

Section 2.

Institutional factors influencing accessibility of higher education

School strategies and accessibility of higher education

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Problem

The problem of accessibility of higher education arises in two aspects:

- Higher education for some groups of contenders proves inaccessible through various socio-economic reasons like residence in small towns and rural settlements, low family incomes etc.
- Accessibility of higher education shows differences related to the variations in secondary school education strategies produced by accounting for or neglecting situations of the development of senior pupils. In other words school strategy plays the role of the “selectivity” factor in accessibility of higher education. School strategy at the same time smoothes down the selection related to socio-economic factors (aspect 1).

Objective

The scope of the research was to identify the effects of the type of schools (school strategy) on the differences in higher education availability level. We assumed that inequality of different groups of population in terms of availability of higher education is determined by the factor of open or concealed educational school strategy. Entrants from schools which account for age related features of education show superior level of availability of higher education unlike entrants from other schools (using other strategies), while social, cultural, and economic and gender differences of availability are even-upped.

Methodology

Contrast sampling method was employed in the research. The lines used were: capital of the region (Krasnoyarsk) – town– village; ‘good’ school – ‘average’ school – ‘bad’ school¹.

In each of the selected schools focused documented interviews were organized. Administration was interviewed about the strategies of the school, group focused interviews with senior pupils about the real strategy of the school and parents, senior pupils and teachers were polled by ‘fill-in-the-form’ way on prospects of the pupil and for purpose of collecting data of significance for the research.

Besides we analyzed the reports of the matriculation commission on entrance of graduates from the sample group schools at the top prestige regional university – the Krasnoyarsk State University (KSU).

¹ Schools were assessed by experts.

The research encompassed 21 schools including 12 schools in the city of Krasnoyarsk, 6 schools of minor towns of the region and 3 rural schools. 267 people participated in focused interviews (130 males and 137 females) and 1375 people were screened by polls (525 senior pupils, 525 parents and 307 teachers). Additionally reports of the matriculation commission, matriculation orders for 2 years (2002, 2003) were analyzed. Interviews and polls took place in February – April 2003.

Findings

1. School type features

Assistance² rendered to senior pupils in implementation of individual educational programs are considered a dedicated assignment with selection of prospect of continued education and substantiation of the selection. The necessity of making a choice generates a situation when a senior pupil may on his own address an adult for assistance in structuring the future. In this event he may discuss his personal vision of education, life prospects provided he faces the situation of choice.

It is understood that if the education process excludes making choice we would never mention the availability of an age-related school strategy. The reverse holds true as well: if adults do not pay attention to the substantiation of the choice made we can assert that there is no indication of assistance in realization of individual educational programs at school. This implies that such school does not implement age-specific strategy of finishing general education.

Accessibility of higher education *per se* for an ‘ideal’ senior pupil i.e. senior pupil with personal plans to continue education must be (all other things being equal) higher than for his coevals stripped of such plans. We can expect therefore that the age-specific strategy of the school increases the availability of higher education.

The research singled out 3 types of school depending on the work with senior pupils.

1st type – ‘mediator’. This school purposefully works with pupils ambitions, with their life plans, individual education programs. The school creates conditions for choice-making and follow-up assistance. School administration is aware of the importance and necessity of such work. It is notable that such schools trace up further live of graduates. An important indicator of such type is confirmation by pupils why such work is important for them. Such schools provide mediatory services for the ‘teen age’ group. This implies understanding of the situation of development and configuration of educational resources for the purposes of age-specific development

2nd type – ‘dispatcher’ – This school works on principle based on the so-called ‘professional orientation’. This type includes schools that tackle the issue of professional orientation on pretty regular basis (dedicated classes, meeting with various professionals etc.).

The vision of the world of profession by pupils is taken for granted irrelevant of the contents of the young people’s claims. In other words the pivotal feature of such type is to follow natural wishes of the young: to learn more about a university and professions. This type of school performs as more or less qualified controller of information on prospects of senior pupils and is not eager to analyze the contents of the claims and transformation of the institute i.e. performs as an open in terms of information but unchanging institute. It is curious that senior pupil at such schools accept the control services and even stress the usefulness. However they discuss such functions as estranged from their situation remaining convinced that decision making is their personal matter.

² We consider such cooperation as dedicated systematically staged discussions, institutionalization in individual study plan within the project to continue education.

3rd type - 'schoolman'. Such schools do not discuss the future of the pupils systematically. They also believe that everything outside the 'school limits' stays outside their cares. At best such things are the responsibility of individual teachers in the field of their own initiative. Such schools are featured by relatively high degree of alienation from situational development of senior pupils and believe that subject studies exhaust the sphere of their competence. Plans of professional orientation work usually exist 'on paper', goal oriented programming of the school strategies is discussed as a rule only in the strict context of the curricula, with no organizational units of choice tracking or at least organization of information channels about the tracking. Moreover the choice is regarded as something disrupting the work of the school. Such schools usually do not have systematic information on matriculated graduates and this information is not attributed to more or less important indicators of the school's performance. Senior pupils feature a high level of alienation and some times expose aggressiveness towards school.

2. Features of school types as per the share of matriculated entrants including choice and fact matching

A major performance indicator of the work of school in our vision is not only percentage of matriculated entrants but compliance index as well. The index shows whether the entrance to university complied with the intents to enter a chosen university, with a chosen profession versus real matriculation facts. To us the index shows how definitely a senior pupil for himself, his parents calculate resources for realization of life plans. How great or insignificant the 'disappointment' is. It shall be noted that the criterion of whether entrance matches the intent is certainly not the sole measure and does not span the problem of availability of higher education completely as besides negotiating the barrier of entrance a student faces the issue of successful graduation from the university and consequent placement. Satisfaction with the latter may be interpreted as the criterion of the quality of the higher education received.

Graduates from schools of 1st type prove to negotiate the barrier 'school – university' 2 times more often than graduates from schools of the 3rd type³. This difference maintains in our opinion that institutional conditions in senior school classes render notable effects on the availability of higher education proceeding from criteria of 'getting' into a university and compliance of claims with the fact of entrance.

3. Impacts of school types, family well-being, knowledge on the availability of higher education

Senior pupils from schools of the 1st type contend to receive higher education much more often than their counterpart from schools of type 2 and 3. They are more definite with the selection of university, have a wider spectrum of means and resources to negotiate the entrance barrier; while selecting profession and a university they more often consider meaningful foundations and internal resources for the entrance. Otherwise such senior pupils exert more effort to negotiate the entrance barrier and their entrance capabilities are ranked high by parents and teachers.

The main statement of the hypothesis supported by the evidence that the claims to receive higher education have linear dependence with the complexity of the curricula (additional

³ Examination of the balance of enrolled entrants in relation to the type of school reveals that school of the 1st type provides 50% of the total matriculation (with 12% of graduates of the total in all school across the sample). Graduates of school type 2 account for 40% of all students (with 55% of graduates of the total in all schools across the sample), and the share of matriculated from schools of the 3d type among all student is 4 times lower than from schools type 2 and almost 5 times lower than from schools type 1 while the share of graduates in schools of the 3d type is 32% of the total.

subjects or some of the subjects are taught deeper and using unconventional programs with elements of option only). In such schools claims to receive higher education are observed much more often than at schools where such attributes of the curriculum are missing.

It is important to observe that outside the factors quoted above we recorded the effects of the following objective parameters on the availability of higher education: place of residence, educational standards and performance, family income, availability of additional subjects or deeper training programs in the curriculum. Such parameters as gender⁴, profession of parents are no restricting factors for the access to higher education as respondents believe.

The territorial factor (center – province) tells on the availability of higher education in a linear manner. If a school from where an entrant comes is sited in a regional center the availability of higher education (probability of matriculation) is the highest. If a school belongs to a minor town the probability of getting into university is somewhat lower. Entrants from rural schools have the lowest chance to receive higher education. Performance influences availability of higher education in a linear manner: the higher the performance, the higher the claims to receive higher education. Grades of significance in this case are ‘good’ and ‘excellent’. The rest of the grade range drastically reduces claims to receive higher education.

The issue of economical factor impacts on availability of higher education suggests significance range of family income from 0 to 7 000 rubles per capita. At incomes above 7 000 rubles the differences smooth down.

4. Effects of school types on entering a regional (classical) university

This last section of the research is dedicated to the analysis of report of the matriculation commission at the Krasnoyarsk State University as the leading regional institution of higher education. We collected information on received applications and matriculated entrants (according to order of the university’s Rector to enroll on budgeted and chargeable places) across the whole sampled schools (21 schools altogether).

Obtained data testified to the effect that schools of the 1st type were featured by small share of the total amount of graduates (10% of secondary school graduates in the sample). At the same time they yielded the largest share of matriculated pupils (45% of matriculated secondary school graduates in the sample), i.e. higher education for these senior pupils is 4 or 5 times more available (depending on type of education: free or chargeable) in the regional university versus schools of the 2nd type. At the same time schools of the 3rd type generating 35% of graduates yield only a 4% share of those who get into the university. It shall be noted that the share of paid and budgeted students does not vary significantly and practically does not depend on the type of school.

⁴ The analysis of the problem using other methods resulted in totally opposite conclusions that “education is more available for girls than for boys”. This contradiction may be explained by the “scale” difference of the research and its scope.

It turned out that in schools of the 1st type such factors like “choice” and “specialization” tell on the growth of the design type of self determination, which revealed gender disproportions (there are more girls using this type of self determination than boys with same mode of self determination specifically at this type of schools). The latter to be frank gives rise to our conclusion that different strategies of school produce different representation of the gender as a factor either limiting or not limiting the availability of higher education.