

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING VOCATIONAL CHOICE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Vocational choice is one of the important and difficult choices in a person's life, which has critical influence to many aspects of professional and social life. Increasing of the role of personal factors in decision-making process in professional sphere is one of the most significant trends in current research in this field. Processes of intensification and increased competition on the labor market, vocational choice and its efficacy become more and more important and responsible decision made by students. Motivational factors have a critical impact on vocational choice and play the central role in explanation and prediction of career opportunities, unemployment and well-being in the future. This study is aimed to investigating key motivational factors and professional and educational expectations, which significantly determine vocational preferences of the first-year students. Integration of existing approaches allowed to combine different sources of data about students' motivation and include into analysis various dimensions of the motivation. Comparison analysis of motivational factors, current grades and occupational preferences promotes opportunities of explanation, regulation and predicting career development on the personal level as well as on level of regional and national labor market.

Key words: vocational choice, education, motivation

JEL Code: I25, J20, J24

Introduction

A number of studies have attempted to define motivational factors related to vocational choice. The variety of instruments, methodologies and techniques were employed to determine the leading motivations for training in a particular field of study and level of education. Many studies and observations show that occupational choice is determined by

many factors, such as expectations (Vroom, 1964), type of motivation (Clark and Trow, 1966), student's orientation towards university (Long, 1977), parent education (Shoffner and Klemer, 1973; Werts, 1973) and reference group influences (Edleson and Crowe, 1960).

At the present time, the problem of vocational choice is very important and challenging for Russia, especially in the context of last education reform, transformation of values of the new generations, social and economic changes in the society. Increasing gap between the number of graduates in some professional and academic fields and real demands of the national labor market is one of the central challenges of the modern Russian society and education system. As a result of vocational choice and motivations of the high-school students, the number of graduates in economics and other social sciences obviously is over and above what is needed, while lack of technicians and engineers is dramatically affects many sectors of the national economy.

The objective of our research is to define and analyze the most common motivations of the first-year students in Russia, underlying their professional choice. This motivations affect not only future occupation but also many social and educational activities of the students – participation in academic and research activities, grades and productivity on the future job position. Understanding these motivations is critical for predicting labor market issues and developing programs to improve the efficiency of occupational choices and better fit education system to the actual market demands.

1 Method

There are a broad variety of instruments and approaches to measure motivations of college students in the context of occupational choice. According Wightwick's research results, measured vocational interests of students are not as valid as predictor of vocational choice as are self-expressed preferences (Wightwick,). Also, Holland reported that there is clear evidence that students self-reports about their vocational choice are much more predictive than any other evidence available (Cohen, 1971).

In order to analyze student's professional motivations the method of semi-structured cognitive interview was used. Interview structure included questions about reasons to attend the particular school and professional area; also questions about expected results and outcomes of the received education were asked during the interviewing process. In order to increase the validity of results, some of questions were rephrased and participants were asked

to explain and clarify all the complex and potentially ambiguous concepts they mentioned in their answers.

Then, method of content analysis was employed to classify answers of the respondents into major groups, describing the primary motivations and expectations. Number of mentions of each concept was estimated in order to build universal and common types of motivations of vocational choice.

2 Sample

The sample includes 64 subjects (37 male; 27 female), randomly drawn from first-year students at Novosibirsk State Academy of Water Transport. In order to identify as large as possible magnitude of vocational motivations, both groups of full-time (35 subjects) and part-time (29 subjects) students were interviewed.

Tab. 1: Title of table (Times New Roman, 12 pt. bold)

	Full-Time Students	Part-Time Students
Male (%)	54.3	62.0
Female (%)	45.7	38.0
Totals (N=134)	35	29

Source: author

All subjects are first-year students, because we need to isolate motivation of student's professional choice from other possible motivations, which may appear during the process of education. In order to avoid possible influence of peers, friends and referent group, participants were interviewed individually, than all the responses were collected into the database and analyzed.

3 Motivational factors of vocational choice

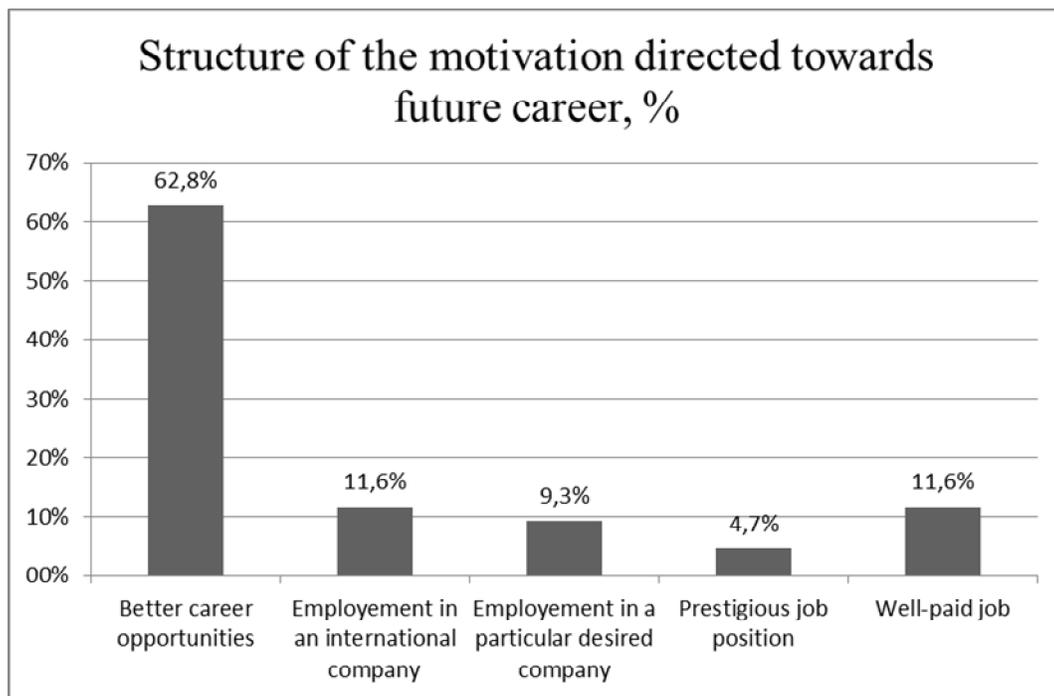
Content analysis was chosen as the proper qualitative method of treating the data. At the first stage all the mentioned by respondents concept were identified and collected into the database. This concepts included different motivations and expected outcomes related to the current education and future occupation. Some of these concepts were mentioned by the majority of the participants ("prestigious or well-paid job", "professional knowledge", "interesting job", "career opportunities", "formal document of education", "increased salary", etc.). The whole list of preliminary motivational concepts includes 25 items total, each of the

concept was mentioned at least twice by different respondents during the cognitive interviewing process.

On the next stage the major groups of motivations were determined. Items from the preliminary 25-concept list were distributed between following groups of motivations of vocational choice:

1. *Future career opportunities.* This motivation was demonstrated by the majority of the respondents (67% of the subjects). This motivation directed towards better job positions in future, well-paid and more prestigious occupation, occupation in well-known international company or in a specific desired company. In terms of V. Gerchikov’s typological theory of work motivation (MoType theory), this type of motivation is can be defined as instrumental or “commercant”, because students exploit their received degree and knowledge in order to achieve future career goals and opportunities (Gerchikov, 2005). Different formulations of this motivation are presented in the figure below (fig. 1):

Fig. 1: Structure of the motivation directed towards future career:



Source: author

Most of the respondent are motivated by better career opportunities in future, but more than 20% of the respondents were more specific: almost 10% are planning to take a job in a particular company, and 11% are oriented to work in an international companies. This

formulations allow to predict relatively higher level of efforts during educational process compared with those, who expecting better opportunities in future as a result of graduation.

Academic achievements and actual level of knowledge are important for this group of students if commensurately related to increased career opportunities, expected wage rate and possibility to be employed in a specific desired organization; if this relation is unclear or ambiguous, students, reported about this type of motivations are more likely to feel anxiety and frustration about education process, have low grades and interrupt their training.

2. *Desired work-role.* These motivations are directed towards desired types of activities on the specific job positions and highly related to the future job satisfaction. Students, demonstrated this type of motivation are intrinsically directed to perform a specific work role after graduation which may be desirable for them because of its' social importance, fit with personal attitudes and interests, possibilities to apply specific skills and knowledge. For this motivational pattern "*it is important what to do, rather than how well it is paid*". Only about 8% of the subjects have demonstrated this type of motivation. In terms of Gerchikov's theory framework this approach can be related to "professional" motivation; this individuals are interested in developing of competences and work-related skills because it is important for the work, they like to do. The process of education, quality of instruction and good fit with specific student's interests are essentially important from the point of view of these students.

3. *Self-improvement.* This motivation is not directly linked with future career, occupation or financial well-being of the subject. It is self-directed interest, which may include such concepts as "becoming more intelligent or educated", "better understanding the world", "become more effective", "to learn how to make decisions". These objectives are universal and may be applied in many real life situations but are not directly related to the occupational sphere. About 29% of the subjects reported about this type of motivation.

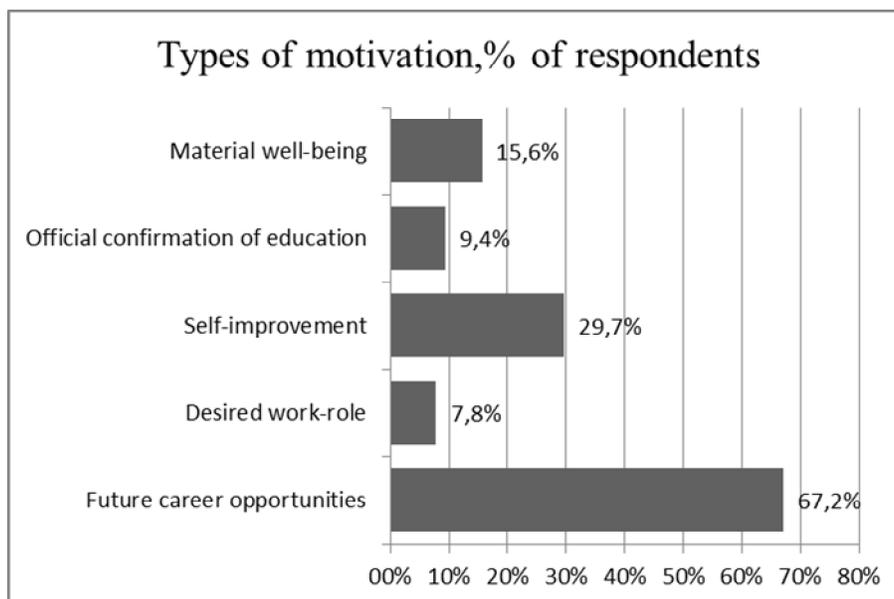
4. *Official confirmation of education.* This is a very specific motivation in the Russian federation, which conceptualizes the aim to achieve only formal confirmation of the education (university diploma), but the real content of training, knowledge and actual professional and academic skills are not the desired objective of a person. The fact of obtaining university diploma is the only one goal for this group of respondents. Related to the Gerchikov's classification, this students may be identified individuals with "avoiding motivation"; they do not want to learn, but they have to do that because of labor market requirements, influence of parents or important others. About 10% of the respondents have reported about avoiding motivation. It is important to note, that this type of motivation does not stimulate academic

success, efforts towards better grades and training results and it is one of the major motivational problem for Russian students and national education and science.

5. *Material well-being*. This motivation highly correlates with motivation towards better career opportunities and desired job positions ($r=0.8$). In this context education plays the instrumental role in achieving material well-being, desired financial status and salary. 16% of respondents demonstrated this type of motivation.

Five types of student's motivations are very different and stimulate different behaviors and productivity of educational process. The diagram below presents the percentage of respondents mentioned each type of motivation in the context of vocational choice (fig. 2). According to the results presented, the majority of students are expecting better career opportunities as the main advantage of education: they expect higher level of salary, more prestigious starting job position, more intensive career development; in contrast, for only 7.8% of the respondents future work role and substantial characteristics of job are very important (work-role motivation). This situation can be explained by relative low level of wages in the Russian Federation, which stimulates materialistic-oriented motivation and makes people to ignore substantial parameters of the work they do on their job position.

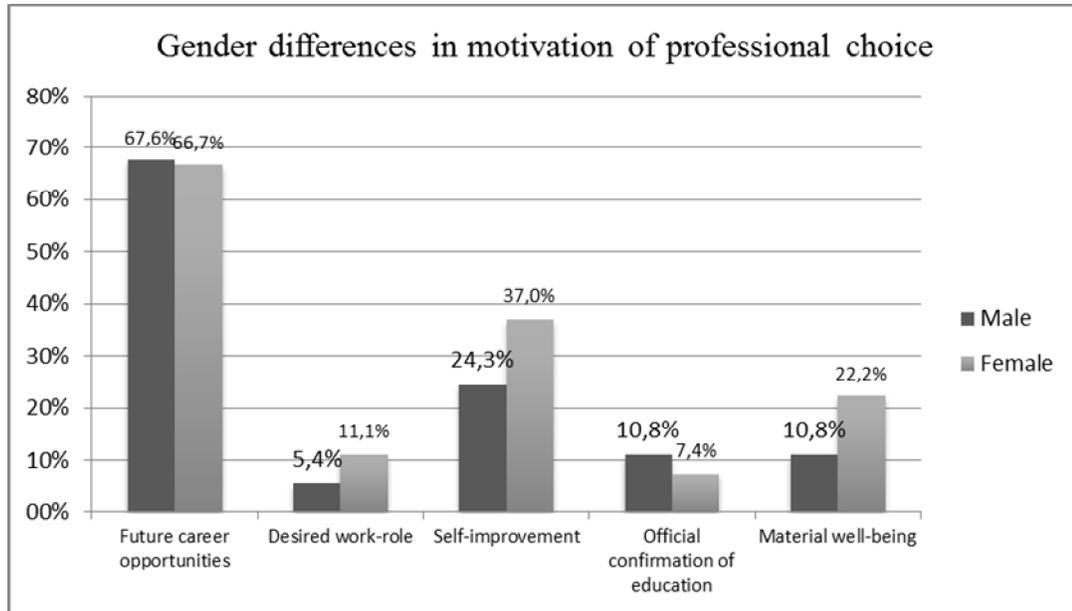
Fig. 2: Respondents, demonstrated different types of motivation, %.



Source: author

The second important direction for the analysis is gender differences in motivation of professional choice. Many studies have reported about significant differences in values structure, professional expectations, interests and motivation between males and females. The diagram below (Fig. 3) presents gender differences in motivation of professional choice among first-year students.

Fig. 2: Gender differences in motivation of professional choice



Source: author

Results of comparative analysis of motivational structure of male and female respondents revealed some significant differences in loadings of some components of motivation of professional choice. While the percentage of individuals with dominating instrumental (future career opportunities) is equal for males and females (67.6% and 66.7%, respectively), the frequencies of professional (desired work role), self-improvement and orientation to the material well-being significantly differ.

Male respondents are significantly less orientated towards self improvement (24.3% compared to 37% for females) and desired work role (5.4% compared to 11.1% for females) and are more likely to be motivated by the formal confirmation of received education (10.8% compared to 7.4% for females). Interestingly, the material well being as an outcome of received education is very important for 22.2% of the female respondents, while for males this percentage is only 10.8%.

Conclusion

In general, results of this study are consistent with many previous studies of motivation in Russia. Secondary education is extremely important not only for achieving career opportunities and prestigious job positions, but also for employment status and satisfactory wage. Many students in Russia are motivated not by the importance of the future work and actual utility for the society. Self-directed and instrumental motivations are dominating at this moment on the national labor market and education system. Also, some significant gender differences in the motivation structure were revealed: male students are more motivated by formal confirmations of education level, but females more often were focused on desired work roles, possibilities of self-improvement and future material benefits.

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