



Problems regarding University Graduates' Employment in Different Regions of Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT In current conditions, in Kazakhstan and other countries of the post-Soviet region, problems of university graduates' employment, as well as the complete realization of their professional and personal potentials, are becoming increasingly relevant. The transition from a planned and centralized economy to a market-based one has also led to significant changes in the business. In this paper, the modern economy of Kazakhstan is characterized, indicating that uneven distribution of inhabitants in rural districts, low level of development of rural areas, and specialization of production has created an uneven distribution of labor resources, giving rise to unfavorable features of labor markets. The paper further presents the results of an empirical study via interviewing 1.5 thousand respondents, showing the problems of young professionals and imbalances in the modern labor market in Kazakhstan. Recommendations are also given for improving youth employment system.

INTRODUCTION

In the conditions of modern economy developing at a tremendous pace and as knowledge is updated, new branches of economy, as well as new directions in science, are appearing, and new specialties are being born accordingly; therefore, it is practically impossible to provide them with personnel trained at universities immediately. Therefore, it becomes particularly relevant to study the problems on optimization of the process of mastering these new specialties by workers of traditional trades (Romanov et al. 2015; Kalieva et al. 2015; Warner 2016; Quan and Dong 2019).

Regional features of employment are also studied in the context of demographic characteristics of economically active populations with breakdown to geographical, economic, and political aspects as well as large territorial associations. The problems associated with employment of graduates are explained by the small number of jobs for them on labor market, mismatch of professional and personal qualities of young specialists with requirements of modern labor market, and poor functioning of mechanisms for ordering specialties to train them at universities (Tatibekov 2012; Krabel and

Flöther 2014; Jackson 2014; Sloane 2014; Winters 2014; Assaad and Krafft 2015).

Of great importance in solving problems and contradictions in relationships between the labor market and educational services, as well as youth employment problems, can also be seen in the studies by many Kazakhstani scholars (Employment Problems of Graduates from Universities and Colleges 2018).

Objective

This investigation is to study the results of an empirical study via interviewing 1.5 thousand respondents, showing the problems of young professionals and imbalances in the modern labor market in Kazakhstan.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a structural-functional analysis, and an employment theory were utilized. The structural-functional analysis is a perspective in sociology that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable

patterns of social behavior (Escarza 2016; Parsons 2017).

An employment theory is a set of ideas that try to explain how jobs are created, levels of pay are decided and the part of economics concerned with the level and type of employment in an economy, what causes it to change, etc. (Means et al. 2015; Keynes 2018).

Studies were also conducted in 2017-2018 in Kyzylorda and South Kazakhstan regions by the Information-Analytic Center of Kyzylorda State University named after Korkyt Ata under the leadership of Makhambetova. A total of 1,500 specialists with higher education were accordingly interviewed. The study used a questionnaire-based method. The research task was to shed light on the employment problems of graduates in the labor market in Kazakhstan. During the study, the following results were obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1, representatives of technical (31.7%), financial and economic (36.4%), and pedagogical (23.5%) specialties were disappointed with the chosen profession even at university. Representatives of agricultural (44.4%) and natural-scientific (47.4%) specialties had never been admired by the acquired specialty, indicating problems in the agricultural sector, as mentioned above.

Two main problems of such professional orientations can be distinguished:

- Lack of seriously set career guidance work and low awareness of real professions;
- Inevitable inconsistency of educational and labor markets, which develop according to different rules - prestige, traditions of the region, and the educational system. One more ques-

tion was also asked: "Which of the following companies would you like to find a job at?"

Most of the respondents (50.5%) said that they wanted to work in governmental institutions, 15.9 percent of them desired to work in foreign companies, and 24.5 percent of these individuals stated that they planned to do their own business. The information of Table 1 shows that young people mainly want to work in state-run enterprises since workers can benefit from more social guarantees and stable wages.

Features of the labor market in Kazakhstan are determined by several factors. The conjuncture of the jobs in the regional labor market is limited due to low population density and narrow market specialization. As a result, the discrepancy between demand and supply of labor is growing, degree of use of labor resources, and its efficiency has significantly reduced, and constitutional rights to labor for rural residents are limited as to their implementation. The structure of the regional sphere of employment, in comparison with other areas, also depends on climatic and seasonal circumstances in its formation.

The labor market in Kazakhstan is developing unevenly. The largest number of the unemployed youth aged 16 to 28 years and registered at the employment centers were observed in southern Kazakhstan region (1.9 thousand people), Astana, and eastern Kazakhstan region (1 thousand people each), 0.9 thousand people in Atyrau region, and 0.8 thousand people in the Mangistau region.

By territorial affiliation, approximately equal numbers of the unemployed were in the city and in the countryside (43.3% or 4 thousand people were rural residents, and 56.7% or 5.2 thousand people were living in urban regions).

Table 1: Representatives of respondents disappointed with their chosen profession

<i>When disappointed with a chosen profession</i>	<i>Faculty</i>						
	<i>Technical</i>	<i>Humanitarian</i>	<i>Medical</i>	<i>Agrarian</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Pedagogical</i>	<i>Financial and economic</i>
Still during training at high school	31.7	12.5	22.2	11.1	15.8	23.5	36.4
After graduation	34.9	45.8	44.4	44.4	31.6	29.4	36.4
Never been admired by the acquired specialty	27.0	20.8	22.2	44.4	47.4	35.3	9.1
Do not remember	6.3	20.8	11.1	0.0	5.3	11.8	18.2

The largest share of the unemployed youth aged 16 to 28 years from the total number of registered was in the Atyrau region (76.7%) and Almaty region (73.7%). A smaller number was in Atyrau, Almaty, and Zhambyl regions; from 23.3 to 29.6 percent.

Thus, to achieve effective youth employment, it is necessary to regulate the labor market in the following areas:

- ♦ Examination of legal and social support mechanisms for young professionals;
- ♦ Expanding the supply of practical counseling services for university graduates as subjects of the labor market and the introduction of a “career coaching” model working in psychological and organizational direction of activities in career centers at universities;
- ♦ Further development of social partnership interaction between universities and employers;
- ♦ Improvement of methods and technologies for recording employment indicators in each university and employment center;
- ♦ Development of the curricula of higher education institutions following the requirements of employers and society;
- ♦ Introduction of special practical courses for students.

Today, in Kazakhstan, reforms are underway, and numerous programs and projects are being developed aimed at development in various fields. Some of them are being implemented, and some are not. Besides, many scientists and experts see the root causes of problems related to labor values such as staff shortages, corruption, neglect of duties, low level of professionalism, weak commitment to innovation, slowness in implementation of entrepreneurship.

Statistics indicate that if 88.3 thousand young specialists graduated in 2009 from Kazakhstani universities, then in 2017, their number doubled (176.1 thousand people). Analyzing them by specialties, it was found that most of them were teachers as well as specialists in economics and law. According to the department, it turned out that every year demands for qualified personnel in technical specialties in the field of mining, chemical industry, construction, energy, etc. are growing.

Now, let us dwell on the main object of the study - university graduates. For example, accord-

ing to the World Values Survey, 75.2 percent of young Kazakhstani specialists were worried that they would not be able to find a job. Also, 66.5 percent of the respondents chose the option “The government should be more responsible for the well-being of all citizens,” 33.5 percent of them answered with the option, “People should be more responsible for achieving self-sufficiency.” In the studies conducted by the Zhastar Research Centre, material difficulties, employment, and fulfillment of higher education had also been mentioned as the main problems of the youth. At the same time, 46 percent of the young people answered, “I cannot do business, and I do not know how to do it” to the question “How do you look at the possibility of doing business?” (Musapirova 2018).

There are several reasons why young professionals can be mobile in the labor market. The first one is connubiality status. Free youth is more mobile than married people found that young people who had just graduated from high school tended to work outside their home region (Fursova et al. 2018). That is, those who have never been married are more mobile than married or divorced people of their age, and women usually follow their husbands.

The second reason is socio-economic status. The processes of youth mobility also depend on various socio-economic factors. The choice of an educational institution from another city depends on an increase in family income, which also contributes to mobility. High income and status of graduates are associated with their migration to other regions and getting an education.

In his research, Gibbs (1998) found that 75 percent of the rural youth were doing higher education in another city, of which one-third had returned to their hometown, and two-thirds were living in other places for up to 25 years old. There are such types of products as agriculture, mining, and jobs typical of rural areas. They often do not require highly qualified specialists, but, for urban jobs, highly qualified specialists are usually required. As a result, this leads to a “leak of the intelligence” from rural areas (Fursova et al. 2017).

In modern Kazakhstan, internal migration also has the following characteristics:

1. The main migration flow is directed to Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, and the western regions;
2. There is a steady influx of migrants into areas with a high level of prosperity;

3. The main part of migration flows are young people;
4. The main factor in the migration flow is the availability of higher education and high salaries.

By territorial affiliation, 43.3 percent of the total number of the registered or 4 thousand people were rural residents, and 56.7 percent or 5.2 thousand people among the participants in the study were from urban regions. Among the regions, the largest part of the unemployed youth aged 16 to 28 of the total number of registered people living in Atyrau region - 76.7 percent, Almaty region - 73.7 percent, Zhambyl region - 70.4 percent, Kyzylorda region - 64.6 percent. The smallest share of the unemployed youth was also in Mangistau, Ak-tobe, Pavlodar, and North Kazakhstan regions, from 32 to 39.7 percent. Among urban residents, the number of registered unemployed individuals prevailed in the Mangistau region - 68 percent, Ak-tobe region - 67 percent, Pavlodar region - 61.5 percent, North Kazakhstan - 60.3 percent, West Kazakhstan - 59.3 percent. Of these, the least number was in Atyrau, Almaty, and Zhambyl regions, from 23.3 to 29.6 percent (AEC GCS 2018), characterizing the uneven distribution of labor resources in the territorial labor markets. To analyze the problems of employment, the regional markets of Kazakhstan are accordingly investigated.

First, concerning their market economic situation, many rural workers themselves are both owners and the main labor force at their enterprises. Making changes in the meaning of the actions of agricultural workers is thus determined by the ability to engage in agriculture in a market situation.

Secondly, the crisis of financial and economic situation of agricultural production and construction makes it impossible to finance non-productive sectors of the region and increase production volumes. The quality of the types of social services in rural areas and the decrease in their volume proceeds from the development of social infrastructure and leads to a decrease in the labor potential of the region. As a result, demands for labor in the production and non-production sectors have reduced.

Thirdly, balances between the center and the regions have been lost due to an increase in the supply of labor in the former and the reduction of jobs in the latter. An increase in the supply of labor has also occurred due to a decline in production

and a decrease in the introduction of new jobs. The elimination of jobs has thus reduced the need for labor.

Fourth, hidden unemployment has emerged in addition to open unemployment, and there is the difficulty of determining its volume, and in connection with this, the complexity of its regulation. In the course of the present study, the following questions were asked from the respondents: "When do graduates of different faculties get disappointed with their chosen profession?"

CONCLUSION

Summing up, it can be argued that university graduates are the most important subjects of socio-economic relations. At present, the shortage of personnel is deeply felt in the economy of Kazakhstani society. Moreover, staffing issues are especially relevant for those employers who are ready to hire young professionals. The contradiction prevails in the mutual expectations of employers and graduates, potentials of young specialists, and their personal and professional qualities do not meet the requirements of employers. The last is waiting for active and highly educated specialists in their profession who are confident in their knowledge, fluent in new computer technologies, able to quickly adapt to the modern needs of society and striving for career growth in the chosen industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that the content of this research paper be studied in light of other aspects of this issue and to consider the problems of employment of university graduates in different regions of Russia in order to provide an overview.

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