

## Thorny Paths of Modern Russian Higher Professional Education



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**Abstract.** The article analyzes problem situations on the way to acquiring professions that require higher professional education. The main attention is paid to the fact that in society there is a real gap between personal (individual) goals in obtaining highly qualified professions and the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural needs of society. In this regard, the reference points of acquiring and passing professional socialization are analyzed, which, in the author's opinion, consists of a consistent solution (algorithm) of interconnected, consistently implemented tasks – professional education, professional orientation, professional selection and professional adaptation. The author examines how these tasks are solved from the standpoint of: a) official state educational policy; b) actions and activities of schools and universities; c) behavior of schoolchildren and students; and d) their regional characteristics. Moreover, attention is paid not so much to the educational, methodological and organizational problems of mastering professions, as to the social aspects of the process of training and obtaining higher education.

**Key words:** higher professional education, professional socialization, professional enlightenment, professional orientation, professional selection, professional adaptation.

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**For citation:** Toshchenko Zh.T. (2025). Thorny paths of modern Russian higher professional education. *Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 18(5), 47–60. DOI: 10.15838/esc.2025.5.101.2

### Problem statement

The social significance of higher education is characterized primarily by such indicators as official decisions on its development and improvement, the number of higher education institutions, the number of students, faculty and support staff, as well as the condition of facilities and equipment.

Let us recall that currently (as of 2025) there are 724 higher education institutions (universities, institutes, academies, including 242 private ones) and 532 branches (427 public and 105 private) in Russia, where 4.33 million young men and women study; 89.2% of them studied in state and municipal organizations, 10.4% in private educational institutions. The distribution of students by specialty is as follows: 31.65% – engineering, technology and technical sciences, 28.85% – social sciences, 12% – healthcare and medical sciences, 9.3% – education and pedagogical sciences, 5.96% – mathematics and natural sciences, 5.21% – humanities, 3.79% – agricultural sciences, 3.25% – arts and culture<sup>1</sup>.

In 2024, they were trained by 216.5 thousand full-time teaching staff – professors, assistants. Another 74.9 thousand were external part-timers. About 58,000 teachers worked under civil law contracts<sup>2</sup>. The number of full-time teachers has significantly decreased compared to the 2008/2009 academic year, when their number was 341.1 thousand people.

According to the Higher School of Economics, 32.4% of Russians aged 25 to 64 have higher education. For comparison: in Italy – 19.9%, in Japan – 34.2%, in the USA – 39.5%, in the UK – 41.3%. At the same time, the current situation regarding higher education causes reasonable concern and dissatisfaction with its results.

<sup>1</sup> MIREA – Russian Technological University. Main Information and Computing Center. Information and analytical materials on the results of monitoring the activities of educational institutions of higher education (accessed: 26.05.2025).

<sup>2</sup> Vaplanova T.A., Gokhberg L.M. et al. (2023). Education in Figures: 2023: Concise Statistical Collection. Moscow: HSE.

The contradictory policy in the field of higher professional education has led to a sharp decrease in the quality of specialist training as a result of ill-conceived and hasty reforms. The collapse of education in the new Russia went through several stages. In the early 1990s, attention was focused on numerous variations in the organization of higher education based on the dismantling of the Soviet system, its denial, and the abandonment of everything that was the heritage not only of the Soviet Union, but of the entire domestic experience in training highly skilled professionals. This was followed by steps to transform education into a service sector with the introduction of measures to commercialize universities. During this period, there was a massive increase in the number of higher education institutions, when university branches were often established even in large villages (for example, in the 2008/2009 academic year there were 1,134 universities and about 2,000 branches)<sup>3</sup>. At the next stage, a policy was implemented to switch to the model of “real education”, which meant the Bologna model of education. Its apologists – former rector of the Higher School of Economics Ya. Kuzminov, former rector of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration V. Mau, together with the Minister of Education of the Russian Federation D. Livanov, enthusiastically and with great zeal promoted this “Western achievement” and secured its implementation. It is worth noting that their main argument was that persons who have bachelor’s and master’s degrees can freely and without any obstacles apply for jobs in all European countries. Moreover, Ya. Kuzminov stated in 2021 that, depending on the university and scientific direction, from 20 to 85% of students go abroad, on average more than 50%. However, opinion polls conducted by the Russian State University for the

<sup>3</sup> Russian Statistical Yearbook. 2010. Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat). Moscow: Statistika Rossii, 2010.

Humanities have shown that such an intention (not even an action yet) is expressed by 1.4 to 8.3% of employees, depending on the branch of the economy and culture (The Life World ..., 2024, p. 436). In response to criticism, the proponents of the Bologna process constantly invented new proposals like two bachelor's degrees, dividing universities into categories worthy of support or third-degree (which included many regional universities). Together with A. Chubais they proposed to make all higher education paid, which led to the formation of another facet of social inequality – educational. We should note that these measures provoked protest and disagreement from the majority of the university intelligentsia, but they did not listen to its voice. Almost all the proposals of the Bologna supporters acquired the character of mandatory implementation, without taking into account the specifics of universities, their regional and national features. As a result, education was developed upon the ideas similar to Khrushchev's initiative to sow corn everywhere – from the northern circumpolar regions to deserts – when uniformity was recognized as the norm for everyone without exception.

At the same time, other problematic situations arose and multiplied. Here are some of them. In 2024, 823,000 people graduated from bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree programs<sup>4</sup>), of which 31% were lawyers and economists (35% in 2020). The number of university graduates in economic and legal fields is four times higher than the staffing requirement. Obviously, despite the importance of these professions, such a clear disparity did not correspond to the objective needs of society, although it correlated with the personal aspirations of young people and their parents. A very strange specialty “manager” has also appeared, which is not tied to any specific field of work; as a result, specialists are being trained who can manage everything they are assigned – from

housing and communal services to an enterprise or cultural institution. At the same time, there was a sharp decrease in attention to the training of engineers, and after a while they began to be sorely missed. Thus, there is an imbalance in the labor market. According to the Ministry of Labor of the Russian Federation, in 2023 there were 12 vacancies per engineer, but 1 vacancy for trained 7–8 lawyers and economists, depending on the region.

Awe cannot but mention an outwardly good, but at the same time crafty figure: according to official data, from 80 to 90% of individuals find employment after graduation. However, a deeper analysis shows that, depending on the university and/or specialty, 40 to 60% of graduates start working in their specialty (or related one)<sup>5</sup>. But can they be considered employed in their specialty based on such examples? Thus, the training of a veterinarian to work in agricultural enterprises ends with his/her getting a job at a pet care in the city where he/she studied. Or can we consider employment in the specialty of medical care for a young doctor when he/she goes to work as a cosmetologist, or a teacher who gets a job at a government or other management service for preparing daily paperwork or collecting current information?

It is also important that the national education sector accounts for only 3.7% of GDP. According to this indicator, Russia ranks 125th in the world. For comparison: in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland – from 7 to 8% of GDP, the USA – 6.1%, Canada – 5.5%, France – 5.4%<sup>6</sup>.

At the same time, there has been an aging and feminization of the teaching staff, a doubling of the workload with low pay for teachers there, and students' scholarships are nominal. The outdated facilities and equipment and numerous economic and financial costs also hinder the high-quality training of specialists.

<sup>4</sup> The graduation rate of lawyers and economists in Russia has decreased by 15% in three years. Available at: [4ege.ru/novosti-vuzov/71965-vypusk-juristov-i-...](https://4ege.ru/novosti-vuzov/71965-vypusk-juristov-i-...)

<sup>5</sup> Rosstat: A third of graduates of Russian universities do not work in their specialty. Available at: [https://vsluh.ru/novosti/obshchestvo/rosstat-tret-vypusnikov-rossiyskikh-vuzov-ne-rabotayut-po-spetsialnosti\\_342862](https://vsluh.ru/novosti/obshchestvo/rosstat-tret-vypusnikov-rossiyskikh-vuzov-ne-rabotayut-po-spetsialnosti_342862)

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://gtmarket.ru> (accessed: 10.10.2025).

In this regard, we should also mention the flawed socio-cultural position of the mass media, which do not tire of promoting and advertising the forms of employment represented by celebrities, entertainers and athletes, marketers, businesspeople of all ranks and profiles, while almost completely ignoring the production professions. And such a policy has a significant impact on the preferences of young people.

By the 2020s, it became obvious that mindlessly copying other people's experience while completely ignoring domestic, including Soviet, achievements, without taking into account the opinion of the majority of the teaching staff, led to a real lag behind global indicators and a decrease in the quality of training skilled specialists. Therefore, it is not surprising that Russia currently ranks 34th in the world in terms of education, having lost the primacy that the Soviet Union possessed.

At present, the higher authorities have proclaimed not only the rejection of the Bologna principles that have complicated the activities of universities, but also the need to introduce fundamental changes to the existing structure of higher education, which, as the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation hopes, will allow for a complete transition to a new structure of education in 2027. As part of the new strategy, it is planned to integrate the experience gained over the past two centuries in the development and functioning of domestic education and meet the real needs of the upcoming Fifth Industrial Revolution.

Based on the review of the state of higher education in Russia, the article examines all stages of professional socialization, which includes professional education, professional orientation, professional selection and professional adaptation.

The empirical basis of the study covers 118 university websites, reflecting their involvement in the implementation of all stages of professional socialization of young people. In addition, in March

– June 2023, an online survey “The role of career guidance in career choice” was conducted using the online questionnaire (CAWI) via the Google Forms platform. Object of the study: high school students, applicants, university students and graduates. Sample size:  $N = 769$ . Sample type: targeted, unrepresentative. Method of selecting respondents is based on one of the target criteria – the status of a high school student, the status of a student in higher education programs, or the status of a graduate. We also used the data from the 2023 FCTAS RAS study, which contains the results of a survey of 4,000 young professionals (Gorshkov et al., 2023), VCIOM-2024<sup>7</sup>. Data from the sociological centers (HSE, FOM) and scientific publications on this topic for 2015–2024 were used. When researching individual groups such as doctors, teachers, and architects, in-depth interviews were conducted with experts, young professionals, and students. Successful work experience in the Republic of Tatarstan, the Sverdlovsk and Rostov regions was used in the analysis of the problems posed.

However, the improvement of higher education involves changes not only in itself, but also in the preparatory stages on which its implementation is based. Thus, we consider both pre-university and university and post-university stages of its development and functioning.

Consequently, the idea was realized to consider the path to the profession in a broader context, starting from the first attempts at professional self-determination to the first steps toward the actual application of acquired knowledge and competencies directly in production.

Let us look at each of these stages, paying special attention to what hinders their effective implementation, including such a specific problem as functional illiteracy (Toshchenko, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> The methodology is described in detail in: Career guidance: Good, but not enough! VCIOM. 2024. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/proforientaciya-khorosho-no-malo> (accessed: 11.09.2024).



***Professional education as a starting point for socio-professional self-determination***

There comes a time in every young person's life when they have to decide how and which profession to choose, how to determine their future career, i.e., assume the trajectory of their life path. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, every young person is given the right to choose a profession, occupation and job. However, as practice shows, this right is sometimes not easy to realize — there is a lack of knowledge about professions, about the requirements they impose on the personality of the employee and the ability to evaluate them, especially about which young people are aware by hearsay. Knowledge about the needs of society in certain professions is of considerable importance. To this should be added the influence of public perception, assessment of available or desired professions, when it is the orientation toward some of them that is determined not by the needs of the economy and culture, but by personal, family or group preferences<sup>8</sup>.

In this regard, there arises an acute issue of implementing consistent, logically non-contradictory actions to organically combine the objective needs and subjective orientations of young people. Moreover, in most cases, the process of entering adulthood for young people is limited to career guidance, often taking into account only local interests. But, as real life shows, this is a process that is limited in its integrity, missing many aspects of acquiring professions, consolidating young people in their professional choice, preparing for productive work and remaining faithful to their chosen work path.

In our opinion, when talking about professional education, we should talk about its two important components, such as professional information and professional propaganda. But it is at this stage that a common mistake is made — instead of spreading

comprehensive information about all possible professions and their relevance in economics and culture, they usually switch to career guidance, which is directly related to the production organizations and higher education institutions in the region.

Career guidance work involves conducting it with great pedagogical tact. By orienting students toward professions that are in demand in the country (region), it is necessary to observe such an important principle as connection with life, avoiding all kinds of pressure, pressure on the consciousness of a young person, stopping the impulses of fashion for certain professions. V. Shubkin brilliantly demonstrated this in his representative studies on the professional orientations of schoolchildren. He convincingly showed and proved that in the 1960s and 1970s, the desire and aspirations of young people and the needs of the national economy for personnel were mutually exclusive pyramids: figuratively speaking, the number of people who wanted to become astronauts and artists was hundreds to thousands of times higher than the number of people who wanted to work in production (Shubkin, 1970).

But real life demonstrated the discrepancy between the behavior of young people and the needs of society. This inadequate situation can be described as a discrepancy between dreams (even sincere ones) and the further choice of a work path, which inevitably led to a deformed social reaction to attitudes toward work, to disappointments, to a decrease in civic engagement and, consequently, to the fact that the potential inherent in nature and education was not tapped either for the benefit of society or for the benefit of the person themselves.

In the realization of awareness, the first place, of course, belongs to the school. But this activity is often limited to telling stories and meeting with representatives of those professions that are “at hand”, i.e. using what is available in a given city, in a particular region. The efforts of schools are

<sup>8</sup> Savitskaya N. (2025). What to expect from the next educational reform. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. May 22.

often complemented by the work of children's art houses (former pioneer palaces), which offer an introduction to a wide range of professional fields, including technical, artistic, natural science, physical culture, sports, and socio-pedagogical. We should note that in 1957, 2,153 pioneer palaces and houses were functioning in the USSR, but according to expert estimates (there are no official statistics), about 500 of them have been preserved in Russia.

The participation of children's and school periodicals in informing and promoting professions has not changed for the better. Instead of magazines that have lost their appeal and popularity, such as "Young Engineer", "Young Naturalist", "Quantum", "Chemistry and Life" and other educational publications aimed at the younger generation, entertainment magazines such as "Young Scrabble", "Toshka and Company", "Minecraft" or aimed at developing interest in business and entrepreneurship ("Think" and "Think Kids"), as well as building leadership skills and financial literacy (the magazine from the Lovely Beetle business school and the "I'm in Business" program). As a result, mass professions related to participation in productive labor in most sectors of the national economy and culture have dropped out of the information field. To be fair, it should be noted that intensive efforts are currently underway to restructure these labor-related orientations. This is exemplified by the sharply increased attention given to engineering and technical specialties: in the 2025 admission cycle, such fields have been allocated 41% of the total number of state-funded (budget) places at universities.

Thus, the restructuring of vocational education is an essential prerequisite for achieving nation-wide goals set out in national programs and projects aimed at increasing productive work.

In the meantime, we can conclude that vocational education needs to be radically restructured at all levels of work with youth, both in schools and in each region, and in the country as a whole, in

the policy of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation.

### ***Career guidance as a process of forming professional attitudes***

The main purpose of career guidance is to prepare young people for a conscious choice of a future profession. In other words, on the basis of professional education, after familiarizing students with existing and possibly new professions, they will have to form their preliminary interest in future work options. It is assumed that at this stage schoolchildren focus on a more detailed assimilation of the essence and functions of the desired profession, the skills and abilities necessary for it, its social assessment, as well as obtaining information about educational institutions that train relevant personnel (Apostolov, 2011, p. 61). Sometimes students receive professional counseling; they undergo diagnostics – most often it is testing; they receive psychological support (for more information, see Pryazhnikova, 2010). However, this structure was dismantled in the 1990s.

Now this activity is being revived. Currently, such forms as meetings with representatives of the professions that young people intend to choose, specialized clubs in their chosen specialty, and in some cases specialized (engineering, medical, pedagogical, and economic) classes have become widely used in schools. Universities are organizing such new forms of interaction with schoolchildren as pre-university meetings, Olympiads and competitions; educational and practical associations are being created. In recent years, social media have joined the implementation of career guidance programs, which not only inform, but also organize classes in various specialties. However, as the analysis shows, many of these forms of work are rather poorly distributed, do not cover all participants, and are often conducted formally. In this situation, schoolchildren and their peers in small towns are excluded from many forms of

influence. And such forms as specialized classes have their own specifics, since they are organized at the request of parents and/ or students, and not based on the needs of the economy and culture. So, as of 2023, there were only 131 engineering classes in high school, which, in our opinion, is clearly insufficient; at the same time, economic, legal and medical classes are massively represented (Anisimov, 2024). Such a form as pre-universities exists only in large cities, their number is also insignificant.

In addition to these institutional efforts, serious contradictions of a socio-psychological nature, the time of professional self-determination, and the choice of a profession or direction of future activity that will form the basis of a life strategy lie on the path of career guidance (Leontiev, Shelobanova, 2001).

Real life has shown that significant discrepancies continue to exist on the path of career guidance between the instructions, recommendations and measures formulated in official documents and what young people are guided by before entering the university. According to the Institute of Sociology FCTAS RAS (a survey of 4,000 young professionals from 207 enterprises and institutions in 41 regions of the Russian Federation in 2021), the meaningful (ideal) aspirations of young people have a pronounced social significance: 57% said that they are focused on the desire to get their chosen specialty; 40.5% are attracted by the high demand for their profession, 30.6% by the prestige of their chosen profession; 29% by its social significance; 27.4% by high wages; 26.4% by career prospects. It is worth paying attention to the “family tradition” indicator, which is mentioned by 14.2% of respondents. But in reality, when choosing a place of study, other orientations often prevail, which torpedo the social significance of the chosen training. These instrumental means of studying at the chosen university include the availability of budget places (50.5% of respondents) and low competition (17%). Although there are rational

and acceptable orientations: 37.3% mentioned the image of the university and 10.6% – job security, of considerable importance are practical considerations often related to the financial situation of the family: 18.1% of respondents consider proximity to home important and another 17% – the presence of a dormitory (Gorshkov et al., 2023, pp. 83–84, 87).

A comparison of these data shows that when finally choosing a university where the student wants to study, meaningful (ideal) goals and orientations often fade into the background, and practical expediency comes to the fore, which may not coincide with previous intentions. Here, in our opinion, lies one of the reasons for the discrepancy between the initial conviction of the advantages of the desired profession and the real decision to choose the profession that, due to a number of circumstances, had to be accepted. A young individual may never get used to their chosen profession, let alone fall in love with it, make it the meaning, the basis of their professional activity. This leads to frustration, discontent, doubt, or passive adherence to the chosen path, which really threatens to turn a person into a “commonplace” representative of low-quality work in the future (for more information, see: Toshchenko, 2023).

Also, one should not discount the selfish and even opportunistic preferences of young people when choosing a profession, which are often influenced by external circumstances: the fashion for professions, as in the case of lawyers, economists and managers, as well as studying only to get a diploma<sup>9</sup>.

#### ***Professional selection in the learning process***

First of all, we note that there are a wide variety of interpretations of professional selection in the literature – from the extremely broad (it includes professional information, career guidance, voca-

<sup>9</sup> VCIOM Analytical Review. Available at: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/bolshaya-zarplata-ili-rabota-po-speczialnosti->

tional training, and even employment) to a narrower and, in our opinion, more specific interpretation of it as the beginning of a real entry into future professional activity and consolidation in it in one's working life. It is from these positions that we will consider this phenomenon.

So, the young person became a student, i.e. out of the mass of possible professional offers and intentions, they chose the profession to be mastered, and they should start preparing for future work along this chosen path.

The first sign that indicates the success of mastering a future profession is academic performance. It is a clear focus on achieving positive grades that indicates a stable motivation to gain knowledge in a future profession, as well as the intention to work in this particular specialty. And even in the case when, for one reason or another, a young person switches to another profession (as a rule, after receiving a second education or special retraining courses), their orientation toward achieving new results on the basis of a solid science-based education is confirmed. As a rule, a contingent of students who are clearly focused on obtaining their chosen profession regularly replenish their knowledge and expand their competencies not only during their studies, but also through participation in scientific events, Olympiads and other competitions, grants, and various activities related to increasing intellectual baggage in their chosen specialty. Even forced or consciously carried out employment during studies, related to future work, strengthens their confidence in the correctness of the chosen professional activity.

Thus, the first and often crucial element of professional selection is the organization of the educational process. It has a leading role. A rationally and effectively formed educational process, with its constant updating and improvement, helps the student to accumulate knowledge in such a way as to apply it most successfully in future practical life. However, "the

modern system of higher education is of a very low quality. There is a great loss of time, and this is in the presence of overload, lack of time. The time that a student spends in classrooms is not being used as effectively as possible"<sup>10</sup>.

In other words, the educational process at universities faces fundamentally new challenges in the context of the ongoing industrial revolution. Now life puts forward different requirements for the training of specialists. A higher education institution, first of all a university, focusing on mastering science-intensive technologies, is designed to "give a young person not only solid fundamental knowledge, but also the opportunity to feel like a participant in real processes, to be able to quickly navigate the flow of information. It is important that a person is armed not with thousands of ready-made recipes, among which there may not be the right one, but with a method of obtaining them, both well-known and new" (Karelina, 2003, p. 3).

The traditional form of organizing the educational process can be characterized as contact, communicating learning, purposefully guided, based on a disciplinary and subject principle and complemented by such forms of improving the quality of training for future specialists as participation in various scientific and practical events, competitions, involvement in research, practical activities to introduce innovative ideas directly in production. This activity reinforces professional qualities already in the learning process and increases the likelihood of a student's final commitment to their chosen specialty.

But the actual learning process does not always happen or end successfully. According to both statistical and sociological data, from 15 to 25% or even 30% of students drop out, depending on the university and the profile of their chosen

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see: Zimnaya I.A. (2002). *Pedagogical Psychology: Textbook for Universities*. 2nd edition. Moscow: Logos. 384 p. P. 3.



profession, especially in engineering, agricultural and pedagogical universities. There are many reasons behind this, ranging from “untrainable” students who became disillusioned with their chosen profession to financial difficulties in continuing their studies (for more information, see: Ziyatdinova, 1999; Denisova-Schmidt, Leontieva, 2015; Bulanova, 2018).

However, on-the-job internship is of particular importance in the professional selection process as a criterion for the quality of professional selection, due to the fact that one of the acute problems of modern Russian higher education is the unpreparedness (and inability) of university graduates to fully integrate into the production process after graduation.

This problem is reflected in the fact that employers have constantly and for many years expressed complaints about the quality of training of the majority of university graduates, their lack of initial skills to fully engage in work in production (Antonova, 2020). Workers also criticize the level of training of young professionals for practical work, as evidenced by the data of sociological research (Ariskin et al., 2015).

These data correlate with the opinion of 38.7% of students that one of the main trends in modern education is poorly observed – the combination of learning with practice, one of the key points in the necessary improvement of their preparation for future professional life (Toshchenko, 2023).

This situation regarding the professional and labor training of university graduates largely rests on the unresolved most important task – the organization of on-the-job internship.

Of course, there are examples of its worthy organization that deserve not only approval, but also the widest possible application. Thus, Rosneft ensured the organization of regular activities for university teachers and permanent and continuous internship for students, which, as experience shows, is one of the most effective ways to develop

responsibility and build professional competencies<sup>11</sup>. ITMO University (formerly the Leningrad Institute of Fine Mechanics and Optics) has announced the transformation of the university into a scientific and educational corporation, whose goals include creating a unique environment for self-realization.

But these examples remind us of the well-known “lighthouses” in Soviet times – highly efficient enterprises (factories, state farms and collective farms), as well as the outstanding achievements of individual workers who stubbornly refused to become a reality for such organizations or relevant professions in all sectors and spheres of economy and culture.

Experts, teachers and students evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of university graduates’ training for industrial activities very critically. If we carefully analyze their arguments, we will come to the need to talk not only about the principles of its organization, but also about its aspects such as preliminary planning, actual implementation and its effectiveness in terms of preparing students for productive work. The analysis shows that a very strange and even paradoxical situation has developed: currently, on the one hand, there is a lot of talk about improving the educational process itself, about various forms of information transmission and assimilation; on the other hand, there is not enough discussion of the problems faced by a young specialist when he/she has to start performing production tasks. In this regard, there is no answer to the question of what connects or should connect the two processes – academic activity and preparation for future work, in order to minimize collisions during the student’s transition from study to professional activity. This raises the question of on-the-job internship, which, in our opinion, can and should be considered as a criterion for the optimal entry of a young specialist into a

<sup>11</sup> Krapchatova E. (2023). Rosneft helps to provide the industry with young professionals. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. January 16.

full-fledged working life. The students themselves are talking about this. A survey of Orenburg State University students showed that they placed the opportunity to get an internship at a well-known company in the third place in terms of career development (42%), while the second place (48%) was given to the practice during which, in their opinion, additional competencies can be obtained (Miroshnikov et al., 2022, pp. 104–105).

Thus, an analysis of the state of on-the-job internship leads to a disappointing conclusion: this form of training for future specialists needs to be radically revised and a fundamentally different approach to its organization and implementation (for more information, see: Toshchenko, 2024).

An analysis of the practice shows that there are many reasons that give rise to student complaints (that are very different depending on the profile of the university). But they have one thing in common – so far there is a vice inherent in production practice, we can call this vice imitation. Overcoming it is one of the most important indicators that must be taken into account in the upcoming reform of higher education if society, economy and culture want to get skilled specialists.

So, we came to the conclusion that the state of affairs regarding on-the-job internship needs to be significantly reconfigured; it should get rid of such vices as embellishing individual results, reducing the importance of negative aspects, and suppressing information undesirable to the organizers for one reason or another (Fedorova, 2013).

***Professional adaptation: will the educational goals be impemented***

Sociological research data (Institute of Sociology FCTAS RAS, HSE, RGGU, USU, etc.) show that at present the transition from study to work is largely a spontaneous process. This is complemented by the fact that the professional training of many graduates does not meet the needs of a particular labor market, as a result of which

graduates are not ready for the real challenges they face when starting work. As a result, the employment picture looks like this. Currently, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, graduates of engineering fields of study most often find jobs in their specialty: 97% of those who start working immediately after graduation find jobs in industries directly or indirectly related to solving engineering problems. Doctors rank second: 74% of them find work in the healthcare sector. Representatives of pedagogical specialties occupy the third place: 60% are employed in their field, while another 17% are employed in areas indirectly related to education<sup>12</sup>.

Opinion polls show that 29% of graduates got a job with the help of friends, 23% used information from the Internet and the media, 22% were helped by relatives (Gorshkov et al., 2023).

Organized assistance is insignificant – 8% of graduates indicated the assistance of the university's employment service (career centers), 2% indicated the support of city and district employment services. About 2% said they were trying to start their own business and become individual entrepreneurs (Gorshkov et al., 2023). Let us note a new aspect of employment – the participation of recruiting firms. Currently, 162 universities have established contacts with them. This condition allows us to conclude that, on the one hand, the employment of graduates occurs in accordance with the laws of a market economy, rather spontaneously; on the other hand, it leads to an irrational use of the intellectual potential of young professionals due to the influence of a significant number of situational and random factors on this process. Graduates of provincial universities find themselves in particularly unfavorable conditions, since they have significantly fewer such opportunities than their peers in metropolitan and large industrial and socio-cultural centers (for more information, see Druzhinina, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://media.foxford.ru/news/prof-vypuskniki-kakih-vuzov-chasche-rabotaut-po-specialnosti>

The position of employers remains contradictory. They want trained and skilled specialists, but the majority of employers do not actually participate in the training of possible candidates, and reduce their involvement to expressing wishes and recommendations. Even such a form of participation as targeted recruitment in universities is characterized rather ambiguously and needs significant changes.

But these employment paths also have a negative side, which can be indicated by the question: what did university graduates have to face after they got a job, since employers complain about the poor preparedness of university graduates to fully perform their duties within the framework of the position they are applying for. Therefore, according to the Russian Technological University (MIREA), the majority of managers (56.8%) pay more attention to whether the applicant has work experience. Only 27.9% of managers take into account the compliance of the specialty in the diploma with the proposed vacancy. This once again underlines that education itself, even if the proposed job is appropriate, plays an insignificant role<sup>13</sup>. Distrust of the diploma is also indicated by the fact that applicants are often offered jobs that require lower skills, with the promise to consider transferring to the position they are applying for after successfully completing the probation period. At the same time, we should note that 52% of company managers, according to Superjob, organize retraining or additional training for young professionals due to the fact that many of them do not know the latest advances in technology and/or decision-making methods (Ariskin et al., 2015).

When applying for a job and taking the first steps to adapt to the work environment, there are significant differences in the views of the three groups involved in this process: employers, teachers and students. According to the HSE, graduates and

early-career professionals were evaluated according to 11 criteria. The opinion of all these groups coincided only on five supra-professional competencies: “partnership/cooperation”, “information analysis and decision-making”, “communication literacy”, “planning and organization”, “self-development”. At the same time, the opinions of teachers and students did not coincide on a number of important competencies for employers: “customer orientation”, “result orientation”, “following rules and procedures”. Competencies such as “stress tolerance”, “leadership”, “influencing”, and “strategic thinking” were significantly overestimated by students and/or teachers when compared with the opinion of employers. Although teachers and students agree with employers on a number of competencies, however, there are competencies that they overestimate or underestimate, which creates a dangerous discrepancy for the labor market between what requirements employers place on young professionals and what non-professional skills universities and students pay attention to (for more information, see: Stepashkina et al., 2022, p. 20).

Finally, the following socio-psychological circumstance is very important for professional adaptation: how clear and obvious the prospects for career growth and career opportunities in future working life are.

### Conclusion

Summing up the analysis of all the stages of preparing future specialists for productive work: professional enlightenment, professional orientation, professional selection and professional adaptation, in our opinion, it can be argued that all the suggestions and judgments made by experts, students and young professionals show that each of these stages needs significant, and sometimes drastic improvement.

Professional enlightenment should be considered as an independent, separate link in preparing young people to choose not just a profession, but one related to the needs of society, its economy

<sup>13</sup> Bashkatova A. (2024). Higher education still needs to be finalized. *Nezavisimaya gazeta*. May 17.

and culture. In our opinion, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation is not paying enough attention to this so far: in its Order 370, dated May 18, 2023 on approval of the federal educational program for basic general education does not separate professional enlightenment and professional orientation, but, sensing this contradiction, introduces the concept of “early career guidance”. In the meantime, we can argue that there is no effective system that would provide relevant information and make it possible to compare the personal needs and aspirations of young people with the needs of both the country and the region in which they live. These requirements apply not only to the school itself, but also to broader awareness, from the efforts of local and regional authorities to systematic propaganda and clarification in the media of the needs of the spheres of life that are most significant and relevant for a rational combination of personal and public interests.

The career guidance stage is no less important for more concretization of the intentions of young people and the preliminary and often final choice of profession. Here, it is of great importance to organize a specialized network for the additional acquisition of knowledge on the chosen profession, for a deeper understanding of its specifics and essence, as well as the efforts that must be made on the way to mastering it. Three factors are important in achieving this goal: a) universities should organize various forms of explanation, including through social media, with the chosen form of education and subsequent work; b) the work of extracurricular children’s organizations such as children’s art houses, voluntary professional communities, periodicals aimed at youth; c) regular meetings with representatives of the chosen profession, along with visits to their places of work. The latter factor is especially important for those who focus on regional and local interests. We should note that the regional aspect of this problem has recently

become more acute. Through the efforts of the minions of the Bologna process, metropolitan and promising universities accounted for the majority of student enrollment, thus compromising the educational field of many republics, territories and regions. Therefore, it is quite natural that this bias was realized – the share of students from regional universities reached 73% of the total number of students enrolled in the first year<sup>14</sup>.

Especially difficult tasks are at the stage of professional selection, when it is finally determined to what extent the chosen profession becomes the lot of future work. The main efforts to achieve this goal are concentrated in the organization of the educational process. Almost no one doubts that studying at a university is the key to determining a future profession. Doubts arise about how this is done. Comprehensive reform of all levels of education, including higher education, has now begun. At the same time, the fundamentality of education in combination with practice orientation is becoming increasingly important. Therefore, the urgent question is how, in the process of upcoming transformations, to select those resources and reserves that exist in Russian society, but have not yet been fully realized. We should especially note that the widely used paid education is evaluated ambiguously – its economic results are obvious, which cannot be said about its social and cultural costs. There are many noteworthy initiatives in the country, but they remain the focus of individual specific universities.

Finally, it is necessary to achieve a certain harmony and consistency in the work that relates to professional adaptation. So far, entry into working life is carried out “of its own accord”, often spontaneously, based on the characteristics and traditions of the organization in which the young individual begins to work. The need for such a coordinated and scientifically based entry into

<sup>14</sup> Poisk. 2025. Issue 26.



the circle of their professional and at the same time clearly defined responsibilities, depending on the requirements of a particular organization, is confirmed by the data: from 20 to 40% of those who changed their profession and place of work are young professionals in the first three years of work.

All this allows us to conclude that only the consistent provision of all stages of a young specialist's entry into working life guarantees their full-fledged professional socialization, ensures the desired interaction with the real needs of the economy and culture.

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Received July 2, 2025.