

# Professional choice and preferences of university graduates in the labor market in Kazakhstan

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**Abstract**—The article presents some results of sociological research (2012) that examines the issue of professional choice and formation of competitive young professionals in today's market conditions. Identification of the influence of socio-economic conditions on the formation and development of the competitiveness of young professionals is relevant in both the theoretical and practical aspects. First, the results complement the scientific data on factors of formation and manifestation of competitiveness of specialists in professional labor market. Second, they contribute to building a more reasonable prognosis of the competitiveness of young professionals. Third, the results of the study can be used to improve the competitiveness of specialists and optimize the use of their labor potential. The article also presents the results of other research conducted by the authors and other researchers.

**Keywords**—choice, competitiveness, employment, graduates, higher education, profession

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, in Kazakhstan's education system, along with noticeable quantitative changes important qualitative ones occurred - institutional changes. Not only external environment for the education system has changed, but also modern labor market is undergoing significant change: requirements for the professional training of young specialists are revised, "new conditions" dictated by organizations and production who are direct consumers of trained specialists. Despite this, obtaining of professional education is not a guarantee against unemployment: the trend of incoherence between supply and demand in the labor market continues to remain, oversupply of graduates of certain specialties (economist, lawyer, manager, etc.) and a reduction in training in a number of professions of material production. All this suggests that the problem of employment of young professionals in the near term will remain relevant on a national scale.

## II. CAREER SUCCESS AND COMPETITIVENESS

This article presents the results of the sociological research conducted in 2012 in Kazakhstan in the following regions: Almaty, Astana, Aktobe region, Karaganda region, the South-Kazakhstan region, Pavlodar region, East Kazakhstan region Semipalatinsk region. During the survey more than 1,500 students in 12 universities of the country were questioned.

During the preparation of the research a multistage sampling quota was used, where as essential criteria socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, nationality) and the regional location of the university were used. As additional criteria a character of ownership of university was taken into account. It is important to point out that 41.5% of Kazakh students indicate that the main condition for future professional success and career growth - is a "high qualification, work experience and high professional knowledge."

However, among the leading positions there are other factors, quite different in their nature:

- Kazakh language - 35.8%
- Influential friends and acquaintances - 32.9%
- Knowledge of foreign languages, getting an education abroad - 26.8%
- Good upbringing (must be a cultured person, respect your elders, etc.) - 25.3%
- The diploma of a prestigious, well-known national institution - 20.7%.

Taking into account the fact that the social and professional values and the values of professional service to their work is considered important for the majority of the young people interviewed, it is an interesting position, which was indicated by 32.9% - "ties, influential friends and acquaintances". Fully expected were the answers to the positions - "good upbringing, culture, and showing respect for elders" - 25.3% "to be a patriot of own country" - 16.3%, and "to be a citizen of Kazakhstan" - 13.1%, by noting these positions Kazakhstani students proved the correctness in the formation and development of their civil identification.

In all types of educational institutions more than 50% of young people have chosen a profession, regarding it as an interesting and prestigious. Respondents were asked a separate question about the meaning and role of higher education in forming of competitiveness of a graduate: 74.6% said it is extremely important and 18.9% - important. A net positive response rate is 93.5%. For comparison can be used the results

of sociological research conducted in 2009 by the Association of Sociologists of Kazakhstan.

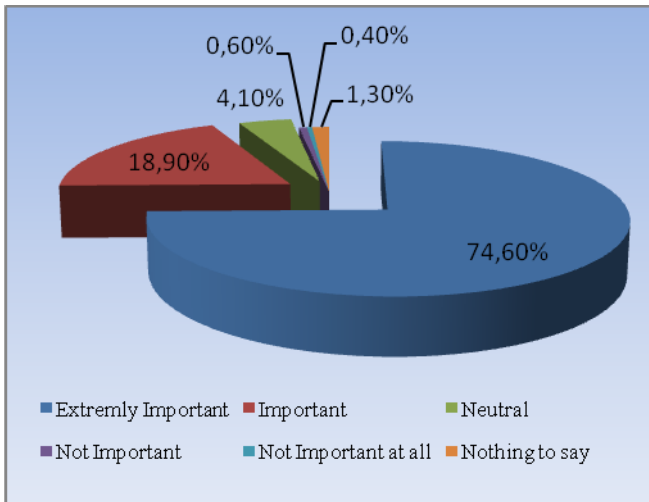


Figure 1. "The role of higher education in formation of competitiveness of graduate"

The research was conducted among students of Almaty (sample size - 1,000 respondents), according to it a total of 84.1% of Almaty students believe it is important to get a higher education, including majority - 57.7% very important [1].

### III. CHOICE OF PROFESSION AND PURPOSE OF STUDYING IN UNIVERSITY.

Choice of future profession is one of the most important moments in one's professional life. Certainly, features of professional orientation of schoolchildren are an issue that requires special consideration. However, the definition of common objectives of obtaining higher education and key selection criteria for future specialization also makes it possible to characterize the priority directions of development of modern education.

Table I shows the results of ranking the answers to the question - "what is the purpose of your study at the university?". Main purpose of studying in higher educational institutions for the majority of Kazakh students (66.2%) - is acquisition of knowledge and professional skills (Table I). It may also be noted that the results and conclusions are supported by data presented above on the factors influencing the life success and the overall importance of higher education.

TABLE I - RANKING OF THE MAIN GOALS OF EDUCATION IN HIGH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (IN% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS).

№	Response options	%
	Acquire knowledge and professional skills	66,2%
2	Get a prestigious diploma that provides ample opportunities for social mobility	24,3%
	Get a document on higher education	6,7%
	Nothing to say	1,3%
	Other	1,3%
	Total	100%

Among the factors influencing the choice of profession, interviewed students expressed a preference for several ones, including the most important - *high income* - 48.9%.

Important criteria are also *the prestige of the future spheres of professional activity* - 28.3%, and *social status* - 24.6% (See Fig. 2).

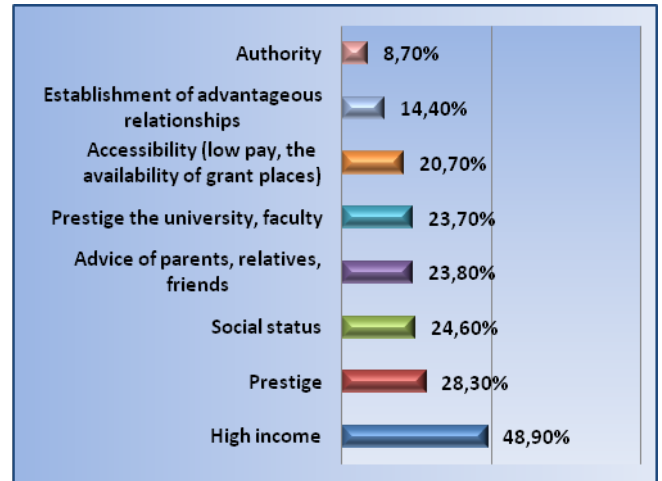


Figure 2. "The ranking of factors influencing the choice of profession"

The choice of profession of ¼ of the students was influenced by the following factors:

- The prestige of the university, the faculty - 23.7%
- Advice of parents, relatives, friends - 23.8%
- Availability (low price, the availability of grant places) - 20.7%

It can be underlined that such factors as prestige, ranking of the university remain the most important factors in the professional orientation of future students.

Obtained results confirm the fact that for majority of students the most important factor in professional self-determination was not only the choice of profession but also of the higher education institution.

A holistic view of the research issue is possible by determining the correlations between factors of choosing a future profession and features of profession itself or research area. Based on the overall data, obtained from treatment of empirical material, it became apparent that factors influencing the choice of profession and university differ according to the main groups of professions.

The traditional distinction humanitarian, science and technology education is reflected in the evaluation of the prestige of the profession and potentially acquired with it social status.

High income is in general - the main criteria influencing the choice of university. However, there are some differences. In response of the future "humanitarians" it came 24% lower than among those who have chosen an engineering field. Thus, high income is a leading priority for students in the field of law -

58.3%, health care - 58.1%, especially in engineering and technical skills - 66.7%.

The most prestigious future sphere of professional activity believe to have students of juridical professions and international relations - 50%, this is also applies to the position of "authority" - 33%. According to the position "social status" the largest frequency result is character for healthcare workers - 46.2%.

TABLE II. RANKING OF FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF PROFESSION BY MAIN GROUPS OF PROFESSIONS (IN% OF RESPONDENTS BY FIELD OF STUDY).

№	Response options	Social sciences and humanities	Natural sciences	Juridical professions and international relations	Economic profession	Technical and Engineering professions	Health care	Information Systems and Computer Engineering
1	High income	42,1 %	43,4 %	58,3 %	50,4 %	66,7 %	58,1 %	53,8 %
2	Prestige	28,9 %	23,6 %	50,0 %	30,6 %	33,3 %	45,2 %	20,6 %
3	Social status	29,8 %	15,9 %	16,6 %	26,3 %	19,0 %	46,2 %	18,6 %
4	Establishment of advantageous relationships	15,8 %	13,5 %	25,0 %	13,8 %	4,7 %	21,5 %	11,0 %
5	Authority	7,9 %	2,4 %	33,3 %	13,8 %	23,8 %	13,9 %	6,9 %
6	Accessibility (low pay, the availability of grant places)	22,8 %	30,4 %	0%	20,4 %	9,5 %	11,8 %	13,8 %
7	Prestige the university, faculty	22,8 %	34,7 %	33,3 %	15,3 %	9,5 %	21,5 %	17,2 %
8	Advice of parents, relatives, friends	21,9 %	14,9 %	25,0 %	26,3 %	19,0 %	20,4 %	37,9 %
9	Example of relatives, friends, acquaintances	3,5 %	5,3 %	16,6 %	7,3 %	4,7 %	7,5 %	7,6 %
10	Occasion	14,0 %	14,9 %	0%	6,6 %	0%	3,2 %	4,8 %

Low pay, availability of grant places played a role in choosing a profession for 30.4% of students in the natural sciences. Finally, may be noted that 37.9% of students of

specialties "Information Technology and Computer Science" believe that their career choices are more influenced by external factors - such as the advice of parents, acquaintances and friends.

#### IV. EMPLOYMENT: PROSPECTS AND FEARS OF FUTURE PROFESSIONALS.

"Education - Employment - Work in specialty" are personal and social processes, the stages of which are interrelated and interdependent. Lack of a system of guaranteed distribution of graduates determines the character of social well-being of graduate students.

Let us give some comparative data to achieve the integrity of perception of the analyzed issue. According to a survey of public opinion among students of al-Farabi Kazakh National University conducted in late 2011 - early 2012 for 47.2% the most important social issue is the question about the prospects of future employment in specialty [2].

*Whether you work in the specialty?* It is possible to cite as an example the respondents' answers in the various regions of Kazakhstan on this issue, which was as follows: 60.6% of respondents claim to have worked in the specialty, and 36.6% have given negative answer to the question. As have shown the results, the vast majority of respondents indicated that in recent years the opportunity to work in specialty have been significantly reduced, in other words, people are forced to look for a new job, sometimes to change professions.

The necessity to change job, to search an additional sources of income are in most cases initiated by external circumstances, which primarily applies to growth of crisis trends in the world and the Kazakh economy. According to the analysis of Kazakhstan's media, the consequences are expressed in the delay of payment of wages, in its reduction, also workers are sent on forced indefinite leave because of standstill of factories and finally, dismissal and job loss [3].

While choosing the profession future professionals, somehow face the problem of employment. Attitude of students that is present in public opinion on this issue largely characterizes the overall socio-psychological well-being of students. It should be stated that today students are not familiar with the professional high school orientation and almost to the last year of studies have no idea what specific profession they acquire in high educational institution. Particularly there is a high percentage of students hardly oriented in the fact what they will become as professionals in Humanities departments (philosophy, cultural studies, religious studies).

In the questionnaire was formulated a number of successive questions about the nature of graduate employment and the factors affecting it: *Do you plan to work in the specialty after graduation? In what sphere do you plan to work? What do you think is necessary in order to get a job?*

The main results obtained from the analysis of empirical data on the research question can be considered "Do you plan to work in the specialty after graduation?"

As seen in Table III 49.8% of respondents are firmly convinced that "will work in the specialty", while another 34.2% chose the answer "more likely." Overall positive response is 84%. Have some doubts about their wish and possibility to work in accordance with their education - 10.6%.

To compare with the results of a research conducted by ASK in 2010, according to which, "the majority of the respondents intend to work in the specialty area in which they are getting a degree". In total, nearly 81% respondents plan to work in the specialty after graduation. While the share of respondents that absolutely sure double the number of students that wish to work in the specialty, but with some degree of doubt. Number of respondents noted "yes" to the question whether they will work in specialty have reached almost 53%, "more likely" - 28%. Number of respondents noting "no" or "probably not" is 11.7%. The share of respondents that have nothing to say reached 7.5% "[1].

TABLE III. DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION "AFTER GRADUATION, DO YOU PLAN TO WORK IN THE SPECIALTY?" (IN% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS).

Response options	%
Yes	49,8%
More likely	34,2%
Probably not	7,2%
No	3,4%
Nothing to say	5,4%

TABLE IV. DISTRIBUTION OF ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION "IN WHAT AREA DO YOU PLAN TO WORK?" (IN% OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS).

№	Response options	%
1	Public service, government	27,2%
2	Ministry of Interior, National Security Committee, the armed forces and etc.	9,9%
3	Industrial production (plant, factory)	12,9%
4	Medicine, education, science, culture	20,0%
5	Trading	3,3%
6	Transport, communications	2,4%
7	Services sector	8,2%
8	Construction	2,4%
9	The mining industry	3,0%
10	The energy industry	1,9%
11	Financial sector (banks, insurance, etc.)	14,0%
12	Agriculture	0,8%
13	Other	2,1%
14	Nothing to say	7,7%

Despite the variety of specialties graduates of universities of Kazakhstan who took part in study are going to work in four main areas:

- 27.2% - Public service, public administration;
- 20.0% - Health, Education, Science and Culture;
- 14.0% - Financial services (banking, insurance, etc.);
- 12.9% - industrial production.

May also be noted that in the answer position "other" the most common answer is "to start own business."

64.6% of the students to the question "What do you think is necessary in order to get a job," noted the option - "a higher education."

## V. CONCLUSION.

Thus, the modern economy in the scientific literature is called "knowledge economy." It is important that the specialists in the field of sociology of education note as ever-present tendency some lag of educational programs from the production, scientific and technical innovation.

In these conditions, there is an aspiration to bring together the educational and industrial sectors; the convergence is possible only through a considerable intensification of educational programs. In other words, instead of "education for life" model have come new educational paradigms which may be called "lifelong learning".

Concerning problems of sociology of work, this quality of economic development is extremely important, as it suggests in the economy as a whole and in its certain sectors the need for constant self-education, professional development, and sometimes the retraining of specialists. These processes raise problems of labor mobility, demand and competitiveness of specialists in the labor market.

Summarizing the data obtained it may be noted that among the Kazakh youth there is a fairly high level of understanding of the need of obtaining higher education, based on an awareness of the importance of professional knowledge for achieving future professional success and career growth.

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