

Immigrants in Russian regions: access to higher education as a factor of adaptation and social stability

**Project team: G.S.Vitkovskaya (Project Director),
T.D.Ivanova, L.I.Ledeneva, E.V.Tyuryukanova**

The Institute of Economic Forecasting, Moscow

Problem

Russia ever since 1990 has remained one of the major recipient center in the world. There are many reasons for it:

- demographic and geopolitical contexts;
- a more stable economic status of Russia versus other countries of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and South-East Asia;
- demographic issues related to absolute indices of depopulation;
- “transparent” borders on CIS countries;
- the presence of large-scale ethnic diasporas in Russia.

All these reasons suggest that Russia will remain a recipient country for many years.

Immigrants by now constitute a large and ever increasing sector of the country’s population. This sector displays high heterogeneity of associated groups and the sector, may be generally termed as a problem related social group of population who have a restricted access to social services inclusive higher education. The access to higher education, however, is for migrants and their children an important element of integration into the Russian society.

Objectives

The objective of this investigation was to evaluate the level, to understand factors and restrictions in accessibility of higher education for the younger generation of immigrants including forced (involuntary) migrants residing in various parts of Russia (urban or rural settlers) and finally to suggest social policies focused on facilitating access to higher education for migrants as an important element of their adaptation and integration in Russia.

The following tasks were resolved within the scope of the investigation:

- terms and conditions of providing children of immigrants with secondary education, additional pre-entry university preparation training and entrance assistance were analyzed;
- ideal orientation models to get higher education for senior pupils-immigrants and their parents were studied;
- higher education institution entrance potential was estimated (the share of senior pupils willing to continue education was determined), behavioral educational strategies of the young migrants were studied;
- the “gap” among the ideal orientation model, the potential and implemented access to higher education was identified;

- main barriers (economic, social, territorial, cultural and psychological, institutional) disrupting the realization of orientation models with young migrants to get higher education were determined;
- guidelines for social policies (educational, migration, residential) aimed at facilitating access of migrants to higher education as an element of adaptation and integration in Russia were developed.

Methodology

Investigations of accessibility of higher education for migrants were performed in three regions including Moscow Region (Moscow and Moscow Region); Smolensk Region (Smolensk and Smolensk Region); Stavropol Region (including Stavropol). Moscow is a major center attracting migrants. Smolensk Region shows relatively undisturbed migration situation with neutral attitudes of the authorities towards migrants. Stavropol Region is the region with unfavorable migration environments and pronounced anti-migration policies.

Investigations were addressed to migrants who had come to Russia after 1990 and had stayed in the country for at least 3 years. Sampling included responds of forced re-settlers and refugees and economic migrants from CIS countries.

Sampling polls were responded by young migrates – graduates from the 11th forms of high schools and by their parents (the sampled total was 411 pupils and 330 parents) and also by young immigrates aged 15 – 20 who had finished secondary education.

Results

1. Education level is individual value on the one hand (enhance competitiveness in the labor markets, facilitate further education and training etc.); on the other hand education level is the function of the market request and depends on the demand for education in the market. This demand in the case of migrants stays very low. Present day economic system that Russia is trying to comply offers migrants mainly the niches of low skilled labor where higher education is not required. Therefore the bond “the higher the education, the better the status in the labor market” does not work in the case of migrants. The issue of “under demand” for higher education, objective economic situation and disrupted social relations do not allow to overcome the objective market factors which play the key role in the problem of accessibility of higher education for migrants.

2. 92% of migrants-high school graduates would prefer to get higher education and 94% of parents would like to give their children higher education. The explanation in many ways was reasoned by the fact that a large number of immigrants who had moved to Russia within the past decade are descendants from families of intelligentsia – intellectuals, former residents of capitals and major cities of ex-USSR Republics.

3. Poll sampling of senior pupils revealed that the university entrance potential was in case of migrants 27% lower than their respective ideal orientation models. 65% of the sampled reported the intent to apply for entrance examinations. Such indicators were much lower than the average values with Russian high school graduates. 21% of respondents would right after high school go to vocational or technical training schools to get high vocational education: this was in good correspondence with average returns for all Russian high school graduates. A certain part of respondents (an inconsiderable one) would probably be getting the higher education upon finishing the training in vocational and technical schools.

The gap between the ideal orientation model of getting higher education and potential intents to enter a university featured stability across the regions of the country like from 22% in Moscow Region to 28% in Smolensk City and Smolensk Region. Every fourth migrant –senior

pupil due to some reasons failed to implement respective orientation models. 23% of respondents reported that currently higher education for them was totally inaccessible in any form while 22% maintained that only evening classes were accessible to them (see Table below).

Table

Migrants' orientation models for getting higher education: ideal, potential, realized and gaps among them, in %

	Ideal orientation model for getting higher education	Potential of getting higher education (estimates of possibility to enter a university)	Realized orientation model for getting higher education	Gap between ideal orientation model and the potential	Gap between the potential and realized orientation model	Gap between ideal orientation model and realized model
Moscow Region	85	63	42	22	21	43
Smolensk Region	95	67	22	28	45	73
Stavropol Region	91	65	27	26	38	64
Total	92	65	33	27	32	59

4. Inadequate knowledge/difficulty of entrance examinations and financial problems were quoted likewise often among the reasons to abandon the intent to enter an institution of higher education. The impacts of the latter reason came in the shape of:

- unaffordable chargeable additional pre-entrance training;
- unaffordable chargeable higher education in private universities (if free education is not available);
- unaffordable alternative costs;
- unwillingness to stay dependent on parents.

Less important reasons included health problems, the desire to form a family, and a specific migrants-related issue of the absence of residence permits, citizenship, real prospect to obtain a respective status for a stable life in the future. The latter reason had an indirect impact on the realization of the ideal orientation model and defines economic and psychological status of migrants, the feelings of stability etc.

5. The majority of migrants revealed features of flexible strategies of behavior in the markets of educational services. The absolute majority of potential university entrants (86%) wanted to become full time students of state universities. 20% of entrants may afford free education only, 35% employed flexible tactics of attempting to enter universities on a free basis leaving paid departments as the last resort (if they fail at the entrance exams). 14% of migrants were ready to accept chargeable forms of education. Educational mobility of sampled migrants (orientation model to change residence for education purposes) was fairly low. 81% of potential entrants planned to enter institutions of higher education in their respective regions. 7% of entrants intended to enter Moscow universities; some 5% would go to other regions of the country.

6. Polling young migrants aged 15 – 25 allowed to evaluate realized orientation models for getting higher education. 19% of respondents had higher education some other 14% were

getting it at that time. The majority of young migrants was working. About 20% were getting training at other educational facilities and courses.

The life styles of migrants gained principal differences upon finishing of incomplete high school. 64% of pupils alone went to the 10th form of the 11-year high school. 13% of children continued training in vocational schools and colleges while 8% started working without any more educational training.

Higher education became available to half of senior pupils or to 33% of the sampled respondents. 23% of migrants got training at colleges after high school graduation, 13% started working and 10% were drafted into the Army.

The majority of migrants with higher education got trained at state institutions of higher education (89%) while many of them were full-time students (66%).

56% of those respondents who were trained at institutions of higher education studied on a paid basis. This is an evidence of difficulties related to free higher education for migrants on the one hand and willingness of migrants to invest into higher education of their children.

7. 63% of migrants who have failed to get higher education are still willing to obtain it. Those migrants who do not plan to obtain higher education in the future see it as inaccessible due to various obstacles (approx. 50% of respondents) or have no wish to upgrade their educational level (50%).