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Dmitry Kurakin

**Russian Longitudinal Panel
Study of Educational
and Occupational Trajectories:
Building Culturally-Sensitive
Research Framework**



HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
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Longitudinal cohort studies of life trajectories are progressively gaining international renown as the most relevant methods for studying education, socialization, and labor market, among other related issues. The Russian Longitudinal Panel Study of Educational and Occupational Trajectories is the first national-scale project of this type in contemporary Russia, and is aimed at improving the current lack of reliable high-quality data on this issue. The benefits of the longitudinal design for causal analysis are much discussed in literature and well acknowledged by scholars. Our study strives to combine the traditional benefits of quantitative analysis with the advantages of cultural-oriented interpretive analysis in sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Another important feature of this study is enriching the data from the national panel with the data from international tests of student competences, namely PISA and TIMSS. In this paper I shed light on the aims, context, perspectives and ambitions of the study; discuss the conceptual benefits, restrictions, and implicit assumptions of the approach; observe the methodological design, and briefly review the main research questions that shaped the study.

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Introduction

Education is progressively becoming a center of major contemporary debates in social and economic sciences, attracting the attention of scholars, policy-makers, and a wider audience. Since modernity, education has become a cornerstone for national policies and economies, cultural and institutional reproduction, social development and the foundation of social (de)stability. Far from being just a means of transmission for those fundamental forces and processes, education became a place and an environment where culture and meanings, power and inequality emerge and take shape. As a part of this process, universities have taken the position of institutions that are simultaneously at the core of modern society, and outside its regular rhythms, an ambiguous and symbolically powerful position similar to the position of monasteries in the Middle Ages. This symbolic status has made universities one of the major cultural attractors of our times for both elites and the masses, and sacred spaces outside the life circle routines. Schools, in turn, became the main arenas not just for socialization and enlightenment, but also for forming modern man's fundamental characteristics. Embracing the vast majority of population, universities provide people with common experiences and collectively shared knowledge and competences, both tacit and explicit. Authority and trust, cultural memory and political legitimacy, perceptions of good, reason and beauty — all of these cultural structures and social adjustments are being substantially shaped within educational institutions.

The idea that social structure is being built in schools and universities has become a commonplace now, and it inspires educational scholars to improve and develop advanced methods to analyze the nature and substance of this relationship. How exactly does education contribute to social life, culture, the economy and social progress? What is really happening in the classrooms and around them? What are contemporary schools and universities as such — how to describe them adequately? Those philosophical questions explicitly or implicitly stand behind all empirical research. At the same time they are progressively becoming key factors in educational policymaking; conjectures, guesses, metaphors and (often outdated) theoretical constructions are being

used as the basis for university ratings and national education reform strategies, while in fact these issues are uncertain and under-researched. It is especially important to keep those questions in mind in a reflexive way while building the design of an empirical study, since it is becoming more and more clear that the traditional metaphors of education, which determined its understanding for decades (such as “education as a commodity” and “education as functional sub-system of society”), are progressively inadequate for understanding what education is and how it works in the modern world.

Post-structuralists were the first to demonstrate with full clarity that what is going on in universities and schools is much deeper and more fundamental for human nature than just obtaining in-demand skills for the labor market, or operating an intellectual market. Thus, Jean Baudrillard assumed that education makes people interiorize the reality of the all-embracing structures of the “code”, whose dominance is a general principle of contemporary life [Baudrillard, 1993]. Educational institutions, thus, make people anthropologically appropriate for social life in the days of simulacra and hyperreality. Michel Foucault, in turn, believed that routines of disciplinary institutions, such as schools, incorporate the administrative order into human bodies, and shape the linkage between knowledge and power [Foucault, 1995; 1998]. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated that education is the main place where social inequality establishes, reproduces, and legitimates itself [Bourdieu, Passeron, 1977]. Those and several other theories have widened our understanding of what is going on in schools and universities to such an extent that it is impossible anymore to take it for granted.

If we wish to open this black box of education, we have to find a relevant method, and many traditional techniques are inappropriate. An efficient way to question education empirically is to trace students’ trajectories before, during and after their education. Universities and schools can resist clear understanding, appearing to be mysterious or even transcendental entities, but the life courses of the students passing through them are real, identifiable, and researchable. We can build and test our theories concerning those entities with the reliable support of data on those life courses. Thus, this kind of data is highly demanded and valuable both for international academia and national policymakers.

Longitudinal panel studies are designed to solve this task. This empirical design offers greater hope of solving the eternal puzzles of causal analysis: what are the causes and what are the consequences when speaking about effects of quality of education, influence of social class and cultural background, competences, attitudes, and attainment? Cross-sectional analysis, indeed, do not allow us to answer those questions. Moreover, a longitudinal design allows for not only causal but also interpretive reconstruction of meaningful complexes — the meanings of long-term choices in education and career, accounts of decisions, basic strategies, etc. — since they can only be coherent when connected to motives and accounts in the past and future. In sum, this type of study finally gives us a chance to understand what is going on in educational institutions, how people make educational and occupational choices, and how they are related.

The Russian longitudinal study of educational and professional trajectories was initiated in 2009 at the National Research University Higher School of Economics¹. The study grew out of the long-term demands from advanced educational scholars in Russia and abroad, who are highly interested in sustainable data and aware of the limitations of traditional cross-surveys. The longitudinal study became the first contemporary national-scale cohort-designed panel study, and in this sense it complements the “Russian Longitudinal Monitoring Survey” (RLMS), which is currently the most reliable and widely used (though not cohort but household-based) set of longitudinal data in Russia. By virtue of the international focus of the study, on a mid- and long-term horizon it will contribute to making Russian education and labor market much more visible for international scholars, improving upon the current lack of valid data. It will also provide policymakers with reliable data, allowing for the development of research-based policy. This is of special importance

¹ The study was started by the initiative of Dr. Isak Froumin and hosted by the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics. The project has been performed from 2009 till 2012 under the guidance of Dr. Dmitry Popov. Since 2012 the project is lead, integrated and coordinated by the Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education under my supervision. This program text, thus, reflects research strategy and basic principles of the second period of the project development.

since Russia is experiencing the consequences of both general institutional change and particular educational reforms. Because of the special focus on interpretive cultural-oriented inquiry, which is not typical for such kind of studies, the study is aimed at the development of new spheres and methods of academic research, such as cultural sociology of education, and combines causal and interpretive analysis.

Meaning of trajectory: interpretive sociological message of the study

As many other seemingly user-friendly concepts, the concept of *trajectory* is in fact vague and underdetermined. Technically it is often seen simply as a sequence of more or less important (i.e. relevant from a certain analytical perspective) events of a personal or group history. For example, one could speak of a personal pathway, such as changing schools, graduation, entering a university and so on, as an individual educational trajectory.

However, this seemingly conceptually neutral vision contains deeply embedded implicit statements. First of all, if a sequence of events fits into the trajectory, it is both explicitly and implicitly implied that there should be a way to explain the trajectory as a whole, not just as a set of unrelated points. Similarly, in the empirical sciences, a measured curve can usually be approximated by some mathematical function, which is seen as a “law” that stands behind the empirical appearance and explains it (i.e. the curve in general and its every point as a single event). Thus, trajectory vision means that a pathway is seen as a unity, and every event on the pathway can be theoretically implied from (or understood based on) the logic or general principle of the trajectory. Thus, if a researcher treats people’s life decisions drawing on the term “trajectory”, he or she implies its unity.

Secondly, and less obviously, the trajectory must be seen as a unity not only by the researcher, but also by the actor himself. This is a necessary pre-condition for the relevance of the term. It is not just superimposed arbitrarily by the observer, but shared as an implicit precondition.

tion of meaningful human action. The principle of “double hermeneutics” [Giddens, 1976] should be taken into account to adequately understand the heuristic and conceptual power of the notion. Every decision people make, such as which university to choose, or which profession to study for, is not in fact “atomic”, and cannot be treated adequately as a single independent event with a separate meaning and reasons. The only way to reconstruct its meaning is to explore a longer temporal perspective, which includes previous and further choices, other decisions and events, and their meanings. As Alasdair MacIntyre puts it: “the behavior is only characterized adequately when we know what the longer and longest-term intentions invoked are and how the shorter-term intentions are related to the longer” [MacIntyre, 1984, p. 241]. This is why the longitudinal design of the study is well founded not only from the point of view of positivist-oriented causal analysis, but also for an interpretive perspective.

The major theoretical resource to reflect this vision of trajectory as a unity is the conception (or, strictly speaking, conceptions) of the *narrative identity* [MacIntyre, 1984; Ricoeur, 1988; 1991]. The conception can aid the understanding of the trajectory because it provides clear reasons and mechanisms that stand behind the unity of the trajectory. Peoples’ perception of life as unified borrows from the pattern seen in a narrative. In other words, we learn to treat our lives as unities from the narratives that surround us and intrinsically shape our perception. Thus, narration of life and pathways becomes a primary mechanism of forming personal and collective identity. For example, psychological studies have shown that memory of modern man is shaped to a considerable extent by processes of storytelling, and, in particular, the genre of the autobiography [Nourkova, Bernstein, Loftus, 2004].

If the basic assumptions of the narrative identity conception are correct, then peoples’ decisions and the events of their life course can be understood and characterized by means of basic narratives and cultural structures, which provide meanings for singular events, choices, and the accounts people build about their lives. Those cultural structures and narratives, their elements and characteristics, are the essential means for the interpretive analysis of the trajectories. Since the current study strives for a methodology that combines traditional quantitative analysis

with the analytical means of interpretive perspective, an informational base of the study was complimented with in-depth interviews (see further the “Tracer Element” sub-program).

Typical trajectory as ideal type and constellation: methodological principles of recognizing educational and occupational trajectories

The next important assumption of the study’s conceptual design is that typical educational and occupational trajectories exist. Even intuitively, we can easily assume that there are similar and different individual life courses. Factors that facilitate personal development in one branch of such trajectories can easily turn into barriers in others. For example, state support to individual entrepreneurs can lead to substantially different results compared with social support policies (economic development in one case and sustaining an economically irrational culture of poverty in another). Max Weber has shown that German day-labourers and Polish peasants in the end of XIX century Prussia behave quite differently under the same conditions [Weber, 1980]. Another example one can find in Weber’s writings is that increasing piece-rates for peasants representing traditional and capitalist cultures during a harvest time can lead to directly opposite results: what motivates the latter, dims the enthusiasm of the former [Weber, 2003, p. 59–60]. **The contemporary illustration is gender inequalities differ much quantitatively and substantially depending on the occupational track [Kosyakova et al., 2014].** Average all-national trends, factors and barriers in education and labor market often lose their meaning, their heuristic and explanative power.

Two Weberian concepts, “ideal type” and “constellation”, allow for building such a theoretical construction of the typical trajectory. Reconstructing the ideal types of educational and occupational trajectories is focused on revealing the inner logic of their construction in its specificity. The notion of constellation appeals to Weber’s model of reconstruction patterns of social life. The model implies that typical patterns of so-

“Form of life”: anthropological message of the study

cial action cannot be explained through general trends (such as, for example, the colder the climate, the higher the rate of technical progress). They can be understood only through a reconstruction of historically unique complexes, including both objective (geographical, economical, structural, technological etc.) and meaningful (worldviews, ethical and aesthetical conventions, etc.) circumstances. In our case, different factors affecting educational and occupational trajectories, such as people’s beliefs, strategies and attitudes, personal characteristics, economic and institutional factors, social background, etc., take the shape of persistent complexes, or constellations, whose features are more dependent on the composition, than on the distinct elements.

The typical educational-occupational trajectory is therefore seen as a sustainable and empirically reproducible constellation of meaningful and non-meaningful factors that shape the “form of life”. The concrete typical trajectories can be reconstructed and assembled differently, depending on scale and particular research focus. This is not a strict definition, but rather a general methodological principle that reflects the research strategy at every level and scale.

“Form of life”: anthropological message of the study

We came to see the typical educational-occupational trajectory as the manifestation of a certain “form of life”, which can be seen as the basic subject of research. Educational decisions, professional achievements, and other elements of trajectory must be treated not in isolation, but through the lens of general principles that embrace them. By reconstructing the principles and empirical features of a form of life, we can come to understand how decisions and judgments are made. Thus, treating the typical trajectories as manifestations of different forms of life, we move from an abstract “narrative unity of a human life” [McIntyre, 1984], to the concrete “unities”, recognizing a more complex picture of human development.

“Form of life” is an old and worthy metaphor in philosophy and social sciences. It had never been conceptualized in a strict sense, but

rather used as a guiding metaphor in several important cases. Apart from essential parallels with the Charles Darwin’s works on the origin and development of the species and works of Herbert Spencer, it was conceptualized by the interpretive psychologist Eduard Spranger (“Lebensformen”), and, most importantly for our context, by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his later works (see [Wittgenstein, 2009]).

According to Wittgenstein, every statement is meaningful only in the context of form of life. What is said and what is thought, aspirations, decisions, and choices make sense in the context of “grammar” — socially governed symbolic structures — and actual and potential actions, interactions, behavioral patterns, and social establishments. “What is true or false is what human beings say; and it is in their language that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life” [Wittgenstein, 2009, p. ccxi]. This link between speech activities and forms of life is an important presupposition of studying the narratives in educational and occupational trajectories, because their analysis is a key for reconstruction of form of life.

The two sides of the constellation that shapes form of life and typical trajectory are its meaningful and non-meaningful components. Those two sides correspond with two basic research strategies in social sciences: interpretive and positivist (in the wider sense of the term). Interpretive analysis deals with the meanings of people’s lives and the world-views that inspire one or another form of life. This paradigm focuses on cultural structures that stand behind every choice and judgment, whether they are ethical, aesthetical or logical, seeking an understanding of the “unconscious canons of choice” [Benedict, 2005]. In this approach, narratives and metaphors are considered to shape perception. The most important conceptual resource that allows us to describe this sociological grammar of cultural meanings is the “strong program” of cultural sociology [Alexander, Smith, 2003], **which states the principle of autonomy of culture**². This autonomy of meaningful realm, being understood in a relative way (i.e. not denying the influence of the non-meaningful

² At least two important and powerful theoretical resources should be mentioned and carefully considered in this context: Bourdieu’s theorizing concerning the “habitus”, and Ann Swidler’s concept of the “strategies” [Swidler, 1986].

factors, but bracketing them out in the first phase of the inquiry), allows for reconstructing the inner logic of the meaningful part of form of life, its “grammar”.

That means, in particular, revealing the basic dimensions and the most important emotional attractors and cultural patterns of the educational/occupational behavior and choice. Those dimensions can be characterized by certain cultural structures shaping the space of the choice and the judgment, which works as axis of signification and differentiates good from bad, attractive from disgusting, and right from wrong. Self-realizing vs. wasting time, profitable vs. gainless, prestigious vs. non-prestigious, successful vs. losing are all examples of the possible binary codes that can shape perception. Emotional attractors are the symbols that people use as reference points while building their strategies. It could be iconic professions — partner in big company, tenured professor, etc., or various symbols of success and status, such as prestigious cars and gadgets, or signs of glory, such as fandom or being a headliner.

People, worldviews and cultures are very different in their priorities, ideals, norms and habits. This assertion gives the approach an anthropological tone. There are various ways to be a human, and every one of them is more or less a self-consistent, historically contingent unity. That was a central point of the groundbreaking anthropological conceptions of the 20th century, such as the theories of Clifford Geertz and Ruth Benedict³ [Benedict, 2005; Geertz, 1973]. The conception of forms of life briefly outlined above has essential affinity and continuity in relation to those theories. Benedict’s theory of the patterns of culture, prescribing an analysis of every culture as, we could say, a distinct form of life, is indicative in this sense.

Traditional economic and sociological quantitative analysis is mostly concerned with “objective”, non-meaningful factors, studying the influence of economic, demographic, institutional, spatial, socio-structural and other factors on the educational and occupational trajectories. It is

³ Ruth Benedict gives a good illustration of this thesis by showing that the meaning of marriage in the Western culture during the Middle Ages is very different from the meanings of marriage in cultures where it did not merge with the church [Benedict, 2005, p. 43–44].

indicative that the distinct trajectories recognized in the course of such types of analyses typically have a larger scale, and are divided by obvious formal attributes (male and female trajectories, academic/vocational educational trajectories, productive/service/administrative labor market sector trajectories, etc.).

The current Russian longitudinal study pays tribute to both above-mentioned strategies, but its central ambition is to reconstruct the entire ideal type of the forms of life, reflecting the complexity of how people shape their educational and occupational trajectories in particular life circumstances, i.e. embracing both its meaningful and non-meaningful sides. The two strategies can thus be seen as the two sides in a bridge-construction process, not yet connected but intended to eventually. This ambition is reflected in the notion of form of life, which combines both, worldviews on the one hand and economic, institutional and material conditions of its existence on the other hand.

Methodology and survey design

Panels and samples

Russian Longitudinal Panel Study of Educational and Occupational Trajectories includes one national and eight regional cohort panels, which all started between 2009 and 2013 (Table 1). There are two types of initial samples: the sample of school students, and the sample of university students. Accordingly, the target population is defined as all school (university) students attending certain grade (year). Both types are represented by institutionally designed stratified cluster samples, meaning that the process of recruiting the individual respondents was mediated by building the sample of organizations (schools and universities). Every student of the selected classes has been included in the sample. All of the samples are designed as representative by location, type of settlement, type of school/university (in the latter case, also field of education)⁴.

⁴ The national sample has different design since it has been built as a follow-up of the TIMSS-2011 survey.

Samples of school students up to 9-graders, in fact, are close to representing the whole age cohort, since mass scale educational tracks in Russia diverge only after 9th grade. Parents and schoolteachers are interviewed until 9th grade, in addition to students. Samples of university students do not include vocational school students or those who left the educational system.

There are three types of panels, recognized based on their importance and aims. The first type is the “strategic panel”, which are currently represented by the sole national panel, consisting of about five thousand cases. The uniqueness of this panel is that it is built based on the sample of the TIMSS-2011, which in turn was followed up by the PISA-2012 test⁵. Accordingly, the data for this panel includes data from both international competence tests. The second type of panel is the “experimental panel”. The main task of those panels is methodical experiments, though potential findings are also of high importance. The experimental panels include four panels in the Yaroslavl region and the Republic of Tatarstan, which started at the beginning of the project in 2009. Those panels are pioneering in terms of trial and error, thus facilitating the improvement of the general methodology. Another two panels include university students in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Among the others, those panels became the experimental base for the crowd-source based techniques of research and maintaining the panel. The final type is the “designated purpose panel”. They are based on the management request, and aimed at developing a reliable base for research-based policy in the sphere of education. The total amount of cases embraced by all the panels is about twenty seven thousand units.

Table 1 represents the panel structure and time schedule of the study. The study is generally projected till 2027, but at the table it is only shown in the period from 2009 till 2016. The rows contain information on the distinct panels, the columns correspond to years. The cells corresponding to the executed and planned waves are colored (the planned are colored less intensely than the executed). The information in the cells represents the number of the wave; respondents position (schoolchild-

⁵ This research design was initiated by Dr. Martin Carnoy and Dr. Isak Froumin, in coordination with Dr. Galina Kovaleva.

Table 1. Scheme of the panels of the Russian Longitudinal Panel Study of Educational and Occupational Trajectories

Panel	Label	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Strategic panels								
National Panel (+TIMSS/PISA)	NP		+ TIMSS-2011 N = 4893	1 wave 9-graders N = 3827 (3435 ∩ TIMSS-2011) + PISA-2012 N ≈ 4500		2 wave 11-graders N ≈ 3800 (in progress); “Tracer Element” N ≈ 120 (in progress)	3 wave 11-graders at al “Tracer Element”	4 wave univ. 1-year stud. at al “Tracer Element”
Experimental panels								
Yaroslavl reg.-1 (schools)	Yy (YTy)	1 wave 9-graders N = 2003		2 wave 11-graders at al N = 1556/ complemented “Tracer Element” n = 14		3 wave univ. 1-2-year stud. at al “Tracer Element”		4 wave univ. 3-4- year stud. at al “Tracer Element”
Tatarstan reg.-1 (schools)	Ty (YTy)	1 wave 9-graders N = 2003		2 wave 11-graders at al N = 1998/ complemented		3 wave univ. 1-2-year stud. at al “Tracer Element” N = 17		4 wave univ. 3-4- year stud. at al “Tracer Element”

Table 1 (continued)

Panel	Label	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016
Yaroslavl reg.-2 (universities)	Yo (YTo)	1 wave univ. 4-year students N = 1474			2 wave 2 years graduates at al N = 609 “Tracer Element” N = 25		3 wave 4 years graduates at al “Tracer Element”	
Tatarstan reg.-2 (universities)	To (YTo)	1 wave univ. 4-year students N = 1988			2 wave 2 years graduates at al N = 583	“Tracer Element” N = 25	3 wave 4 years graduates at al “Tracer Element”	
Moscow (universities)	MS		1 wave univ. 1-year students N = 1994			2 wave univ. 4-year stud. at al N ≈ 600 (in progress) “Crowdsourcse”		
St-Petersburg (universities)	SPS			1 wave univ. 1-year students N = 4000			2 wave univ. 4-year stud. at al “Tracer Element”	

Designated purpose panels						
Moscow (schools)	M9				1 wave 9-graders N = 5045; “Tracer Element” n = 40	2 wave 11-graders et al “Tracer Element”
Moscow (schools)	M5				1 wave 5-graders N ≈ 4000 (in progress)	2 wave 7-graders “Tracer Element”

dren, students, graduates; “at al” means age mates who took another track); number of cases (N) (not including additional categories of respondents, such as parents and teachers); number of interviews within the sub-program of qualitative interviews, the “Tracer Element” (n).

In the future, researchers plan to start another enlarged national sample of 9-graders, related to international competence and skills test data. The initiation of the panel of 1-graders is also under consideration. The reason is that problems related to cognitive and non-cognitive competences formation, progress and their influence on the life course, demand study at the start of formal education and early development.

Follow up waves

The periodicity of the waves varies from six months to three years. The exact period is defined by the academic council of the project, depending on the aims and tasks of the panel. The main factor herewith is the closeness to the main points of high stakes decision making. Thus, the most important points are: the end of the ninth grade, the end of the eleventh grade, the beginning and the end of tertiary education, and the labor market entry. At each of those points, students are about to decide which educational/occupational track to choose.

Another important challenge is administering the research panels, and keeping them from experiencing attrition. The investigations and experiments are undertaken by the project team in close cooperation with the partner survey company⁶ to develop an effective program of panel maintenance⁷.

Information base

The core of the study’s information base contains means more or less traditional for longitudinal panel studies. First of all, it rests upon quantitative research tools: surveys based on formalized questionnaires, and

⁶ The “Public Opinion” Foundation is a permanent partner survey company of the study since the autumn of 2012.

⁷ The extremely fruitful consultations and advices of Polina Kozyreva, Vladimir Gimpelson, Randall Olsen, Joshua Hawley, Aigul Mavletova, and Michaela Sixt are highly appreciated.

additional statistical and open source information. The questionnaires contain thematic blocks on demographical and family characteristics, personality, parent family relationship, material status and leisure, personal life, education and occupation history, current study and current work, health, religion behavior, future work and studying plans and expectations etc. The statistical data is oriented toward the information on localities, educational, occupational and other institutional environments.

“Tracer Element” sub-program

A cultural shift in the study design, which took place after a change within the project team in 2012, led to the expansion of the study’s informational base to include the field of narrative data and qualitative methods of analysis. In accordance with this, a sub-program of qualitative interviews was initiated. The program has been called the “Tracer Element”, employing a natural science metaphor about the detailed tracing of a distinct element for the purpose of studying the course of massive and complicated processes, such as chemical reactions. In the course of this sub-program, part of the basic panel respondents (1–2%) are asked to participate in the in-depth interviews, which include video and audio recording. These interviews aim at revealing the meaning structures that shape life course trajectories.

The interview guides differ depending on the particular aims of the study, but all of them are generally oriented toward gathering biographical narrative information. For example, the “Tracer Element” at the panel of Moscow 9-graders (M9) includes schoolchildren nominated to be “gifted”, in order to research cultural aspects of the social construction of giftedness. Qualitative interviews of the older Tatarstan panel (To) were focused on the problems of maternity and career. The younger cohort of the Yaroslavl region panel (Yy) “Tracer Element” was dedicated to practices related to the body as teenagers move into adulthood. These practices include a wide range of decisions and events, from the choosing to pierce one’s ears to being in a fight at school. Part of the interviews of the joint Yaroslavl-Tatarstan older panel (YTo) deals with the medicine-doctor career track.

Organizational design and structure of partnerships

The Russian Longitudinal Panel Study of Educational and Occupational Trajectories is characterized by its rich amount of data, which cannot be exhausted by single research team. In a sense the longitudinal studies are similar to a supercomputer or hadron collider, which inherently have to involve a number of research collectives and individual scholars. However, the use value of the gathered data is critically dependent upon the research design and tools. That means that to use the study data most effectively, the key users of the data have to participate in the research design's elaboration and development. This is an obvious challenge for the project team, because integrating multiple scholars and research groups is a not a trivial task.

At the current stage of the project, the study is administered, integrated and operated by the Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of the Institute of Education, Higher School of Economics. The academic council of the study coordinates the process. The Centre oversees the participation of several research centers and groups, as well as individual scholars, in the project. The key partner centers are the International Laboratory for Educational Policy Analysis (Institute of Education, HSE), Centre for Social and Economic Development of Schools (Institute of Education, HSE), Education as a Lifelong Process — Comparing Educational Trajectories in Modern Societies (“eduLIFE”, European University Institute, Florence, Italy), Group for Studies of Childhood (Institute of Education, HSE), Center for Cultural Sociology (Yale University, USA), Institute for Longitudinal Studies (Ohio State University), Center for Labour Market Studies (HSE), Laboratory for Labour Market Studies (HSE), and several others. This list is not complete, and partnerships are continually being organized.

The current organizational design of the study was built during the second stage of the project, which began in the middle of 2012. We used German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) as the most important pattern⁸ for this task, though the mentioned project is of a much larger scale (Blossfeld, Roßbach, & von Maurice, 2011). The NEPS has devel-

⁸ The contribution of the executive team of the NEPS and especially Hans-Günther Roßbach, Jutta von Maurice, Jan Scopek, Michaela Sixt, André Müller-Kull-

oped a very effective organizational scheme integrated into the research framework. Inspired by this successful experience, we borrowed several important elements of the German practice and began to integrate them into the course of our study.

The integration of partners is structured following the thematic division of the project framework. This framework recognizes six blocks of conceptual questions (Table 2). The thematic blocks are: (1) Life trajectory as “life form”; (2) Stages of typical trajectories; (3) Objective and subjective factors shaping educational trajectory; (4) Impact of education on occupational trajectory; (5) “Portrait” of a generation; (6) Social reproduction and formation of classes⁹. The seventh element of the research tools is an extra-thematic block of life course information, which serves as a base and facilitator for all of the thematic directions.

Partners included in certain divisions are involved in the preparation of the corresponding parts of the research tools. Every group involved developed preliminary themes and proposals of the forthcoming studies prior to designing the research tools. The first column of Table 2 specifies the thematic blocks of conceptual questions; the second column indicates key partners integrated in the work. The third column contains a structured list of preliminary expected studies, and specifies their empirical base (labels of the panels and waves are specified in the brackets).

Conceptual framework of the study: Structured list of research questions

In this section I will specify the conceptual questions of the study, which are organized by the research framework. Most of the conceptual blocks are being developed jointly by the project team and the part-

er and other participants of the International workshop in Bamberg (June 3th–5th, 2013) is very valuable and highly appreciated.

⁹ For more detailed information about the thematic blocks of the research framework see the next section.

Table 2. Scheme of partnerships, research perspectives and expectations for 2013–2016

<p>Blocks of Conceptual Questions</p>	<p>Groups and Scholars</p>	<p>Expected studies in 2013–2016 Panels and Waves: NP-1-2-3, MS-1-2, YTy-1-2, YTo-1-2, M9-1, M5-11</p>
<p>1. Life trajectory as “life form”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – inner (meaningful) milieu of typical trajectory – meanings of success – aesthetically-driven educational decisions 	<p>Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education IE HSE + Yale Center for Cultural Sociology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic dimension of educational and professional choice (NP-1-2) • Iconic Professions: professional stereotypes in contemporary Russia (NP-1-2, MS-2) • Changing meanings of commercial education (YTy-1-2) • Idiographic description of selected typical trajectory (YTo-1-2) • Meanings of success (YTo-1-2) • Motherhood and labor market entry in Russia (YTo-1-2) • Networks of friendship and meaning-making in educational choice (M9-1) • Conquered growing-up: creating identity through transgression (YTy-1-2) • Body Practices and their impact to entering adulthood (YTy-1-2)
<p>2. Stages of typical trajectories</p>	<p>Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education IE HSE + «eduLIFE» (EUI in Florence) + Group for Studies of Childhood IE HSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and its consequences for gender differences in early labor market career (YTo-1-2) • What is the role of the (school and family) environment in the process of socialization and entering adulthood? (M5-1) • How environment is transformed by actors (parents, teachers, children) into an active educational resource of maturing? (M5-1)

Conceptual framework of the study: Structured list of research questions

<p>3. Objective and subjective factors of shaping educational trajectory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resources, triggers and barriers of qualitative education assessment - emerging of educational and professional aspirations 	<p>International Laboratory for Educational Policy Analysis IE HSE + Centre for Social and Economic Development of Schools IE HSE + Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education IE HSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value added of vocational training programs for academic track (NP-1-2-3) • Why academic track oriented students go to vocational programs? (NP-1-2) • How teachers' practices affect academic achievement? (NP-1-2) • How long-term planning affect educational trajectory? (NP-1-2-3) • Is social class or academic performance is more important for choice of track? (NP-1-2-3) • Nomination to "giftedness": how schools and environments interact with "gifted" children? (M9)
<p>4. Impact of education on occupational trajectory</p>	<p>Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education IE HSE + «eduLIFE» (EUI in Florence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How working while studying affect educational achievement and occupational trajectory (YTo-1-2) • Gender aspects of Labor Market Entry (YTo-1-2)
<p>5. "Portrait" of generation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive picture of the national and regional cohorts
<p>6. Social reproduction and formation of classes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - formation of classes - resilience - educational contexts 	<p>Centre for Social and Economic Development of Schools IE HSE + Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education IE HSE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful strategies of resilience (YTo-1-2) • How municipal context and quality of schools affects academic results? (YTy-1-2) • Models of extra-curricular activities and their impact to the academic achievement (YTy-1-2)

Note: NP — national panel; MS — Moscow university students panel; M9 — Moscow 9-graders panel; M5 — Moscow 5-graders panel; YTy — Yaroslavl-Tatarstan younger panel (9-graders); YTo — Yaroslavl-Tatarstan older panel (univ. 4–5 course). Numbers after the abbreviation correspond to the waves.

ner groups¹⁰ (see Table 2). The framework is the subject of corrections and additions, but the basic idea is that it serves to limit the research interests to a specified number of approaches, research questions and hypotheses. The blocks belong to different traditions and approaches. For example, only the first block is fully corresponds with the cultural shift stated in the first sections of the paper.

Block 1. Understanding typical trajectories as “forms of life”

Basic hypothesis 1: There are sustainable and reproducible trajectories — i.e. typical trajectories exist.

Basic hypothesis 2: Any typical trajectory is based upon a “form of life”, a set of interrelated ways of acting, behavioral patterns, cultural structures, and “worldviews”, i.e. a particular “rationality”.

- 1.1. Inner (meaningful) milieu of typical trajectory
 - 1.1.1. Reconstruction of social meanings and cultural structures of typical trajectories.
 - 1.1.2. What are the interrelations between meaningful and non-meaningful (economical, material, demographical, social-structural etc.) factors in a typical trajectory?
 - 1.1.3. How do people make choices? Basic models of decision-making.
 - 1.1.4. Which patterns of activity (including ritual-like activities) shape major and sustainable collective representations and reference points, which inform the typical trajectories?

¹⁰ It is important to mention scholars who have contributed to the formation of this list by discussions, consultations or direct participation: Isak Froumin, Martin Carnoy, Maria Yudkevich, Ekaterina Pavlenko, Timothy Malacarne, Werner Binder, Gordey Yastrebov, Katerina Polivanova, Ilya Prakhov, Marina Pinskaya, Tania Zitoun, Anna Lund, Katrin Kullasepp, Julia Tyumeneva, Dmitry Popov, Boris Elkonin, Vladimir Gimpelson, Alexey Bessudnov, Sergey Roshin, Valeriya Malik, Yuliya Kosyakova, Diana Yanbarisova, Sergey Kosaretskiy, Andrey Zakharov, Tatyana Khavenson, and other fellows and colleagues of the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics.

Conceptual framework of the study: Structured list of research questions

- 1.1.5. How does the credibility and “authority”¹¹ of the typical trajectory shape? Emotional attractors of the typical trajectories.
- 1.1.6. How does localization of uncertainty influence the shape of typical trajectories?
- 1.1.7. How do mechanisms of interiorization of the order affect the shape of typical trajectories?
- 1.1.8. What are the cultural meanings of the most common life-choice reference points (such as: self-dependence, professional becoming, good work, successful career, high quality education, keeping a repertoire of the possibilities, happy life, etc.)?
- 1.2. Meanings of success
 - 1.2.1. What are the collectively shared emotionally attractive reference points (such as “success”)?
 - 1.2.2. How are collective representations of success in life (and professional life) shaped?
 - 1.2.3. How can the “success” of a trajectory be methodologically recognized?
- 1.3. Ethically and aesthetically-driven educational decisions
 - 1.3.1. Which professions can be treated as “iconic”, i.e. professions that invoke strong and widely shared stereotypes?
 - 1.3.2. Which are the ethical, aesthetical, and logical attributes of the iconic professions?
 - 1.3.3. Which meaningful dimensions of choice (ethical, aesthetical, or logical) dominate in different typical trajectories?

¹¹ Here I use the term “authority” in the sense that Clifford Geertz assigning it in the following context: “Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the order” [Geertz, 1973, p. 90].

Block 2. Stages of trajectories formation¹²

Basic assumption 1: The stages of reaching adulthood are socially constructed phenomena. Their adequate description requires to be embedded in a historical context to historical context.

Basic assumption 2: The existing stages are heterogeneous, and their study demands differentiation of the various trajectories.

- 2.1. How is the experience of becoming an “adult” changing in the contemporary world?
- 2.2. What are the most common scenarios of reaching adulthood, and practices of socialization in contemporary Russia?
- 2.3. How are the basic factors of reaching adulthood (such as family, location, educational institutions, social policy etc.) inter-related?
- 2.4. How does the variety of possible scenarios for reaching adulthood influence the shape of the trajectory?
- 2.5. Which are the basic cultural patterns and particular models of childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and other new forms (such as “emerging adulthood”)? How do they change over time?
- 2.6. How do existing forms of education and professionalization relate to the stages of reaching adulthood?
- 2.7. What are the corporeal markers of “growing up”?
- 2.8. What are the interrelations of the educational, professional and other elements of the trajectories?

Block 3. Objective and subjective factors of shaping educational trajectory¹³

- 3.1. Resources, triggers and barriers of qualitative education assessment
 - 3.1.1. What are the main factors and barriers of high-quality education accessibility?

¹² This block has been formulated in an intense coordination with Dr. Katerina Polivanova.

¹³ This block has been formulated in an intense coordination with Dr. Gordey Yastrebov. In particular, paragraph 3.2. is mostly elaborated by him.

Conceptual framework of the study: Structured list of research questions

- 3.1.2. What role does supplementary education (outside the school or university) play in educational achievement formation?
- 3.1.3. Which factors are important for decision-making concerning educational strategy?
- 3.1.4. How sustainable and stable are declared choices of educational strategy (within different typical trajectories)? How are those choices connected with further career building?
- 3.1.5. What are the causal factors of dropouts in schools and universities?
- 3.1.6. What are the socio-economic consequences of attrition for students in schools and universities?
- 3.1.7. What are the typical consequences of interrupting one's education?
- 3.1.8. How do personal features inform educational and professional success?
- 3.2. Emergence of educational and professional aspirations
 - 3.2.1. How are professional aspirations formed among adolescents and youths? (The impact of school, family, peers, environment, personal qualities.)
 - 3.2.2. How do professional aspirations change over time? What are the stages of their formation?
 - 3.2.3. What determines personal involvement in professional interests, sense of purpose, and how detailed plans are?
 - 3.2.4. What are the main reasons for the incongruity between professional aspirations and plans, and real life trajectories? Does this incongruity substantially decrease life-satisfaction? What are the social consequences of this?
 - 3.2.5. What role do expectations play in the choices individuals make for their educational trajectories (considering expectations regarding academic achievements, position and salary at work)?

Block 4. Impact of education on occupational trajectory

- 4.1. What is the impact of education and its contexts to a career?
- 4.2. How does education shape competences?
- 4.3. The study of typical educational-occupational maneuvers and processes, such as: change of profession, deskilling, professional breakthroughs, marginalization, etc.
- 4.4. How does education affect individual's civic position, and how does it influence institutional trust?

Block 5. "Portrait" of generation

- 5.1. How can a generation portrait be described in terms of educational/occupational trajectories?
- 5.2. "Diffuseness" of the different educations.

Block 6. Social reproduction and formation of classes¹⁴

- 6.1. Formation of classes
 - 6.1.1. How (and which) existing typical trajectories are connected with class relations?
 - 6.1.2. Which emerging typical trajectories lead to the formation of stable class structures in Russia?
- 6.2. Resilience
 - 6.2.1. Which strategies, decisions and factors promote overcoming resource (socio-economical or class) deprivation?
 - 6.2.2. How do the social, economic, and cultural capitals of the family influence the way of allocation of the leisure (free time) resource?
 - 6.2.3. Which models of extra-curricular time allocation are dominant in different types of households?

¹⁴ This block has been formulated in an intense coordination with Dr. Gordey Yastrebov and Dr. Marina Pinskaya. In particular, paragraphs 6.2. and 6.3. have been mostly elaborated by them.

- 6.2.4. Which models of extra-curricular time allocation give children the most advantages in terms of life chances, and which, in turn, reduce the possibilities for mobility?
- 6.3. Educational contexts
 - 6.3.1. How do the quality of schools and other relevant characteristics of the educational contexts (concerned with region, locality, and region) influence educational achievements?

Data dissemination policy and expectations

The study is still going through its initial phase, and many crucial methodological and substantive problems are being examined and improved upon. The data dissemination policy implies coordination of access to the data by the operator of the study (Centre for Cultural Sociology and Anthropology of Education at the Institute of Education, HSE) and its academic council. Currently beta-versions of the databases are available to the partners of the study. The organization of open access to registered users for the fully completed data bases will be considered in the medium term.

It is expected that data from the study will substantially fill the lack of reliable high quality longitudinal data on education and labor market in Russia, and thus improve their international research visibility. The study is going to contribute to the research culture in the sphere of educational studies in Russia, and become an effective factor of the implementation of the advanced practices of the research-based governance among Russian policy-makers. It is expected that the study will allow for elaborating a culturally-sensitive interpretive sociological and anthropological tradition in the longitudinal panel studies (along with more conventional methods), and, in particular, to contribute to the establishment of the sub-field of cultural sociology of education.

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