

Study of accessibility of higher education for various groups of population in the Republic of Buryatia

E.V.Petrova

Center for Study of Culture, Ulan-Ude

Problem

System of higher education fulfills various functions in society. One of them is ensuring a channel of ascending social mobility for representatives of all social and ethnic groups of population. In this context, system of higher education must provide for equal opportunities for members of society to get certain education and professional training.

Russian higher education reflects and projects socio-economic stratification and polarization of society. Nowadays, it is to a greater extent than in Soviet time a factor of social differentiation in society.

This study was devoted to answering to the question to what extent such differentiation is apparent in Buryatia, and what are the opportunities of getting higher education in the Republic.

Objectives

Major tasks of the study were:

- Determination of the effect of the factors of socio-economic and demographic differentiation between the senior pupils and students in the Republic of Buryatia on accessibility of higher education. The factors included were: family welfare, results at school, health, prestige of higher schools, sex, ethnic group, residence, parents' education and social status, availability of informal practices for enrolment (connections, relatives), degree of awareness of school-leavers on opportunities of getting higher education, basis of schooling in higher school.

Furthermore, the task was assigned to compare the features of the groups which gather people who:

- a) would like to get higher education in the Republic of Buryatia;
 - b) have opportunities for getting higher education;
 - c) plan to enter a university;
 - d) study at university.
- Identification of the effect of ethnic factor on accessibility of higher education, investigation of educational strategies of representatives of various ethnic groups of population in the Republic of Buryatia.
 - Study of the opinions and ideas of pupils and students, experts and parents on the problems of accessibility of higher education in the Republic of Buryatia and ways of solving them, on difference of quality of education, expert opinions on acceptable and unacceptable differences of accessibility of higher education, attitudes to introduction of educational services on a pay basis and their

compliance with education quality, readiness and capability of population to pay for higher education.

Methodology

The following methods were used as major methods of collection of empiric information:

- expert poll (individual formalized interviews, 50 persons);
- poll among full-time students (group questionnaires, 786 persons);
- senior pupil poll (group questionnaires, 792 persons);
- senior pupil parents poll (individual questionnaire at home, 656 persons).

To interrogate senior pupils, a multi-stage stratified sampling was designed as per the following indications: rural area or city-capital of the region (Ulan-Ude), settlement, school type, year of schooling.

Lists of home addresses of senior pupil parents were used for interrogation of parents.

To select experts, the features accounted for were: competence, field of professional occupation, ethnic group, capability to assess accessibility of higher education for various groups of population in the Republic of Buryatia.

Results

1. Orientation to higher education is rather high among various social and ethnic groups of population in the republic. 70% of senior pupils have intention to chose higher education after leaving secondary school. Higher education is considered as a resource demanded by environment and ensuring acceptable social status and wider opportunities of employment in future.

2. Growth of the number of students, opening of new professions in higher schools, as well as growth of the number of subsidiaries of higher schools from other cities in Buryatia testify to higher education accessibility growth in this region. It is true, however, that quality of rendered educational services does not always meet required standards.

3. Major factors influencing accessibility of higher education in Buryatia are:

Parents' education level and welfare.

Orientation to higher education is more pronounced among the senior pupils whose parents graduated from colleges or universities, employed at managerial positions, preferably occupied at intellectual or highly skilled manual jobs. Those categories are prevalent among students also. Higher schools in the republic count not more than 3% of students whose parents have incomplete secondary education .

Determination analysis has shown that there is close correlation between parents' education and choice of educational strategies by senior pupils. Combination of higher education for both parents or higher and special secondary education makes school-leavers select higher education at a rate of 90% in the first case; and 81% when the father has higher education, and the mother has special secondary education (graduated from college); and 72%, if vice versa, the father with special secondary education, and the mother with higher education; and 79%, when both parents with special secondary education.

Family's welfare.

Senior pupils' orientation to higher education slightly lowers down with lowering down of the family's welfare.

Among those who estimate their welfare as good or satisfactory about 70%-71% want to continue their education in higher school, and only 59.3% among those who estimate their welfare as bad.

Together with family's income per capita growth, evaluation of one's ability for higher education grows. 48.8% of senior pupils estimating that their welfare is good, 47.4% as satisfactory and only 3.3% as bad have the opportunity of learning at higher school.

Students preferably estimate their welfare as good or satisfactory, rarely as bad. 7.7% students only estimate their welfare as bad.

Family's residence.

In reality, inhabitants of rural areas have less opportunities of getting higher education and they are less competitive at entrance examination.

According to senior pupils' self-assessment, there are more opportunities of entering universities in Buryatia and outside for urban population (81.1%), and less opportunities for rural population (54.8%).

Among the students in higher schools of the Republic of Buryatia, inhabitants of urban area make a majority of 59.45%.

School results.

The worse school results are, the lesser number of senior pupils are oriented to higher education.

School results of senior pupils also influence their assessment of their abilities on the way to higher education. The lower they are, the less ambitious the school-leavers are. Objectively, quality of knowledge of rural school-leavers is lower than in the cities. But both groups estimate their level of knowledge nearly the same. 54.7% of inhabitants of Ulan-Ude and 56.1% of rural inhabitants believe their knowledge is good.

Health.

Overwhelming majority of the persons having the opportunity of learning in a higher school is youth with good health (68.1%). Satisfactory health is reported for 28.6% of such persons, and bad health for 3.3% only.

Healthy youth is prevalent among contemporary students in Buryatia (57.3%) also. 35.6% only believe their health is satisfactory, and 6.9% bad.

Connections of the parents, relatives and acquaintances.

Just 2.5% of the school-leavers are absolutely sure they can enter university without outside assistance. 10% have doubts of this, but still count on themselves. 30% of senior pupils rely on various informal practices (first of all connections of relatives).

39.1% of senior pupils would prepare for entrance examination on their own, 15.7% with the help of a coach. 32.8% intend to go to preparation courses, and about 5% would have recourse to their parents' help.

Among the pollees, 55.9% of students prepared themselves for entrance examination on their own, 13.7% with the help of a coach, 38.4% attended preparation courses, and about 4% learned together with their parents.

4. Inequality in self-assessment of the abilities is more pronounced than difference of intention to enter university.

5. Orientation to higher education with Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups is lower than with Buryates. Russians and representatives of other ethnic groups assess their opportunities of getting higher education lower than Buryates. Higher school entrants of

Russian nationality are respectively less active than representatives of the title nationality at entering universities. To a great extent, this is due to the fact that educational strategies of Russians, Buryates and representatives of other ethnic groups have been influenced by the peculiarities of socio-economic development of Buryatia in Soviet time and the policy of social equalization of ethnic groups, consequences of which still count until now.

6. Higher education is the least accessible for the following categories of population of Buryatia:

- children of unemployed and unskilled workers;
- rural inhabitants;
- children of low-income families;
- children whose parents have received incomplete secondary education;
- children with poor health.