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CHOICE OF EDUCATIONAL ROUTE BY 9th GRADE GRADUATES OF RUSSIAN SCHOOLS

Z. V. Proshkova (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Sociological Institute of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, ul. 7th Krasnoarmeyskaya, 25/14, St-Petersburg, Russia, eder57@yandex.ru

Abstract

 The article is concerned with the popular educational routes, as well as the motives for choosing an educational trajectory for 9th grade graduates. Personal and family reasons for leaving of ninth-graders from school to college were identified. In a sociological study, a questionnaire survey was conducted among students of the 9th grade of secondary schools in St. Petersburg. Students' responses were analyzed with the support of specialized national and foreign computer programs. As a result of the processing of sociological information, a list of arguments was obtained in favor of changing or maintaining the school educational route. Six educational tracks of 9th grade graduates have been identified. The most popular educational solutions are continuing to study in grades 10-11 and leaving for college after graduating from grade 9. The leading motives of ninth-graders for choosing an educational route are the desire to prepare for the successful passing of the Unified State Exam, getting a profession at the college on a budgetary basis, refusing to take final exams in the grade 11, family plans and recommendations, drive for material security and a quick start to a career, improving quality of school educational capital. The results obtained indicate the need to increase the variety of educational routes for students, to support online schools and a home teaching system for high school students.

1. Introduction

Graduating students of 9th grades of secondary schools in Russia face the question of whether to continue their education in grades 10-11 or to leave the educational institution. Personal motives for changing the educational route combine with family considerations (Abramova et al., 2015). Students and their parents jointly decide whether the student needs to prepare for the Unified State Exam and enter the university or it is better to go to college after grade 9.

There are many forks in the student's educational path. For example, graduating from primary school and choosing a gymnasium or lyceum for further education (Ivaniushina & Williams, 2019). At this point, some families decide to transfer the child to a top-rated school, being one of the top 500 best schools in Russia (Proshkova, 2018). Changing the educational route after grade 9 is widespread. According to statistics, more than half of Russian ninth-graders leave school (Bondarenko et al., 2020). Those remaining in grades 10-11 are also looking for the most effective way of completing the final two-year segment of the school educational path. The community offers students various opportunities, including home schooling and online schools (Janelli, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

The fundamental scientific problem, which this study is directed to, is the effectiveness of schools as a factor in the creation and accumulation of educational, cultural, and social capital of a person. The school has always been considered the most important agent for the educational socialization of youth (Mannheim & Stewart, 1962). The influence of the school was studied in sociology, psychology, cultural studies, pedagogy, and interdisciplinary discourse. Family and school are the most significant social institutions at the initial stage of life, interacting with each other, forming cognitive skills and character of a person (Klyachko et al., 2019). The peculiarity of the problem statement is in the use of educational routes by 9th grade graduates choosing between different types of continuing school education and specialized secondary education.

Educational topic is one of the most popular in foreign and domestic sociological science. Studies of the secondary school graduates' prospects (Konstantinovskiy, 2019), the prestige of professions among schoolchildren are regularly conducted (Bessudnov & Malik, 2016), new theoretical approaches are proposed (Bormann & John, 2014). Primary attention is paid to school and higher education (Cherednichenko, 2020). The holistic educational path of a person is on the periphery of sociological interest (Avraamova & Loginov, 2016). The relevance of the study consists in turning to thoughtful educational and professional strategies for high school students. This is especially important in the context of a quick change of the previously typical route "graduating from grade 11 and entering university" to "leaving after grade 9 at a secondary specialized educational institution" (Alexandrov et al., 2015, p. 73). The results of the project can be used to develop the basics of social policy, helping schools and the parent community.

3.   Research Questions

The following questions are raised in the project: planning and implementation of the educational route for schoolchildren, options for changing the educational path after graduating from grade 9, family and personal motives for choosing the educational route, the conversion of educational capital into professional assets in the assessment of ninth-graders and their families. An additional objective of the study is the development of empirical methods relevant to studying the problems of education and the family. Particular attention is paid to digital technologies for the collection and analysis of sociological information.

3.1. What educational routes do ninth-graders choose?

One of the key areas of analysis was the identification of the current set of educational route options for 9th grade graduates. It was important to establish how many students are planning to receive specialized secondary education, as well as to find out how many respondents will remain in the school system by choosing one or another educational format.

3.2. Why is it decided to change the school route?

In frames of this issue, personal reasons for changing the educational route after the end of grade 9 are identified. The family motives for choosing an educational trajectory are examined in detail. The long-term professional plans of 9th grade graduates are studied.

4.   Purpose of the Study

It is assumed that the answers to the research questions issued will help to support optimal educational routes for 9th grade graduates and their families, the effective accumulation of educational and social capital by students of Russian schools, as well as the conversion of educational capital into a professional career.

5.   Research Methods

To collect information, a questionnaire for students in grades 9 was used. The sample included 479 students from educational institutions with in-depth study of a number of subjects, as well as non-core schools of St. Petersburg. 20 respondents studied at the city's top-rated gymnasium, which is included in the first 25 schools from the top "500 best schools of Russia". 450 questionnaires were selected for analysis.

The survey was conducted in February-April 2020, so 238 questionnaires were distributed through social networks, since the regime of self-isolation began. The most difficult task in the field phase was to reach an agreement with the school directorate to conduct a survey - locally and remotely.

At the moment, answers to questions about the plans of the respondents for the educational and professional future, the reasons for choosing the educational route after the end of grade 9 are analyzed.

The questionnaire used open, closed and half-closed questions. They were processed using computer programs SPSS and Discant. The domestic development Discant (dialogue system for classifying and

analyzing texts) is especially convenient for studying the answers to open questions in the questionnaire (Kanevsky & Saganenko, 1997).

5.1. Choosing a school route: grades 10-11 or college

An analysis of the answers to the half-closed questionnaire of the questionnaire about plans showed that 9th grade graduates either go to college, or stay in grades 10-11, or take a break from school. In the second case, there are several decisions on how to spend the last years at school. It was managed to identify six educational routes of ninth-graders (Table 01).

Table 01. Educational routes of 9th grade graduates

No.	Educational routes	Respondents, number	Respondents, %
1	Go to college after graduating from grade 9	211	47
2	Stay in the same school in grades 10-11	139	31
3	Go to another school	47	10
4	Go to home schooling	27	6
5	Go to online school	21	5
6	Take a break from school	5	1
	TOTAL:	450	100

The sixth route - to take a break from school - was not included in the list of ready-made answers to the half-closed questionnaire. Ninth-graders independently indicated this route in the answer option "Other". It was not clear if that meant the beginning of professional activity after the end of grade 9 or free time. Methodological difficulties arose with the analysis of the alternative "Go to another school" chosen by the respondents. Judging by the answers to further open questions, ninth-graders from top-rated schools either want to go to an equally strong gymnasium with a different profile, or to a regular school. In the second case, schoolchildren and their parents choose a lighter curriculum in grades 10-11 to focus on preparing for the Unified State Exam. Another reason for moving to another school is low academic performance and the refusal of the directorate to leave the child in high school. This applies to both ninth-graders of non-core schools and students from top-rated gymnasiums and lyceums.

5.2. Motives for choosing an educational route after the end of grade 9

The reasons for choosing an educational trajectory by 9th grade graduates were analyzed using open questionnaire questions. The answers received were divided into semantic segments and classified using Discant computer program (Geger, 2010). The classification resulted in a list of justifications proposed by students for choosing an educational route:

Table 02. Rating of motives for choosing an educational route

No.	Groups	Typical judgments (elements)	Judgments, number	Judgments, %
1	Preparation to enter university	to enter a university, get a certificate for a university, pass an exam, a budget place in a university	675	21
2	Getting a profession	to start a career as soon as possible, to master a profession	547	17

3	Get college education for free	no money for the university, to save on education, I will not manage to qualify for free tuition in the university	515	16
4	Do not pass the Unified State Exam	I can't cope with exams, I don't want to take an exam, I will get a low score	450	14
5	Suggestion of family	the parents insisted, on the advice of the family, brother suggested	386	12
6	Earnings	earnings, material independence, money	354	11
7	Improve the quality of school education	to study in a specialized school, strong teachers, smart classmates	290	9
	TOTAL:		3217	100

Table 02 shows the first seven positions from the list of the most popular judgments about the reasons for choosing a new educational trajectory or maintaining the same one. The analysis of motives was carried out on the basis of computer processing of 3217 received individual statements of respondents.

6. Findings

The most popular educational route for 9th grade graduates in Table 01 is to enter a college. 47% of the ninth-graders surveyed want to leave school to receive specialized secondary education. This figure is less than the average for Russia, as students of St. Petersburg were interviewed. In the city, there are more persons wishing to enter a university (Bondarenko et al., 2020). 53% of ninth-graders are planning to stay in the school system, choosing different learning options in grades 10-11. Most students are going to continue their studies at their own school. 10% of 9th grade graduates will transfer to another school. 11% of respondents want to change traditional education to home schooling or online school. Five people from the sample said they would take a break from their studies.

Among the motives for choosing an educational route after the end of grade 9 in Table 02, preparations for passing the Unified State Exam and admission to university are leading (21% of respondents). Such students stay in grades 10-11. In 2nd and 3rd places there is a desire to learn a profession in college, getting a free secondary specialized education. In 4th place there is the refusal to pass the Unified State Exam with the corresponding admission to college. The fifth position among the factors of choosing the educational route is occupied by the parents' advice on either leaving school or continuing to study in grades 10-11. The next group of answers indicates the desire of ninth-graders to start earning. Such answers were given by students planning to go to college.

In last place, the motives for changing the educational path turned out to be the desire of students to improve the quality of school educational capital. This refers to entering top-rated schools in St. Petersburg. This plan is associated with the transition in grades 10-11 to a specialized gymnasium with strong teachers and successful classmates.

7.   Conclusion

The study revealed six relevant educational routes for 9th grade graduates. The most popular educational solutions are continuing to study in grades 10-11 and leaving for college after the end of grade 9. The motives for choosing an educational route for 9th grade graduates are established. This is the desire to prepare for the Unified State Exam to enter a university, getting a profession at a college on a budgetary basis, refusing to take final exams in the 11th grade, family plans, striving for material independence, improving the quality of school educational capital. Practical recommendations of the project are support for a variety of educational routes for students, development of online schools and assistance to the home education system for high school students. An empirical prospect for studying the educational routes of schoolchildren is a nationwide survey of 9th grade graduates.

Acknowledgments

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