

WORKERS' RESOURCES AND TRAJECTORIES

DOI: 10.15838/sa.2023.3.39.9

UDC 316.477 | LBC 60.56

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EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES AS A BASIS FOR THE TYPOLOGY OF RUSSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS



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The experience of Russian and foreign studies testifies to the perspective and relevance of analyzing students' educational trajectories as part of their life world from the point of view of the constructivist paradigm. Developing the ideas of Zh.T. Toshchenko's constructivist concept, the authors of the article propose to consider studies at university as a stage of educational trajectory, which is part of the student's life path. Taking into account the provisions of G.G. Tatarova's typological analysis we attempt to identify modal types of students with educational trajectory inherent in each of these types. This typology is based on temporal and value dimensions/properties of the student's life world and their dynamics in the process of movement along an individual educational trajectory within the boundaries of the university institutional space. The empirical basis for approbation of the methodology was the data of two stages of the monitoring research on "Educational path of UTMN student in the conditions of individual educational trajectories" (2022–2023). The methods of factor and cluster analysis were consistently used to identify modal types of students. Factor analysis was built within the boundaries of

temporal logic on the basis of three components (groups of factors): 1) significance of past events; 2) value of current learning practices; 3) anticipation of the future. The groups of factors were considered as independent empirical indicators and were used as typological features for further differentiation of respondents into clusters. The results of data processing revealed four modal types of students (“conformists”, “excellent students”, “activists” and “nihilists”), each of which corresponds to its own educational trajectory. The identified modal types of students have an important applied value for the effective management of the space of a modern Russian university. The obtained empirical results provide an opportunity to make managerial decisions on the development of educational trajectories desirable for the university and the labor market (“excellent students” and “activists”) and correction of the undesirable ones (“conformists” and “nihilists”), as well as the possibility of further monitoring measurements.

Life world, educational trajectory, modal types of students, factor analysis, cluster analysis, educational monitoring.

Introduction

Many researchers emphasize that it is student youth who are the “locomotive” of social change, representing one of the most “socially active and mobile population groups” (Tishkov et al., 2017, p. 87). At the same time, the mainstream of modern works concerning the problems of student youth is the consideration of educational trajectories in higher education as one of the possible manifestations of the multidimensional and interdisciplinary concept of “life course”, which also includes “labor, family and other life trajectories” (Yadova, 2022, p. 83). In foreign literature, life course studies is a multidisciplinary research program used in sociology and other disciplines of humanitarian and natural science profile (Bynner, 2016). To date, at least three approaches to the analysis of life course (or, in other words, life trajectories) have emerged depending on what lies at the basis of the analysis: 1) values and norms; 2) the nature of the influence of social institutions and, accordingly, the institutional conditions of human activity; 3) the content and form of manifestation of the individual’s subjectivity. In our opinion, the analysis of values, norms and the established institutional environment is important because social institutions undoubtedly influence the life course, especially when it comes to young people (Gavrilyuk, 2018). For example, the obvious differences between the European and Asian model of higher education

(Marambe, Vermunt, Boshuizen, 2012) cannot but influence the construction of a student’s individual educational trajectory. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the most promising is the approach that gives importance to individual subjectivity, allowing us to analyze the life trajectories of modern university students from a constructivist perspective. This approach to the study of educational trajectories originates from the monograph by P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron on the reproduction of the class structure of society through the educational system (Bourdieu, Passeron, 2007). Modern supporters of constructivism focus, as a rule, on the study of people’s educational experience in the context of the life course, their everyday practices within the boundaries of educational institutions and beyond them, individual logic of interpreting life events (Wong, Chiu, 2019). Education is often interpreted as one of the points of transition into adulthood alongside significant events within other basic life trajectories, family, professional and career ones (Jackson, Berkowitz, 2005). Finally, there are already emerging studies devoted to analyzing the adaptation of university students to different educational environments (Tkachenko, 2018), including specifically to learning through the system of individual educational trajectories (Gurinovich, 2016; Gavrilyuk, Pogodaeva, 2023), students’ planning of their educational trajectories (Endres et al, 2021), the role of teachers, who form and design curricula,

in motivating students' learning activities (Kickert et al., 2022), and the problems of adaptation of young university graduates in the labor market (Krekhovets, Shpilev, 2020).

Different approaches to the typology of university students

A rather popular direction of analysis is attempts to typologize university and vocational school students into different target groups (Ogorodnikov, 2009; Murzina, 2010; Demkina, 2011; Gorbunova, 2015). Social psychologists mainly emphasize on singling out the groups of students with different types of thinking. Thus, T.I. Kasyanova, A.V. Maltsev and S.A. Grebnev, with the help of the professional personality test developed by the scientist from the USA J. Holland, identify two main types of students: 1) intellectual – realistic type; 2) artistic – social type (Kasyanova et al., 2022). In turn, E.V. Shitikova describes four groups of students according to the level of development of their scientific potential depending on the dominant type of thinking: 1) adaptive, 2) reproductive, 3) heuristic, 4) creative (Shitikova, 2014).

In contrast to social psychologists, within the framework of sociological research, the grounds for typologization are somewhat different. We can agree with A.Y. Ogorodnikov that sociologists are helped by typologization to reveal “the nature, problems of social activity of young people, peculiarities and barriers of human participation in the construction of social reality and transformation of social processes and ways of interaction” (Ogorodnikov, 2009, p. 93). Moreover, the basis for typology is quite different aspects of students' learning activities, but mainly motivation to study and future employment, as well as educational trajectories implemented in the space of higher education institutions (Fursov, 2006; Terentyev, 2016; Ambarova, Zborovskiy, 2021).

Thus, N.P. Fetiskin, M.J. Gusmanov in the course of analyzing students' learning activity identify four predominant types: 1) “creatively oriented or gifted”; 2) “inclined to deep learning of the studied disciplines – excellent students”; 3) “ordinary” students, latently capable, with orientation to formal fulfilment of academic

requirements; 4) “problematic” (debtors) (Fetiskin, Gusmanov, 2017, p. 60).

E.V. Grunt, A.P. Zayko carried out a typological analysis of vocational school students and named three types of students' social activity: 1) “supernormative activists” (or “socially active”); 2) “normative activists”, 3) “potential activists” (Grunt, Zayko, 2016).

O.A. Mineeva and M.P. Prokhorova give a description of the types of strategies for entering the labor market depending on the intensity of tracking the situation in the labor market, the breadth of the student's interests, and their activity in choosing employment options: 1) active-target strategy; 2) active-not-target strategy; 3) passive-target strategy (Mineeva, Prokhorova, 2018).

Attempts are made to identify a new type of freelance student, for whom secondary employment is paid work performed in the mode of free employment and adapted to the curriculum and educational process (Kharchenko, Pulkina, 2015).

K.V. Rochev, relying on the methodology of V.I. Gerchikov, identifies several types of student motivation, proving their different influence on the average academic grade: “academic performance on average has a direct dependence on the professional type of motivation and an inverse dependence on the avoidance type” (Rochev, 2014, p. 118), as well as concluding that “the influence of (only) the instrumental component of motivation increases as graduation approaches” (Rochev, 2014, p. 118). This is confirmed by the results of other studies showing the change of students' learning attitudes as they grow up and move along the educational trajectory, when students “have to quite consciously reformat themselves to the need to avoid failure and possible problems associated with retakes and expulsion from the university in case of “failure” of the exams” (Gigin, Grishchenko, 2021, p. 115).

Thus, the accumulated research experience allows us to say, firstly, about the prospectivity of research on students' educational trajectories from the perspective of the constructivist paradigm, and secondly, about the need to continue the search for the basis of typology,

including not individual aspects of the student's educational activity, but the totality of all the value properties of his/her life world, taking into account the temporal characteristics that are objectively present and affect the student during the period of study in higher education.

Methodology, methods and design of the empirical study

At present, Tyumen State University (hereinafter, TyumSU) is testing the model of personalized education of students on individual educational trajectories (hereinafter, IET). In the new conditions of educational process organization there is a need for specialized continuous monitoring of students' educational trajectories. In response to this need, in 2022, a decision was made to establish the "Center for Educational Analytics" at TyumSU (headed by T.V. Gavriluk), whose strategic objectives include the development of methodology and monitoring research (Bocharov, Gavriluk, 2023).

To analyze the monitoring indicators, a methodology of "sociology of life" based on the constructivist concept of Zh.T. Toshchenko was developed (Toshchenko, 2016). The central concept of this concept is "life world", which characterizes the sphere of objectively conditioned and subjectively significant experience of people, as well as the system of their communications and forms of social interaction regulated by means of value and symbolic mediators. The lifeworld is also a space of life activity, in which a person can act as a creator, as a transformer of this space, regardless of the vector of transformations and their emotional evaluation by others. At the same time, the temporal dimension is significant for the analysis of the life world in the concept of Zh.T. Toshchenko, which allows us to comprehensively analyze: 1) the significance of past events; 2) the value of currently available objectively embodied practices; 3) the goal-setting of subjects regarding future plans, goals and personal trajectories of life.

Applying this methodology, we consider university studies as a stage of the educational trajectory, which is a part of the student's entire

life path. Taking into account the provisions of G.G. Tatarova's typological analysis (Tatarova et al., 2023), we have developed an approach to the identification of modal types of students with educational trajectory inherent in each of these types. The typology is based on temporal and value dimensions/properties of the student's life world and their dynamics in the process of movement along an individual educational trajectory within the boundaries of the institutional space of higher education institution.

The empirical basis for the article is the data of two stages of the monitoring research on "Educational path of TyumSU student in the conditions of individual educational trajectories". A comparative analysis of the panel mass survey of the first-year (December 2022) and the fourth-year undergraduate students of TyumSU (April 2023) is presented. The object of the study is undergraduate students of TyumSU. The sample is purposive, representative by gender and group of specialties (social, humanities, natural sciences, technical).

1000 study participants were the first-year students, including 360 (36%) students of natural science specialties and 640 (64%) students of social and humanities specialties, which corresponds to the structure of the general population of first-year students having entered TyumSU in 2022 (3760 people). Out of 1000 people, 400 (40%) are male and 600 (60%) are female.

The number of study participants among the fourth (final) year students amounted to 856 people, including students of natural science specialties – 264 people (30.8%), social and humanitarian specialties – 592 people (69.2%), which corresponds to the structure of the general population of final year students studying at TyumSU in 2023 (1356 people). Out of 856 people, 244 (28.5%) are male and 612 (71.5%) are female. The data collection was done from February to April 2023.

In order to collect data at both stages of the project, a questionnaire survey of students was conducted in monitoring mode (i.e., keeping the main questions and blocks of the questionnaire).

Table. Main mathematical criteria of validity of the performed factor solutions for the arrays of I and IV-year students of TyumSU (method of principal components, factor rotation by Varimax method with Kaiser normalization)

Groups of factors of student's life world	Coverage of total variance of initial variables, %		Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy measure (KMO)		Bartlett's sphericity criterion (Sig)	
	I year	IV year	I year	IV year	I year	IV year
1. School experience	70.2	72.1	0.817	0.855	0.0	
2. Formed competencies*	64.1	64.2	0.835	0.857	0.0	
3. Importance of IET learning principles	62.9	70.9	0.885	0.931	0.0	
4. University experience**	72.6	64.1	0.815	0.799	0.0	
5. Professional perspectives	67.1	70.0	0.760	0.787	0.0	

* For first-year students: "readiness to university studies (factors of basic competencies)".
 ** For first-year students: "expectations from university studies".
 Source: results of the author's research.

The survey of students was conducted in the classroom on the basis of "Anketolog" program (with preliminary instruction of respondents by the interviewer).

To identify modal types of students, we consistently used the methods of factor and cluster analysis (analysis was carried out in the IBM SPSS Statistics program). The combination of these methods is currently successfully used in sociological research to obtain social types of respondents (Popov, 2013), including those used by us in our earlier studies of young people of the new working class (Bocharov, Gavriljuk, 2021).

Factor analysis was built within the boundaries of temporal logic (with necessary adjustments for first-year and graduate students) based on the following components (groups of factors):

1) the significance of past events: "factors of school experience";

2) the value of current educational practices: "factors of readiness to study in higher education (for final year students "factors of competence formation") and "factors of importance of IET learning principles";

3) anticipation of the future – plans, goals, possible personal trajectories of life: "factors of expectations from studying at university" (for final-year students "factors of experience of studying at university" and they belong to the group of actual educational practices) and "factors of professional prospects".

We consider these groups of factors as independent empirical indicators and use them as typological features for further differentiation of respondents into clusters (*Table*).

Within the framework of cluster analysis, respondents were classified into groups based on significant characteristics (factors) using the K-means method as the most optimal method for a large number of analyzed objects (observations). This method involves dividing the entire set of objects into a number of clusters specified by the researcher so that the average values for the clusters for each variable are maximally different. Empirically, we chose four-cluster solutions as the most reasonable for both data sets (I and IV years). The validity of their choice in both cases was confirmed by F-statistics (Fisher's statistic) and the value of statistical significance (having values less than 0.05), univariate one-factor analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA).

Modal types of students and their characteristics

According to the results of data processing, we found four modal types of students, each of which corresponds to its own educational trajectory. The student's temporal movement along the educational trajectory, their maturation and preparation for graduation, entry into the labor market are certainly reflected in the presence of some

specific features and differences between the characteristics of the types of students of the I and IV year, but the main characteristics of the identified modal types coincide.

Social type 1 “Conformists”

Characteristics of the type: conformism, social passivity, orientation to minimization of educational efforts, anxiety for the future.

Grounds for building an educational trajectory – passive presence, expressed in the lack of interest in educational courses, formal fulfillment of minimum requirements against the background of a tendency to anxiety for their professional future. The main thing for them is to get an education certificate.

Differences in the characteristics of I and IV year students. Fourth-year students are more anxious about their future, their departure from thinking about future work and belief in a happy accident that can improve their financial situation compared to their parents are more pronounced.

Prediction. For first-year students of this type, high anxiety and uncertainty about the future may prevent successful graduation. For graduates there is a low probability of entering a master’s program or working in their degree field and quick adaptation in the labor market (graduates of this type are most oriented to free schedule, self-employment/freelance).

Social type 2 “Excellent students”

Characteristics of the type: aspiration to multidisciplinary knowledge and mastering of the chosen specialty, high level of self-discipline and motivation to study, conscious choice of IET.

Grounds for building an educational trajectory is personal responsibility, expressed in high learning and cognitive activity, aspiration to acquire additional knowledge, as a rule, within the framework of the educational space of the university.

Differences in the characteristics of I and IV year students. Fourth-year students have increased orientation towards entering a master’s program in their specialty and decreased indicators of optimistic perception of the future.

Prediction. For first-year students: very high probability of successful graduation. For

graduates: a high probability of realization of a linear educational trajectory (entering a master’s program in the specialty) and/or successful adaptation in the labor market and employment according to their specialty.

Social type 3 “Activists”

Characteristics of the type: aspiration to group work and establishment of social ties, wide informal communications, high readiness for extracurricular activities, low degree of intrinsic motivation to study.

Grounds for building an educational trajectory are the expansion of social capital, the use of informal connections for adaptation in higher education and solving academic tasks, as well as for achieving success in life in general.

Differences in the characteristics of I and IV year students. Fourth-year students have a decrease in involvement in extracurricular activities. There is a noticeable increase among the graduates in the support of the Unified State Examination and Basic State Examination system and the level of assessment of their own knowledge in the field of Internet communications and foreign language.

Prediction. For first-year students: a fairly high probability of successful graduation. For graduates: a high probability of successful adaptation to the labor market, but when finding a job, priority will be given to competencies in the field of information technologies and foreign language rather than to the profession obtained.

Social type 4 “Nihilists”

Characteristics of the type: negative attitude, low involvement in group work and extracurricular activities, lack of interest in learning, critical attitude to the system of IET training.

Grounds for building an educational trajectory – avoidance, expressed in a negative attitude to study in higher education, critical attitude to the IET learning technology.

Differences in the characteristics of I and IV year students. Fourth-year students have even more critical attitude towards education in general, school and university studies, and IET teaching principles. Also, the share of those who do not want to work has increased among fourth-year

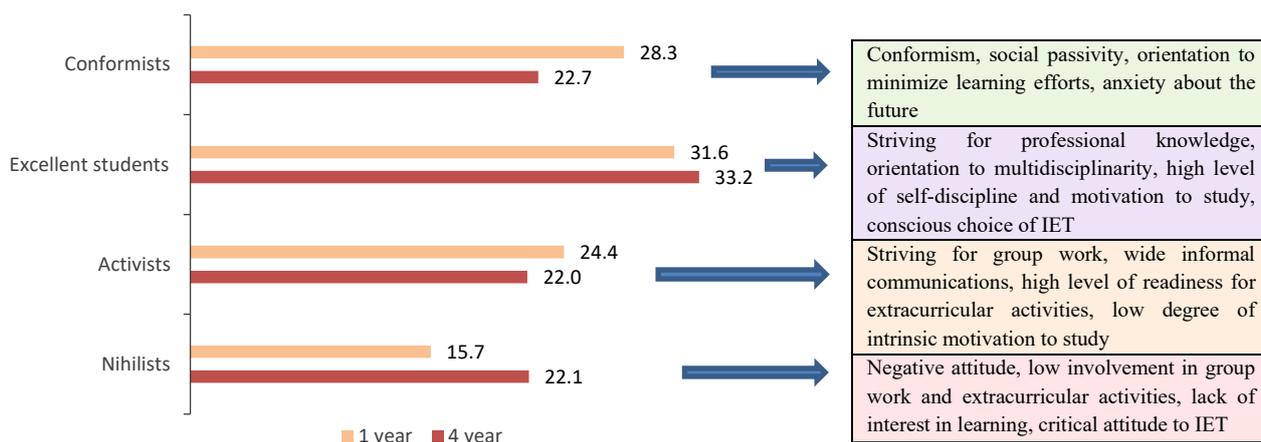


Fig. Types of students, their brief characteristics and shares in the arrays of respondents, %

Source: own compilation.

students. Compared to first-year students, the share of those who believe that they will not be able to achieve the same position in life as their parents have has doubled.

Prediction. For first-year students of this type, there is a high probability of not graduating from college. For graduates there is a high probability of problems of adaptation in the labor market, low probability of employment in the specialty and a high risk of being in the group of the unemployed.

It is possible to note the dynamics of the representation of modal types among the surveyed first- and fourth-year students of TyumSU. Among the graduates there is a noticeable decrease in the share of students of the “conformists” type and an increase in the share of “nihilists”. The shares of “excellent students” and “activists” in both arrays are approximately the same (*Figure*).

Conclusion

The identified modal types of students have an important applied value for effective management of university space. The temporal character of the methodology ensured the plasticity of its basis (value properties of the student’s life world) and the possibility of correct comparison of empirical data. Within the framework of empirical research carried out in the monitoring mode, first-year students were typologized at the beginning of their educational trajectory, at the same time the existence of the same modal types was confirmed among

final-year students. The obtained empirical data provide an opportunity to make managerial decisions on the development of educational trajectories desirable for the university and the labor market (“excellent students” and “activists”) and correction of the undesirable ones (“conformists” and “nihilists”), as well as the possibility of further monitoring measurements. It is the possibility of reasonable planning and search for social reserves in the conditions of the new educational space (IET system), which has not yet been fully mastered either by the teachers of Russian universities or by the students themselves, that is an important feature of the constructivist approach we are implementing and its methodological advantage.

According to the results of our research, specific practical measures to refine the IET system for the development of desirable and correction of undesirable trajectories include the following:

- 1) expansion of the repertoire of courses offered to students for training under the IET system of professional electives;
- 2) increasing the effectiveness of tutor support for students (especially for first-year students);
- 3) optimization of transparency criteria (students should have a clear idea of the content of the offered course) and accessibility of the mechanisms of students’ choice of IET courses (stable operation of the university digital environment, including the student’s personal cabinet);

4) improving the university's technical capabilities to increase the quality of online course technology;

5) improving the quality of the class schedule (convenient timing of classes, avoiding gaps between classes and scheduling classes in different buildings of the university);

6) creation of real opportunities for a student to collect a block of elective courses in order to receive a document on additional education based on the results of their completion;

7) inadmissibility of reducing the hours of specialized disciplines at the expense of elective courses;

8) improvement of teaching technologies by teachers, taking into account the need to read courses in mixed groups consisting of students of different specialties and profiles.

The implementation of this set of measures will allow to expect an increase in the level of student satisfaction with the IET system and an increase in the share of "excellent students" and "activists".

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