

## Change in the Social Composition of the Students in Conditions of Russian Society Transformation

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**Abstract:** The stratification changes of the social composition of students in conditions of formational changes in modern Russia have been analyzed. Following indicators of stratification personal characteristics were highlighted: the socio-demographic (gender), type of residence of students before enter the higher institutions, the primary social experience, education level and social status of the parents. The analysis is based on empirical data of sociological studied conducted in 1984, 2000, 2008 and 2012. The study was undergone among the students of Perm National Research Polytechnic University (state high education institution) and Perm Institute of Human and Technological Sciences (private higher education institution). The nature of a new gender stereotype forming in Russian society and a role of formal education as a basic social and stratification stimulus of youth were studied. This allowed us to conclude that the labor market reveals discrepancy between demand and offer of the labor force with such characteristics as education and gender of potential employees. Results of the study showed that the migration processes in the country contribute to the marginalization of students, that creates an additional social burden on students as a professional group, increasing social and psychological tension in the society; social background of students has become a dominant factor in the choice of higher education and basic social constraint in getting of this education; formational and crisis processes directly affect the changes in the social composition of students in high schools.

**Key words:** Students • Socio-demographic characteristics • Gender • Education • Type of community • The social status of students • Labor market

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### INTRODUCTION

Transformation processes in the society related to changes in social and economic conditions, are always entailed by structural changes of various social groups. This process is clearly reflected in the structure of the social composition of students [1].

Sociological studies conducted in the Permian high schools from 2002 to 2012 are revealed these changes. For a deeper analysis of the stratification process, we have compared the present students with the students of 1984, which are the parents of present generation<sup>1</sup>. The specificity of higher education institutes which participated in study of 2002 and 2008 must be also

considered. The studies were conducted in Perm National Research Polytechnic University (PNRPU) (in 1984 - the Perm Polytechnic Institute (PPI), 2002 and 2008 - Perm State Technical University (PSTU), 2012 - PNIPU)<sup>2</sup> and PIHTS (Private Higher Education Institution, Perm Institute of Human and Technological Sciences).

The social characteristics of students were considered using *socio-demographic features*

The students interviewed in 2002, 2008 and 2012 were young people, which primary socialization occurred in the new (market) conditions of Russia. These are young people who were born in the late 80s and early 90s of the XX century. The students were distributed by gender as shown in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Totally, number of respondents involved into study: in 1984 – 792 students; in 2002 Г. – 934 persons; in 2008 – 709 persons; 2012 Г. – 300 persons.

<sup>2</sup> To avoid the confusion, we use the following abbreviation of Perm National Research Polytechnic University - PNRPU within the article.

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Table 1: Distribution of students by gender in studies of 1984, 2002, 2008 and 2012 (% of respondents in each institution)

Type of institution	Young men				Girls			
	1984	2002	2008	2012	1984	2002	2008	2012
PNRPU	50,2	91,0	52,9	52,0	49,3	9,0	46,9	48,0
PGTI	–	19,7	26,6		–	75,4	73,4	

XX century was the century of the period when the women entered the social and political activities, enhancing her role in economics while maintaining a certain stereotype of her status options in the minds of men [2, 3]. In the process of joining the male's economic and political environment, the women reached important heights in the field of education, professional skills and management. This should also facilitate the formation of new gender stereotypes.

Formation of gender consciousness is the creation of gender stereotype of individual behavior in society [4,5].

However, with the restructuring of Russian society, a problem of labor forces in the labor market, where priorities were given to the male and unskilled labor has emerged. This contributed, on the one hand, to the development of discrimination, on the other – increased the social participation of women [6]. To survive in a competitive environment, the woman should be more competent men in the professional field and therefore have a high level of education. Today, a new gender stereotype was formed in Russian society. Our studies allow us to determine the level of this stereotype development.

A comparative analysis of results by years reflects changing of gender distribution of students in higher education institutions. Decline in the proportion of young men-students by 2002 can be explained on the one hand, the fact that in the 90s, the youths were actively involved in commerce and entrepreneurship and, therefore, postponed the study. On the other hand, discrimination of girls in the labor market and the “immorality” of newly-formed so-called “New Russian leaders” have resulted to the need to protect themselves in the labor market by increasing their competitiveness due to higher education.

Over recent years, the number of young men focused on higher education has increased. On the other hand, an increase in the number of girls in technical, so-called “male” institution (PNRPU) and young men in the socio-humanitarian, so-called “female” institution (PIHTS) was observed. This can be considered as a tendency to change the requirements of the labor market to workers not only on gender characteristics and, most importantly,

the level of education, i.e. the knowledge became a priority in the labor market, but not gender of specialist. It should be noted that in recent years, social-gender composition of students have stabilized that indicate the tendency of gender stereotypes to comply with some static social norm.

Human behavior in society is always refracted through his gender perception of himself as an individual and a member of the group [7,8]. Changes in society, evolutionary or crisis, reflect in personality through the gender stereotypes. Therefore, the results of any sociological study should be analyzed taking to account the gender characteristics of students.

The following socio-demographic characteristics is a *type of reside of students before enter the higher education institution*. In the study, the residents of the villages, district and settlement type of resides were combined into one group (the rural residents) and urban residents, including the regional and national settlements - in the other group (urban residents).

Social and territorial structure of higher education institutions of different types is the equal what indicates the uniformity (social stereotypes) of the nature of public demand in education regardless of the status of the higher institution. The results of comparative analysis by year reflects the changes in the social composition of students by type of their residence before enter the higher institution are shown in Table 2.

It should be noted that the number of rural residents among students decreased by 2008. This resulted in decrease in the level of education and further in “the decadence of culture” in these areas. On the other hand, there was impairment of skilled labor in these settlements that resulted in an increase of migration of young people, especially from the small towns. As a result, the number of students from small towns significantly increased by 2012 and reached 39,5% of urban residents (approximately 20% in 2002 and 2008). A group of residents of large cities was in 2012 – 38,2%. This tendency shows that education is one of the most appropriate incentives to change the social status of the young man in the crisis of society. This is the main solution to the life strategies of modern young men and women.

Table 2: Distribution of students in state and private higher institutions according to the place of their primary socialization (% of respondents by years of study)

Type of higher institution	Rural residents				Urban residents			
	1984	2002	2008	2012	1984	2002	2008	2012
PNRPU	9,2	16,0	11,8	21,9	88,5	84,0	88,2	77,7
PIHTS	–	14,3	13,0	–	–	85,7	85,5	–

Table 3: Distribution of students of public and private higher institutions based on the social and work experience (% of respondents by years of research)

Social experience	PNRPU			PIHTS		Total		
	1984	2002	2008	2002	2008	1984	2002	2008
Studied	68,2	96,0	98,4	96,7	98,5	69,5	94,3	97,5
Worked, served in military	28,9	4,0	1,6	3,3	1,5	30,5	5,6	1,6

The next social characteristic is *social experience of students*. Almost all the students went to study at a higher education institution right after secondary school graduation (Table 3).

The character of these changes was evaluated by the years and revealed that this tendency maintained by 2012.

The study results of studies demonstrated that the Soviet period characterizes by a more balanced decision making in important life questions. Choice of profession and occupation was determined by primary work experience, therefore, it was a socially motivated choice. Thus, it can be concluded that the socio-economic conditions of the Soviet period enabled the youth to “spend time searching for themselves”. This situation explains the fact that the undergraduate students were able to take over responsibility for the family, as confirmed by the results of studies conducted in 80s [9]. During the transition of Russian society to a “market economy”, the significant changes in life of people have occurred. It would seem that the “market economy” requires such human characters as the high mobility, adaptability, practicality, ability to take risks. These features should be formed during life and work experience and this experience can hardly be obtained by “sitting at the school desk”. If take in to account the discrimination of young people in the labor market as a social group without work experience and changes of the law on military service, then there is a question “Why do young people first seek to obtain a higher education, then, knowing all the vagaries of the labor market, leave for “the large living swimming”?

Thus, we can establish the fact that present student society is formed by studying youth and his social choice is not determined by life experience. In the future, this can result to professional frustration and reduction of social well-being of the individual. This situation suggests an

increase of the social and psychological tensions in the society in the future, because the discrimination is based on age, gender and work experience.

Another important indicator of the culture and the social specific situation of students is the social background of students [10]. This index is considered through the social status of the parents and their level of education.

Educational level of parents of students in the 80s reflects the socio-economic and socio-cultural peculiarities of the Soviet period. The demand of society in specialists with higher education and the opportunity of children from different social status families to obtain an education were considered as the normal. The shift of society to the “market economy” has influenced the social character of the educational level of the Russian residents. Children whose parents had higher level of education (specialized secondary and higher professional education) became dominant among the students. However, education remains the only way to change the status of the individual in the socially deformed structure therefore parents with low education level orient children to choose higher education besides the families where the parents have obtained the higher education. Therefore, to date, the demand in education is still the most important among the students’ life values (Table 4).

It should be noted that in the private higher institution with the programs of higher and secondary education, the role of the father is significant due to the fact that the proportion of fathers who have secondary special education was higher.

Thus, the educational potential of the Russian society and specifically in Perm city and the Perm region, is represented by the families with a high level of education of parents and other groups of residents with this feature.

Table 4: Distribution of students in public and private higher education institutions based on the education level of student's parents (% of respondents)

Education level of parents	In PNRPU		In PIHTS	
	1984	2008	2012	2008
<b>Mother</b>				
Elementary	7,1	0,4	0,5	1,0
Incomplete secondary	12,0	0,4	2,6	0,5
General secondary	13,9	4,3	10,1	8,4
Secondary special	30,5	30,1	39,9	32,5
Higher	23,2	63,0	44,1	57,6
Academic degree	1,3	1,8	1,3	–
<b>Father</b>				
Elementary	9,9	–	1,3	1,1
Incomplete secondary	13,9	1,4	3,6	1,1
General secondary	14,9	6,8	11,4	13,1
Secondary special	22,5	30,2	37,6	40,6
Higher	29,2	57,6	37,9	43,4
Academic degree	1,9	3,9	0,7	0,6

Table 5: Distribution of students in public and private higher institutions based on the social and professional status of parents (% of total number of respondents)

Social status of parents	PNRPU				PIHTS	
	1984	2002	2008	2012	2002	2008
<b>Mother</b>						
Farmers	2,0	0,9	1,1	3,6	–	3,2
Workers	29,4	20,9	18,3	24,5		28,1
Intellectuals	36,9	31,7	36,2	31,4		17,0
Retail and service		4,5	11,1	9,8		6,2
Entrepreneurs, businessmen		6,7	7,0	5,2		16,8
Administrative managers		8,1	5,4	4,9		6,8
Office workers in industry and organizations	25,2	19,8	20,7	16,0		22,0
<b>Father</b>						
Farmers	2,0		3,2	3,6	1,6	3,6
Workers	40,6	28,8	26,5	34,0	24,6	28,1
Intellectuals	30,4	22,0	26,5	49,4	10,7	9,6
Merchants and service employees		2,7	13,5	2,0	9,8	11,3
Entrepreneurs, businessmen		8,2	7,6	9,2	15,4	11,9
Administrative managers		12,6	7,6	3,9	7,5	8,3
Office workers in industry and organizations	13,5	19,4	15,1	20,3	30,4	22,0

There is a fact that high educational potential is maintaining due to older generation. At the same time, most of the families in which parents have a high level of education, are concentrated in the large cities. However, the educational “hunger” in other territorial entities and other social groups are increasing with time. This situation could have a negative impact on the country as a whole and for certain economic entities in particular due to the labor market is not ready to accept a large number of highly qualified specialists. On the other hand, the marginal social composition of students

enhances the competitive relationships in high institutions and later, this tendency will take place in the labor market of the city [11].

This was also supported by a study data on the social and professional status of the parents of students shown in Table 5.

If the status of the mother is the dominant factor in the choice of education by children in 2008, then in 2012, the role of social status of fathers has increased. This once again confirms the conclusion that discrimination of women was the impetus to change the status of men in

the family, his dominance in family and marital relationships. This situation, first of all, exacerbates the discrimination throughout the all social spectrum in the society what is so-called the Law of “boomerang”.

Thus, the students of public and private higher institution according to the socio-demographic characteristics have both common and distinctive features.

- The significant changes in the gender composition of schools with specific characteristics regarding this indicator have occurred. There a “mixture” according to the gender “male” and “female” higher institutions was observed. This is stipulated by both discrimination and competitive characteristics of the labor market. At the same time, there a clear social gender stereotype has been formed.
- A high level of education of parents still dominates in the selection of education type by prospective students. However, there is a tendency to expand the social composition of students due to the social groups with lower educational level of parents.
- The social composition of students acquires marginal features because it is represented by students from different territorial entities, as well as young people whose parents have a different social status in society. At the same time, the social composition of students in different types of higher institutions has own social peculiarities. The student’s composition in the public higher institution is represented mostly by children from families of workers while in private institution, the students from families of workers, industrial and state organization office workers, merchants, entrepreneurs and businessmen. This symbiosis can have the negative consequences, because is based on the social class differences.
- If the situation on the labor market will not change i.e. do not to create the job vacancies which require highly skilled employees, then in the next 10-15 years, the national economy will suffer the significant deficit especially in agriculture, mining and manufacturing sectors.
- There is tendency among prospective students entering the higher institutions after graduation of college or secondary school, regardless of their type.

- The analysis undertaken in this study indicates a high level of social tension. On one hand, there is the situation when the education is an important social value, which was formed in the Soviet period. From the other, the education is the main social incentives to young people to change their social status in present Russia.

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