat. col./ Goscomstat of Russia. – M., 2003.

⁵ G.Satarov. Diagnostics of Russian corruption: sociological analysis. (Report summary). M.: INDEM foundation, 2002; Monitoring of educational economics. Corruption in the system of education. Information bulletin, №4, 2004.

Federation in June 2000. Since 2001, trial of the mechanism of the unified public examination (national exam) for secondary school-leaver, which is bound to replace university entrance examination and undermine the wide-spread practice of informal payment for entering university. Since 2002, a new mechanism of budgetary financing of higher schools based on public nominative financial obligations (“GIFO”) is under trial. It is bound to implement the principle «money following student», link the amount of public financing of university to the results of national exam by school-entrants, and create new, more equitable forms of combining free and pay higher education. The idea, the first results of those innovations and advisability of their extension over the whole country have raised, in their turn, new discussions.

Public concern in the last year has focused on the problems of organization of enrolment to universities and their financing. Discussion of the ways of reforming higher education system and its financing mechanisms has paid insufficient attention to consideration of the existing higher education system and prospects of its development from the viewpoint of the opportunities and obstacles for various groups of population to have access to higher education.

On the one hand, it is obvious that quantitative indices of development of professional education in Russia testify to its higher accessibility. The data of public statistics on the number of secondary schools leavers and higher schools entrants are becoming closer to each other. Rapid growth of pay education has made professional education more easily accessible for persons from families having medium and high income. On the other hand, development of pay forms of schooling and growth of population expenses for preparation for entering universities for free education make us assume that economic barriers on the way to higher education have grown, and in spite of growing total enrolment to higher schools, their accessibility for certain socially vulnerable groups of population, first of all for children from families with low income, has dropped.

Until recently, we had rather few reliable data on the factors determining accessibility of higher education system, effectiveness of higher education and subsequent employment for obtained profession for members of families with low income, people from rural areas, representatives of small ethnic communities, orphans, disabled persons, etc.

About the project «Accessibility of higher education for socially disadvantaged groups»

Understanding importance of studying in such a way the changes occurring in Russian higher education system has been at the origin of implementation of the large-scale research project «Accessibility of higher education for socially disadvantaged groups», which has been initiated and given financial support by Ford Foundation. Its main objective has been stated as initiation, monitoring and synthesis of studies of accessibility of higher education for socially vulnerable groups of population.

The functions of organizer and research coordinator for the activities in frame of this project were assumed by the Independent Institute for Social Policy. The project was implemented between December 2001 and June 2004.

The first task in this project was creating common understanding of the object of the upcoming study among the experts taking part in the project. Common understanding was reached that the problems of accessibility of higher education should be considered as problems of differentiation of the opportunities for various social groups for getting access to higher education (entering a university and successful graduation). Consequently, the object of the study of accessibility of higher education is defined as differences between social groups with respect to the opportunities of getting access to higher education accounting for its quality, as well factors conditioning these differences and their dynamics. In this context, socially

vulnerable groups of population are not defined as certain a priori identified categories of population, but groups having relatively worse opportunities of access to higher education accounting for its quality.

Another important result of the preliminary discussions of the problems of accessibility of higher education was the statement that there are now two sub-systems in Russian higher educational system: one - elite high-quality higher education, and the other one - mass higher education of lower quality. The second case has practically become available for a majority of respective age categories of population. At the same time, opportunities of access to schools ensuring high quality of professional training of future specialists have been apparently reduced for most of the population. Therefore, a study of accessibility of higher education should be focused differently with respect to two existing systems offering educational services of different quality.

These principles were taken as a basis for the program studies of accessibility of higher education⁶. Within the framework of this program, the following guidelines for study of accessibility of higher education were identified:

- 1) Study of the impact of the factors of social and economic differentiation of the population on accessibility of higher education.
- 2) Study of the impact of institutional factors on accessibility of higher education.
- 3) Study of the impact of socio-cultural factors on accessibility of higher education.
- 4) Study of public opinion on the problems of accessibility of higher education and ways of solving them.
- 5) Development of method of influencing the level of higher education accessibility.

The program of studies served for Ford Foundation and the Independent Institute for Social Policy as a basis for organizing a tender for support of individual projects ensuring implementation of the tasks in the program. In October 2002, Ford Foundation made a decision to support 11 out of 53 proposed projects.

Most of the tasks in the program were included into the scope of the selected projects, but no tasks of studying the impact of rules of enrolment and payment for education in higher schools on accessibility of higher education were represented, as well as no comparative quantitative study of the effect of various socio-economic and institutional factors on accessibility of higher education was included. These two tasks were resolved by the Independent Institute for Social Policy with Ford Foundation's support in addition to the 11 above-mentioned projects.

All the above studies were completed during the year 2003. Then, basing on their results, a series of articles were prepared and published in the book «*Accessibility of higher education in Russia*». Edited by S.V.Shishkin. Independent Institute for Social Policy. – M., 2004. The results of the study of the effect of transformation of mechanisms of enrolment to higher schools and schooling financing on accessibility of higher education were included into a separate publication «*Higher education in Russia: rules and reality*». Authors: A.S.Zaborovskaya, T.L.Kliachko, I.B.Korolev, V.A.Chernets, A.E.Chirikova, L.S.Shilova, S.V.Shishkin (editor), Independent Institute for Social Policy. — M., 2004.

⁶ D.L.Konstantinovskiy, M.D.Krasilnikova, T.M.Maleva, Y.M.Roshchina, S.V.Shishkin. Study of accessibility of higher education. Program of studies. / Problems of accessibility of higher education. Preprint WP3/2003/01/ Edited by S.V. Shishkin. Independent Institute for Social Policy. – M.: «SIGNAL», 2003. pages 171-191.

What do we now know about accessibility of higher education?

The results of the studies done within the project «Study of accessibility of higher education for socially vulnerable groups of population» make it possible the following final conclusions on the differences existing in our society with respect to opportunities of entering higher school, factors determining those opportunities and necessary orientations of educational policy.

1. Higher education in Russia is becoming a standard and necessary condition for life in society. 80% of the adult population of Russia and 89% of youth believe that higher education is important for successful career⁷. In 2003, 83.1% of the secondary school pupils, 74.0% of the technical secondary school (college) students and 38.5% of the vocational school pupils had the intention to enter higher schools⁸.

2. Growing figures of higher school students and formal growth of accessibility of higher education for population conceal the processes of differentiation of higher education systems developing there. Before completion of these studies, such differentiation was noticed by expert community as building of two sub-systems within Russian system of higher education: 1) elite high-quality higher education and 2) mass low-quality higher education. Deeper investigation of this process shows that the difference between higher-education sub-systems appears on the line «general education – special education»⁹. Sub-systems of general higher education and professional (special) higher education are being made-up.

General higher education fulfill the function of socialization of the students. Development of general higher education is due not only to the desire to get a diploma as a way to get to a group of higher status, nor so to the desire of young men to obtain deferment of military service, but rather to raising demand in the labor market from employers for employees having first of all certain level of general culture¹⁰. Rendering of this general cultural training, more advanced than in ordinary secondary school has become a function demanded from higher education. This function is implemented by low-prestige and medium-prestige universities, departments.

The problems existing in this part of the educational system are due to redundancy of programs aiming at dispensing specialized professional knowledge and skills, low quality of education in many schools and discrepancy between the existing forms of higher school and required function.

Getting professional (special) higher education is ensured by entering to elite higher schools or prestigious professions in ordinary higher schools, as well as by education in compliance with master's degree programs and second graduation programs¹¹.

At the same time, in addition to general and professional education, the existing system of higher education contains clearly identifiable elite and mass components. Thus, two lines of differentiation of educational sub-systems and, consequently, discussion of accessibility problems should be adopted: 1)«general vs. professional» and 2)«mass vs. elite».

3. Mass general and mass professional higher education are now available on a free-of-charge basis: for youth from any social groups provided good results at secondary school, as well as on a pay basis for everyone able continue education after secondary school and pay for

⁷ See project «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson.

⁸ See project «Accessibility of education as a social problem (differentiation of access to higher education and population's attitude towards it)», headed by G.A.Cherednichenko.

⁹ See projects: «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson; «Differentiation of higher education as a public institution and changes in accessibility of higher education for various social groups», headed by A.A.Veikher.

¹⁰ See project «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson .

¹¹ Ibidem.

this. Major reasons for renouncing to higher education are insufficient material and financial resources of the family and insufficient knowledge and difficulty of entrance examination.

However, opportunities of getting prestigious, elite education (general and professional) are considerably different for people from different social groups. Considerable portion of the population (from 45% of pollees from 15 to 35 years old) believe that they can't afford not higher education as such, but "good" higher education¹².

4. Accessibility of prestigious education is substantially determined not only and not so much by the abilities shown by the youth at entrance examination, but rather by resource potential of their families, which is made-up of social status, informal relationships, money, residence location, etc.¹³. Difference of families' resource potential determines substantial inequality with respect to accessibility of higher education. Among the students of medium-prestige professions, 26% come from families with low resource potential, and 46%, with medium resource potential. Among the students of high-prestige (highly competitive) professions, elite universities, not more than 12% come from families with low resource potential, and 41% come from families with medium wealth, since entering to such professions presumes considerable expenditures for pre-entrance preparation or extraordinary abilities¹⁴. Entering to higher school for highly competitive professions is hardly probable unless there is either coach training, or education in specialized secondary schools, or bribe.

5. According to assessments by population, family's social capital (family, corporate and status relationships) is more important factor influencing opportunities for prestigious higher education than family's income and residence location¹⁵.

6. Difference of income level substantially influences difference of accessibility of higher education. Both poor and well-off families pay for education in higher schools. It is true that less reach people select less expensive options of schooling: less prestigious schools or professions, less expensive forms of education. Persons with low income prefer evening classes and education by correspondence.

7. The most acute reaction on the question about inequality of chances of entering a university for different groups of entrants is observed with students having minimum amount of cultural and educational resource and, consequently, feeling uncertain in the competition for entering higher school¹⁶. The lesser their parents' income is, the more acutely they feel injustice and the more insurmountable the obstacles before their children seem to them.

8. In general, consciousness of need for payment for schooling is rather strongly implanted among the population, particularly, among youth. The younger and better-off the pollees are, the more indifferent they are to growth of pay education. However, whatever their income is, most of the families are first of all looking for their children entering universities on a free of charge basis, considering pay schooling as spare option of higher education. On the one hand, pay schooling limit accessibility of higher education, but on the other hand, it equalizes chances of entering higher school for those who do not have enough educational resources¹⁷.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ See projects: «Accessibility of higher education and prospects of positive social dynamics», headed by E.M.Avraamova; «Study of higher education accessibility factors» - Y.M.Roshchina.

¹⁴ See project «Accessibility of higher education and prospects of positive social dynamics», headed by E.M.Avraamova.

¹⁵ See, for example, projects: «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson; «Accessibility of higher education and prospects of positive social dynamics», headed by E.M.Avraamova.

¹⁶ See project «Accessibility of education as a social problem (differentiation of access to higher education and population's attitude towards it)», headed by G.A.Chernichenko.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

9. Territorial factor substantially influences accessibility of higher education. Quality of secondary schooling in schools located in rural areas and towns far away from regional higher education center is usually lower than in schools located in cities¹⁸. Most of the schools located in rural areas and towns are not included into higher school preparatory networks, or included into such networks on worse conditions compared to schools in university's centers¹⁹. As a rule, they have no specialized education, nor additional matters. So, the students there have no opportunity to get high-quality education prior to higher school; they cannot take advantage of preferential conditions of enrolment to higher school, which are often available for senior pupils of elite schools in the cities.

Evaluation of their chances of getting higher education by population is proportional to the size of the settlement where they live. Higher education is 1.7 times as much available for inhabitants of capital cities as for rural inhabitants²⁰. Higher education is 1.14 times more available for urban school-leavers than rural school-leavers, similar ratio for specialized secondary schools being 1.56²¹.

10. Pupils in different schools show clearly different attitude as for their intentions and opportunities with respect to higher education. Pupils leaving secondary schools want, as an average, to enter more prestigious higher schools, those leaving colleges, less prestigious, and those leaving vocational schools, even less prestigious²².

11. In spite of the fact that during the period from 1996 to 2003, enrolment of disabled persons in total enrolment to universities grew by 5 times (from 0.08% to 0.4%), accessibility of higher education is impeded for many disabled persons due to maladjustment of ordinary universities to disabled persons, irregular distribution of universities implementing programs for disabled persons over the territory of Russia, and imperfection of the mechanism of target financing of their schooling²³. Motivation to entering higher school among disabled persons, as well as among migrants is also relatively low because of low quality of secondary education they receive²⁴.

12. Accessibility of prestigious higher education is made even more complicated due to institutional barriers erected between higher school and secondary school²⁵. Professors consciously reproduce the gap between the level and scope of knowledge dispensed at secondary school, on the one hand, and the requirements set forth by higher school, on the other hand. This gap has generated a practically new and complete component of the educational system inserted in between secondary and university. That is the system of coach training and departments of preparation for entering higher school. The more prestigious the professions are, and the better-off the entrants families are, the higher the barrier of accessibility erected by higher school is. Need of having recourse to pay services for preparation for entrance examination or informal

¹⁸ See projects: «School strategies and accessibility of higher education» headed by P.A.Sergomanov; «Regional educational networks in focus of accessibility of higher education: new exclusions or new opportunities» headed by E.L.Omelchenko.

¹⁹ See projects: «Regional educational networks in focus of accessibility of higher education: new exclusions or new opportunities» headed by E.L.Omelchenko .

²⁰ See projects: «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson.

²¹ See project «Accessibility of education as a social problem (differentiation of access to higher education and population's attitude towards it)», headed by G.A.Cherednichenko.

²² Ibidem.

²³ See project «Accessibility of higher education for disabled persons» headed by E.R.Yarskaya-Smirnova.

²⁴ See projects: «Immigrants in Russian regions: access to higher education as a factor of adaptation and social stability» headed by G.S.Vitkovskaya; «Accessibility of higher education for disabled persons» headed by E.R.Yarskaya-Smirnova.

²⁵ See projects: «School strategies and accessibility of higher education» headed by P.A.Sergomanov; «Regional educational networks in focus of accessibility of higher education: new exclusions or new opportunities» headed by E.L.Omelchenko.

paying for enrolment reduces the opportunities for children from low-income families, rural areas and small towns to enter for professions of high demand²⁶.

13. The existing formal rules of selection and payment for schooling with minimum public supervision of their conducting give universities great opportunities to form their enrolment policy as they need. Real content of the rules of enrolment to different universities and professions, prevalence of informal exchanges at enrolment to university and during schooling are determined by the school (profession) prestige, its economic status and policy of its management²⁷. All this entails differentiation of opportunities of entering university for different social groups and segmentation of the higher educational system as per accessibility features.

14. Effect of the experiment with national exam and GIFO on higher education accessibility has not been clearly disclosed yet. However, it is possible to mention potential support of national exam implementation by population²⁸.

15. A target-oriented policy of creating privileges in getting higher education for certain groups of population may lead to considerable reduction of higher education accessibility for the other citizens, if the target group is big enough. That is clearly shown by the results of the study carried out in the Republic of Buryatia²⁹. The policy of control of ethnic structure of the higher school students in favor of the title ethnoses applied by the State in Soviet time is now being reproduced by the education system itself and causes substantial inequality of intentions of people from non-title ethnoses to enter university and considerable discrepancy between the proportion of students of different ethnic groups in public universities and ethnic structure of local population.

16. Language in which education is dispensed in secondary and university is substantially less meaningful factor of differentiation in the field of accessibility of higher education than social capital, income and parents' education level. That has been shown by the study performed in the Republic of Tatarstan³⁰. Although pupils leaving Tatar secondary schools have unequal opportunities of getting higher education in Tatar language as compared to the opportunities of getting it in Russian language, they do not perceive this as a problem of accessibility of higher education (as an aggregate of knowledge of certain level). There is no sufficient demand for higher education in Tatar language, and there are big difficulties with issuing school programs in Tatar language for all professions. This is not so much a problem of higher education accessibility, but rather a problem of development of national education.

17. Accessibility of higher education is determined by the opportunities not only of entering a university, but also successfully terminate the whole course of schooling. Low level of welfare of the students is not the leading factor impeding university termination. Major cause of breaking off schooling is inability to learn, adapt to loads, etc.³¹ However, importance of economic factor, i.e. need for certain level of family income or having some earnings grows with the prestige of selected university or profession. At the same time, the policy of the State for material support to higher school students is not effective: scholarship amount is scanty, there is practically no financial support to most successful and assiduous students, young student's families, etc.

²⁶ See project «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects», headed by A.G.Levinson .

²⁷ See project «Effect of transformation of the mechanisms of enrolment to universities and financing of higher education on its accessibility» headed by S.V.Shishkin

²⁸ See project «Accessibility of higher education: social and institutional aspects» headed by A.G.Levinson.

²⁹ See project «Study of accessibility of higher education for various groups of population in the Republic of Buryatia» - E.V.Petrova.

³⁰ See project «Schooling language as a factor of accessibility of higher education (example of the Republic of Tatarstan)» headed by L.M.Mukhariamova.

³¹ See project «Factors determining accessibility of complete higher education at an elite higher education institution (example of the Lomonosov Moscow State University)» headed by I.G.Teleshova.

18. Accounting for the whole aggregate of social and economic factors of higher-education accessibility, the following social groups being in most vulnerable situation can be identified:

- inhabitants of rural areas and smaller towns far away from university centers;
- children from low-income families, including children of disabled and unemployed persons and unskilled workers;
- families with low educational potential of parents;
- migrants' children;
- school-leavers from vocational schools;
- children with poor health.

Groups of population having relatively lower opportunities of entering university are concentrated in low-prestige universities (teachers training, agricultural, etc), and in low-prestige departments and low-competition professions.

19. Russian system of higher education ensures ascending social mobility, fulfills the function of social mixing, but not enough due to existing inequality with respect to its accessibility.

20. State policy of equalization of starting positions at entering university should progress in two directions:

- 1) equalization of the quality of secondary (general) education;
- 2) subsidizing schooling for gifted representatives of socially vulnerable groups of population on pay basis.

21. Strategic task is equalization of the level of secondary education. That can be ensured by:

- consistent implementation of supervision on application of educational standards through national exam mechanism;
- implementation of a program of restructuring of rural schools and creation of schooling districts;
- stimulation of founding secondary schools in rural areas and small towns supervised by universities;
- founding university complexes basing on universities, colleges and vocational schools.

22. With respect to gifted youth from socially vulnerable groups of population, a special target-oriented program is required. State policy of equalization of starting positions at getting higher education should use tools of subsidizing schooling for gifted representatives of socially vulnerable groups of population on pay basis. Most preferable way seems to be full or partial compensation of expenses for schooling on pay basis to persons from socially vulnerable groups using mechanisms of educational loans, public repayable subsidies, increased GIFO, etc.

Social scholarships for children from poor families to provide them for should not only be kept, but increased, as well as purposeful extension of opportunities of combining schooling with job, creation of special centers for student employment and selection of potential employers able to credit schooling.

23. State policy with respect to emerging functional differentiation of higher education should not be directed to suppress its mass component oriented to dispensing general higher education. Allegations to low quality of mass higher education cannot conceal the fact that

society really sets forth increased demand for inexpensive higher education aimed not at quality of knowledge, but at skills and cultural standards dispensed in the process of learning in a university.

Active reaction of the State on development of mass general higher education should consist in purposeful restructuring of the system of higher professional education providing for clearer differentiation of universities and higher education degrees. That means segregation of universities into mass educational institutions only training bachelors, and universities training both bachelors and masters. A new type of school would be needed for training mass staff for the sector of services and the so-called "new economy". Programs for training of many-sided employees, which would learn special professional knowledge through internal company's training and complementary professional training in the form of master's degree, accelerated second higher education degree, etc .

Introduction of new professional training programs after general higher education and new qualification degrees would allow people graduated from universities to update their education profile getting more adequate professional training.

24. Flexibility of educational opportunities and programs becomes the key factor of extension of accessibility of general and professional higher education. Purposeful support should be given to development of remote training, improvement of evening courses and courses by correspondence, extension of the opportunities for students to select forms of continuation of education and setting up individual strategies of continuous training.

About the structure of submitted studies

Digests of the results of the completed studies have been grouped into three sections in this review.

The first section includes studies focused on analysis of the effect of factors of socio-economic differentiation of population on accessibility of higher education. The project headed by *A.G.Levinson* investigates social and institutional aspects of accessibility of higher education, as well as segregation of higher education into mass and elite ones. *Y.M.Roshchina*, in her study using regressive analysis, identifies major factors now affecting accessibility of higher education. The study headed by *G.A.Cherednichenko* is devoted to issues related to differentiation of accessibility of higher education for people leaving secondary schools, vocational schools and colleges. The project headed by *E.M.Avraamova* on the basis of analysis of education strategies of youth identifies major factors affecting accessibility of higher education and analyses the existing mechanisms of vertical social mobility. The results of the study headed by *A.A.Veikher* draws attention to the on-going differentiation of Russian higher education, namely, segregation into general and specialized.

The second section includes studies mainly devoted to institutional factors influencing difference in opportunities of getting higher education for various categories of population. The study headed by *P.A.Sergomanov* testifies that accessibility of higher education is substantially conditioned by strategy of secondary school, including in the field of professional orientation. The effect of the on-going transformation of the mechanisms of enrolment to university and schooling financing on accessibility of higher education is investigated in the study headed by *S.V.Shishkin*. The project headed by *E.L.Omelchenko* draws attention to such a factor of accessibility of higher education as involvement of secondary schools, vocational schools and colleges into educational networks together with universities. The study headed by *I.G.Teleshova* is devoted to finding out causes impeding getting complete higher education in an elite university.

Finally, the third section includes digests of projects devoted to peculiarities of the problems of accessibility of higher education for individual social and territorial groups:

inhabitants of national autonomies in Russian Federation, disabled persons and migrants. The study headed by *E.R.Yarskaya-Smirnova*, identifies factors reducing accessibility of higher education for disabled persons. The results of the project headed by *G.S.Vitkovskaya* testifies that extension of accessibility of higher education is one of the key factors of adaptation of immigrants and assurance of social stability. The project headed by *L.M.Mukhariamova* assesses influence of the language of education in secondary school on accessibility of higher education in the Republic of Tatarstan. The study by *E.V.Petrova* investigates various factors of accessibility of higher education in the Republic of Buryatia, including effect of school-leaver's educational strategies depending on ethnic origin.

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