Quality education as a basis for professional mobility of youth in the Republic of Kazakhstan

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Abstract

The main characteristics of social conditioning, conscious, purposeful labor inherent in professional activities. Professional work requires prior educational background of the individual and is in the process of continuous employment. Globalization processes influence both directly and indirectly by the state and dynamics of employment. The use of new, less labor-intensive technologies contributes to the creation of new jobs and rapid economic growth. But to get to the jobs for people without higher education, a high intellectual level of development and professional competence, it is almost impossible. Intelligence and professionalism - these are the main trump cards, to protect against unemployment. Economic modernization of Kazakhstan aimed at sustainable development of the market economy and the management of its growth. Make the economy sustainable and manage this growth will only invest in the younger generation. Purpose: Based on social science data to develop practical recommendations to government and non-governmental organizations interested in identifying new prospects for the professional socialization of modern personality.

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Introduction

Social-economic changes and pertinent social restructuring within modern conditions have affected the labour and employment sphere in Kazakhstan. Demands for various occupations are changing; labour market is becoming more dynamic.

Globalization processes have both direct and indirect influence on the state and dynamics of employment. Use of new and less labour-intensive technologies facilitate the creation of new employment opportunities and a rapid economic growth. However, it is getting difficult for people to get new jobs if they have no higher education or are lacking in high intellect or professional expertise. Intellectuality and professionalism – these are the main distinguishing features of a person which can help him face the challenge of unemployment.

At present, the youth comprises 29% of the whole population; the proportion of rural youth is 48% of the total youth. Today, educational programmes cover 83% of young people aged between 14 and 21 years. At this stage,
students of higher education institutions in Kazakhstan do not practice intensive and specialized professional
development within their academic studies. This can be witnessed by that fact that only 40% of respondents intend
to work within their specialty. The proportion of those, who lean back on luck, is 25%. Nearly one fourth of
respondents are already inclined to ‘deprofessionalization’. 6.5% of young graduates are planning to set up their
own businesses after obtaining their degrees. The survey showed us that parents and the family have a great
influence on students in choosing their profession (39.1%).

1. Professional education and current position

A survey was conducted in five regions of Kazakhstan - Almaty, Karaganda, East Kazakhstan region, Kostanai,
West Kazakhstan region - using quota sample set on ‘gender’, ‘age’ and ‘place of residence’ characteristics. The
survey covered 1000 respondents in total with the number of selected participants in each region being 200. In
accordance with the quota sample characteristics the respondents were grouped as follows: female respondents -
462, male respondents - 446; urban citizens - 435, rural dwellers - 473; respondents aged between 15-20 years - 142,
21-28 years - 185, 29-39 years - 171, 40-49 years - 149, 50-59 years - 186, 60 and elder - 75 respondents. The survey
was conducted based on ‘Best High School Teacher of 2011’ State Scholarship. Sample units for survey were
regions, district centres, cities, rural settlements and respondent groups.

Multiphase modelling was used to carry out survey sampling. The first phase involved cluster sampling to select
five out of 14 regions of Kazakhstan, and accordingly, main cities – Almaty, Karaganda, Semey, Uralsk, Kostanai
were selected in the first place; minor cities, district centres, rural settlements were selected afterwards. Respondents
were selected based on random route sampling with a quota plan set on gender and age characteristics, i.e. it was a
random sampling of respondents within clusters.

Quantitative method (population survey method) was used to achieve the aims and objectives of the survey.
Quantitative method of research allows assessing the prevalence of parameters under consideration, as well as their
dimensions. As far as the survey required the comparative assessment of situations in regions and population’s
attitude towards changes related to social modernization, the representativeness was ensured at all levels by each
region. The aim of the survey was to develop practical recommendations for state and non-governmental
organizations interested in defining new perspectives for professional socialization of individuals based on
sociological data.

The question “Does your current occupation correspond to your professional educational background?” was
answered as follows (See Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote sample</th>
<th>Absolute correspondence</th>
<th>Partial correspondence</th>
<th>No correspondence</th>
<th>Difficult to answer</th>
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Table 1 – Breakdown of answers to the question “Does your current occupation correspond to your professional educational background?”
Results of the survey conducted by the author are of considerable importance in respect of permanently employed respondents who provided their answers to the question “If you have a permanent job, what are the issues you would like to change or improve?” Answers are provided in Table 2.

The results show that respondents are greatly concerned about the following issues: ethical values at work place; use of unethical practices in interpersonal relations; need for substituting autocratic managerial style with a democratic one. Generally, the responses reflect major issues that an employer usually faces at the workplace.

Table 2 - Breakdown of answers to the question “If you have a permanent job, what are the issues you would like to change or improve?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents group ( % of respondents from each group)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Age</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Urban citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To replace autocratic managerial style and democratize it</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not to save on reducing employee benefits</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not to ignore moral encouragement, to use moral encouragement more often</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid rough treatment to each other, to comply with ethics</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain positive moral environment without paying special emphasis on a particular person</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27.3 % of female, 28.1 % of male respondents are concerned with the moral environment at their workplace. It is reasonably safe to suggest that opinions do not strongly differ. 19.7 % of urban citizens and 34.9 % of rural dwellers feel concerned about this issue. This indicates that in rural areas informal relations, kinship prevent having formal employment relationships more than in cities. Attitudes by age groups towards moral environment at the workplace were as follows: 15-20 years – 22.6 %, 21-28 years – 33.7 %, 29-39 years – 24.2 %, 40-49 years – 25.7 %, 50-59 years – 29.4 %, 60 and elder – 28.1 %. Maximum percentage of respondents among age groups, concerned about the issue, is between 21-28 years. At this age, young people usually obtain a certain degree or graduate from high schools, strive to get promoted and develop their professional skills; probably, for this reason, young people tend to overreact to any kind of unfair treatment.

Avoiding rough treatment within the team, complying with ethic norms were chosen by 28.4 % of female and 22.4 % of male respondents. Psychologically and emotionally, women are more vulnerable than men. Women perhaps face and go through such incidents involving unethical practices often. More or less similar attitude can be seen by age group clusters. Respondents aged between 21-28 years stand out in the age group showing most concerns about ethics compliance: 15-20 years – 24.3 %, 21-28 years – 29.2 %, 29-39 years – 23.6 %, 40-49 years – 24.3 %, 50-59 years - 24.4 %, 60 and elder – 26.6 %.

2. Youth motivation and labour market

It is natural that in a social circumstances, where the state must provide its citizens with the most important components of welfare, regardless of their labour activity, the state cannot create much incentives for their labour activities.

It should be noted that the status of individuals is now transforming from a socio-ideological status to one dependent on their labour activities and their creative skills helping them to become proprietors, entrepreneurs,
owners, who possess an economic freedom and voluntariness to choose the form of their activities. This has stirred up the interest of the society to choose the model of motivation for labour activities.

In modern processes of labour socialization, it is necessary to concentrate the individuals’ attention on realities of modern society; it is important to develop a value of labour and change the content of its motivation, as well as to ensure incentives for the labour and satisfaction of an individual with his employment.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is a set of fundamental economical, social and cultural rights which also include the right to work. It defines the ‘right to work’ as a right of access to a freely chosen job; the right to have an equal pay; just and fair remuneration without any discrimination. Particularly, it specifies that women shall be guaranteed the same labour conditions with equal pay for equal work; everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection, including the rest, leisure, reasonable limitation of working hours, and periodical holidays with pays.

The employment sector in Kazakhstan has not yet acquired the features of a free labour market. It is not about state ideology; rather, it is connected with unresolved social issues of citizens. The employment is considered by majority as a tool of existence. Meanwhile, there are other categories of people, who consider the employment as a value; they take pleasure in working. Therefore, it is safe to say there is a room for voluntary labour as well. This gives an opportunity to think about perspectives of a free labour in Kazakhstan. Leastwise, there is no ideological barrier causing the men to create and produce within certain standards or to distinguish and categorize everything into bad and good, black or white etc.

Modernization in Kazakhstan is taking place at a fast pace in conditions of a lower level of economic development, which leads to mass unemployment of people unable to quickly adapt to occurring changes. Number of marginal social layers in Kazakhstan is increasing due to the ongoing migration of rural population to urban centres, therefore, in most cases, adding to the number of unemployed people. Rural youth cannot be regarded as competitors to their urban peers for many reasons; foremost among them is the former’s inability to socialize with various strata to society. Most commonly, they fall behind in terms of the level and quality of their education, knowledge of English, awareness, etc. Additionally, insufficiency of material resources necessary to realize their life plans, accommodation and employment difficulties are becoming major obstacles in their lives. These difficulties incite them to different violations and deviant activities, such as theft, robbery and other criminal activities.

Deviant behaviour is widespread among rural youth primarily due to the low level social and living conditions (limited resources, unemployment etc.) (Nuskabayev, 2005).

Even today, state bodies of Kazakhstan should take care of the future of these young people ensuring new employment opportunities, employing the Kazakh youth and orienting them to perspective sectors of national economy, industrial sectors, and solving the tasks of their professional development. Kazakhstan may prevent many economical, political, religious issues reducing social tensions and addressing certain social concerns of its population.

Creating adequate opportunities for productive employment and ensuring sustainable sources of subsistence are one of the most important and difficult tasks for any community. Employment and income are not the concepts related to economic needs only, they are the tools to participate in public life; they are the sources and the fields of interaction for formation of an individual.

The presence of partial and non-stable employment in Kazakhstan has led to the occurrence of such phenomenon as the ‘working poor’. In this case, ‘working poor’ are medical employees, teachers, scientists and other skilled workers.

A free interview, conducted among students of al-Farabi Kazakh National University in December 2010, involved 25 students. The answers to the question “Do you consider yourself a free citizen of the society?” were positive by 53.3% of respondents, whereas the negative answer was provided by 25.0%, undecided respondents were 12.9 %. The question “Do you think the rights to work, education and rest are well respected in our country?” was answered as follows: 18.5% - well respected, 37.0% - well respected for most part, 42.7 % - not respected for most part, 5.4% - not respected at all, 2.2 % - undecided. Despite the fact, that majority of respondents provided negative answers to this question young people have more confidence that they can make a difference by becoming more united and active.

Some scholars of Kazakhstan state that decline in living standards of many social groups in present-day conditions put them in a choice of two general patterns of behaviour: a market-oriented and protective nature. The
first involves changing the area of activity into the ‘market’ sector (non-state sector), transfer to well paid jobs in other sectors of the economy, including a change of profession (social and occupational mobility), as well as an active search for additional revenue, while maintaining the basic work (secondary employment). The second tactic involves the strategy of limitations in spiritual and material consumption, full or partial denial of previous standards of behaviour. This pattern of behaviour is divided into two subtypes: compensatory and deprivation. In the first case, the satisfaction of any need comes due to the ‘denial’ of the other, i.e. through substitution or compensation. The second behaviour type involves a large-scale limitation of consumption, covering a broad spectrum of needs (Shedenova, 1998). Withdrawal of many specialists into the business sphere and entrepreneurship reflects the specifics of the first model of market behaviour by citizens of Kazakhstani society. Limitation of consumption as a peculiar feature of the second model, in our view, characterizes the behaviour by most of the population of Kazakhstan taking into account the prevalence of non-affluent citizens.

Under the existing conditions, the labour is an overwhelming tool for living. ‘Survive at all costs’ is the main slogan that defines a low level of satisfaction of material needs by the majority of the population of Kazakhstan.

Where there is coercion, there is a limited level of individual freedom.

Main direction is forming an attitude towards work as an end in itself, as a work perpetrated in order to satisfy internal physical and spiritual needs. The quest for self-realization through creative search is the driving force of a free man from forced labour. The central values for the modern man should be the content of his own activities, the reciprocal relationship with other people in the labour.

Competitions for educational grants in Kazakhstan provide 1% quota admission for young people with developmental disabilities, 0.5% quota for orphans and children left without parental care, and a 30% quota for rural youth to specialties that define socio-economic development of the rural settlement.

The process of industrialization in the country is associated with the rapid development of science and technology, which requires more and more educated, highly skilled, skilled workers in new and complex industries (electronics, programming, automation, etc.)

Low professional skills of unemployed people in this country do not meet the needs of today’s labour market. New job positions that are increasingly appearing in present conditions, suffer from a lack of personnel. Choosing common professions as lawyers and economists, the youth swells the ranks of specialists in these professional fields only quantitatively without showing brilliant knowledge and skills.

The survey conducted by Kazakh scholars have shown that students are greatly influenced by their parents and family in choosing their occupation (39.1%) (Figure 1) (Maulshariff, 2004).

![Figure 1. Factors influencing the choice of the profession](image)

Schools, teachers have almost the same influence; number of accidentally made choices is at the same level too (13 %). 12.2% of students made their choice independently. Another source of influence is mass media hitting 7.1%; and friends, acquaintances – 7.1 %. Only few students admitted they have chosen their profession because it was their ‘calling’, ‘vocation’ – 0.6%, and due to knowledge of the main subject – 0.6 %. 4.5% of students were influenced upon meeting with outstanding representatives of this professional field, 1.2% of students made their
choice due to open door events. Survey results indicate that students prone to listen to advice from others and act as told to act by their parents or family members rather than making their independent choice.

Market structure in various countries is built on different economic and labour ethos. Individualism and entrepreneurial spirit of Americans are rooted in the history of this country, its complex ethnic and geographical structure. Another style of life which is contrary to the spirit of capitalism and acts in an ethical form is a type of perception and behaviour, which may be called traditionalism (Sadykov, 2003).

5. Conclusion

Despite efforts to ignore, the economic activity is conditional upon labour ethics which reflects mental features of the nation. Islam had a great influence on the labour ethics of the Kazakhs as a relatively new world religion. Islam has a strongly expressed belief in divine predestination. All Muslims are destined to an absolute obedience to the divine will. Muslims say, ‘Thank God for what He created for you and all that he has given you for your existence; be content with what you have’. Moderation and modesty characterize a true Muslim.

It is safe to say that Islam is regarded not just as a religion but as a way of life, entirely determining the attitudes and everyday behaviour, including economic and employment behaviour.

The idea of rationality is acute for our country. Our mentality does not sufficiently and apparently express individualism and healthy competition, strive for daily diligent work, rational use of material values, the ability to handle money, management of free time and the ability to enjoy and appreciate the results of the work, etc.

Currently, a range of projects aimed at increasing the level of youth employment and youth adaptation in labour market are being implemented annually with participation of the civil sector. They include the following projects such as “Zhassyl El” programme, student construction and labour initiatives, "Talent Pool", "With Diploma to Village", "Youth Employment Exchange".

References


