



Non-state Schools for Sustainable Education Development: Family Choice Motives

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Abstract: The article presents the results of the analysis of the parents' conversation on the Internet forum, the topic of which was non-state school education. The sociological project studied the statements of participants in network communication who sent their children to private lyceums or gymnasiums. Parents' judgments were processed with the support of domestic specialized computer programs. Seven groups of family motives for choosing a non-state school for children were identified. It was found that the most important reasons for the education of children in paid educational institutions are the parents' belief in the high quality of non-state education, the desire to protect children, and the individualization of the school educational route. Among the less significant motives there were the family's readiness to invest in children's education, the desire to prepare 11th grade graduates to pass the unified state exam, and the approval of digital teaching methods. The findings suggest the need to improve the accessibility and quality of Russian school education, support family participation in the educational process, and take into account the diversity of demands for the school system. The empirical perspective of the study is an analysis of the choice of private schools at different stages of a child's education.

1 INTRODUCTION


The need for private school education in Russia.


Experts estimate the request for teaching children in private schools, gymnasiums and lyceums at 6% of the total number of schools by 2022 (Dukhanina, et al., 2019). At the moment, the number of non-state institutions of secondary education is about 850, that is, 2% of the total number of schools. The growth of private education in Russia fell on the 90s, but few institutions withstood the competition and have survived to this day. There are schools with a twenty-year history in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara and some other big cities. All of them ask for an entrance fee, as well as tuition fees in the amount of 20,000 rubles per month.

Russian school education is compulsory; therefore, state educational institutions dominate in the children's educational sphere (Konstantinovskiy,

et al., 2006). Initially, private schools were aimed at working with students with non-standard needs, that is, with a niche nature. However, over time, the needs of parents and students themselves, especially older schoolchildren, have changed (Rogozina, Shchur, 2014). The quality of education came to the fore, and the prestige of private schooling increased.

In the presented sociological project, the motives of parents who made the decision to send their children to Russian private schools were studied. The range of research questions included the reasons for abandoning a state educational institution, assessing the quality of school education by parents - public and private, satisfaction with the educational level of children, developing an educational route for children, family investments in the education of the younger generation. Not only the family material costs, but also the investment of time, own intellectual efforts in the development of the child

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were studied. The influence of the educational and cultural resources of the family on the accumulation of human capital by children was assessed (Proshkova, 2020).

Along with the analysis of the listed issues, the study conceptualized the method of collecting available information on the network. In 2020, we managed to conduct several interviews with the parents of students of non-state schools, but the information received was not enough for well-founded conclusions. The interview was interrupted by the enforced quarantine. We turned to the available materials on the Internet, in particular, to thematic family forums. Among them there was a conversation between parents about paid school education, the direct experience of Russian families in teaching children of different ages in non-state schools in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Internet forum of parents of private schools students.

The Internet forum refers to the empirical methods of digital sociology, a recently emerging dimension of world sociology (Wynn, 2009). The main merit of the direction is the development of effective technologies for collecting and analyzing information. Domestic scientists have mastered a number of new research methods. Distance interviewing and online closed-type questionnaires are especially often used (Zhuravleva, 2015). The detailed methodological substantiation was received by interviews by e-mail (Doktorov, Khairullina, 2015).

The Internet forum in our interpretation is a group discussion on the network on a topic set by the moderator. It is useful for sociology to search and analyze such conversations in order to study the opinions of hard-to-reach audiences. In particular, parents whose children study in non-state schools. From a methodological point of view, the Internet forum occupies an intermediate position between the method of document analysis, observation and focus group without a leader (Belanovsky, 2001). The advantage of the empirical approach is the completeness of the information array, although it is difficult to pretend to be representativeness of the sample.

To identify and analyze the motives for choosing a paid school education, we found on the Internet a parent forum of the corresponding topic. Not all of the participants in the conversation were representatives of the target group, but the majority shared their direct

experience of teaching children in non-state schools in the two capitals. Researchers looked at published texts and highlighted arguments in favor of paid education. For example, here is a father's story from an Internet forum: "Education has always been valued in our family, but there were no good schools near our home, because we live among new buildings. Even bad schools would have to be driven back and forth every day. In one of the new houses, private primary classes were opened with very good teachers, and they gave them there. Grandparents on both sides chip in on payment". In the above passage, one can find the following motives for choosing non-state education:

- The high value of education in the family.
- Territorial inaccessibility of schools.
- Desire to provide a child with a quality education.
- The readiness of the family for material investment in education.

The content of the Internet forum was analyzed until the new family reasons for the child's admission to a private school began to repeat. We call this a sense of fullness of the collected empirical array. We studied 611 separate statements, which were able to classify and find 7 groups of parental motives. Arguments with a general theme fell into one group. For example, the class "Quality of education" includes statements: "There were no good schools near the house", "There are 15 people in a class in a paid school, and 36 are in our former one", "In this gymnasium they teach excellent English, and from the third grade another foreign language is added", "I like that different advanced methods are used in the lessons, including games for primary school students", "The school provides excellent preparation for a foreign university"

The analysis was complicated by the variety of messages, since the parents of children of younger, average and senior school ages took part in the selected conversation. It is clear that at different stages of the implementation of the educational route, specific tasks arise. In elementary school, children firstly need a good teacher, and in the eleventh final year - high-quality preparation for entering the university. But it was important for us to get the big picture and understand why families prefer a private school to a public one, despite the material costs. An in-depth study of the reasons for choosing non-state education by families of schoolchildren of different ages is a promising task of sociological research.

To process the information of the Internet forum, the Russian computer system Discant was used. It was developed by Russian researchers G.I.

Saganenko and E.A. Kanevsky specifically for solving complex problems of empirical sociology. Discant is an interactive system of classification and analysis of texts (Kanevsky, Saganenko, et al., 1997). Initially, the program was designed to process answers to open-ended questionnaire questions. Thus, the sociologist Aleksey Eduardovich Geger obtained an interesting experience of using Discant while studying the value orientations of Russian youth (Geger, 2010). Subsequently, Discant was able to adapt to the analysis of unstructured texts in sociological research of a qualitative type. In particular, the authors of the article applied Discant to the materials of the Internet forum in previous projects of educational issues (Proshkova, Saganenko, 2019).

The discussion about paid school education was analyzed with the help of Discant by the method of classifying the statements of the participants of the Internet forum. On the basis of the classification, a list of arguments for the education of children in a non-state school was obtained. The list was lined up hierarchically: from the most common, that is, significant parental motive, to the less reflexive positions.

3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Rating of motives for choosing a non-state school.

Actualization and classification of the ideas found in the texts of the Internet forum showed that parents are trying to tell the story of a child's admission to a non-state school and explain why the family chose private education. In the published cases, there are two main plots - the change of the state educational institution to a private one and the initial choice of a non-state gymnasium. A rare type of educational route is the return from a private educational institution to a public school. We came across 15 of these stories, with parents choosing top-rated public schools. We call high-rated educational institutions included in the list of the "500 best schools in Russia" (specialized secondary educational institutions with the best indicators of passing the general state exam; a large number of students winning intellectual Olympiads).

Table 1: Motives for choosing a non-state school.

No	Groups	Types of judgments	Number of judgments	Frequency of occurrence (%)
1	Quality of education	High quality of education, few children in the class (10-20 people), excellent teachers, new teaching methods are used, successful curricula, a high level of technical equipment in the class, there is no rush to work, tests are given after mastering the material, additional lessons if necessary, several foreign languages are taught, children leave school with good English, a lot of attention is paid to mathematics, a modern approach to teaching computer science, preparation for admission to 239 or 610 schools	259	42
2	Safety	The likelihood of contracting the coronavirus is lower, there are no hooligans, the children are looked after well, the child falls sick less, small classes are better for health, more strict monitoring for children health at school, special menu for children in a dining room.	91	15
3	Individual approach	My child was unable to adapt to public school, it was recommended to leave school, need in an individual route, poor contacts with classmates in the previous school, overtakes the regular school program, is bored in public school, did not cope with the school program, needs lengthy explanations, conflicts in school, the son goes in for sports and often at the training camp, the child is engaged in creativity, the daughter is passionate about programming.	86	14
4	Availability	A school close to home, a private primary school in our house, it is a long way to take a child to an English school, there are no schools in new buildings, there was not enough space in a school in the micro-district.	55	9
5	Finances	We can pay for a paid school, parents help with payment for school, why not allow children to study comfortably with good incomes, both parents have a high salary, it is cheaper for us to pay for a school closer to home, there is a high passive income, discounts for tuition.	50	8

Table 1: Motives for choosing a non-state school (cont.).

6	Preparation for the Unified State Exam	You can focus on preparing for the Unified State Exam, tutors in the final class will cost more, a good preparatory program for the Unified State Exam, daily testing on the Unified State Exam collections, do not load extra subjects in grade 11.	41	7
7	Digitalization of education	Interactive whiteboard in the classroom, useful online platforms, programming training, electronic diary, reports with electronic presentation.	29	5
	TOTAL:	611 judgments	611	100

The table shows that the rating of family motives for choosing a non-state education is made up of seven groups of statements. Each group is united by a common theme, which the researchers determined on their own. It was difficult to understand what type of answer is, for example, the judgment "Good schools were far from home." We are talking about the territorial inaccessibility of the school or the quality of education. By a common decision, we attributed the statement to the group "Quality of education", since the idea of studying in a strong educational institution was the main one in the answer of the participant of the Internet forum.

4 DISCUSSING THE RESULTS

Arguments for non-state school education.

When justifying the choice of a paid lyceum or gymnasium, the parents paid the main attention to the quality of education. Almost half of the judgments concerned the advantages of non-state schools in terms of efficiency and comfort of learning. The remaining 59% of responses were distributed among six groups of arguments.

4.1 Quality of Education

As stated, the most important reason for parents to choose a non-public school is the quality of education. The group "Quality of education" includes 41% of judgments. Parents provide various explanations for their position. They say that in the former school in lower grades 35-40 people studied. It is noted that non-state schools have good technology and a balanced curriculum. Students master several foreign languages, and English at the B2 level. The teachers are highly qualified. At all levels of education, students are given unremitting attention. According to participants of the Internet forum, while graduates and primary school students are taught in public schools, grades 5-8 lack care. Parents appreciate modern educational approaches and innovative methods. The informants emphasized that the choice of private school education will

increase a person's success after graduation, which is consistent with the findings of modern sociological research (Agranovich, 2020). So, parents hope for the admission of their son or daughter to the budgetary department of the university, and they choose the best universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

4.2 Safety

In second place, unexpectedly for us, there were judgments about the preservation of health and life. Apparently, this is due to the coronavirus epidemic, during which the parents talked on the Internet forum. In smaller classrooms, there is less risk of infection. Conflicts are resolved without fights, there is a special staff to look after children, especially after primary school students.

4.3 Individual Approach

The group included judgments about children with special needs, as well as the parents' desire to individualize the child's educational route. For example, in the latter case, high school students who want to become programmers and focus on specialized academic subjects go to a non-state school. In addition, in twelve families, children are engaged in creativity and take an external program for grades 10-11 in natural science and mathematics.

4.4 Availability

Even in Moscow and St. Petersburg there is a problem of territorial accessibility of schools for primary school students. Not all parents are ready to take their child 3-5 kilometers from home twice a day. The situation is especially difficult in new buildings. The situation is different with specialized education, access to which is geographically limited. It would seem that parents of children in grades 1-4 could be satisfied with an ordinary school near their home, but many would like to teach children from an early age in gymnasiums and lyceums. The fact is that one of the factors in choosing a school is the reputation of an educational institution, which today is easy to learn

not only from local residents, but also from the Internet. Parents are afraid that after poor initial training they will not go to a good school.

4.5 Finances

In this group of statements, we are talking about family income, parents' salaries and readiness for financial investments in high-quality education of children. An interesting fact is that in a third of the cases reported on the Internet forum, non-state school education is paid for by the student's grandparents.

4.6 Preparing for the Unified State Exam

Parents of students in grades 10-11 told on the Internet forum the history of transferring schoolchildren from public schools to paid education in order to provide senior high students with high-quality preparation for the Unified State Exam (USE). According to the informants, such a solution saves time and money, as well as preserves the health of graduates. Parents do not consider tutors to be an alternative to school.

4.7 Digitalization of Education

Digital teaching methods were in the last place in the ranking of motives for choosing a non-state school. Parents love whiteboards, helpful online resources, and distance classroom assessment and testing. The informants hope that new didactic approaches will increase the digital literacy of students in education. But parents do not support the transition to distance learning at school in general.

5 CONCLUSION

The sociological study identified seven groups of reasons why families choose non-state school education for their children. Parents believe that in private gymnasiums and lyceums, the quality of education is significantly higher, the safety of children is ensured, and it is also possible to individualize the student's educational route. In addition, families strive to find a good school closer to home, have the opportunity to pay for the education of their children, and support digital teaching methods. Among the practical recommendations of the project is to improve the accessibility and quality of school education, to provide strong preparation for passing the Unified State Exam at school. The next

task of the empirical research is to analyze the motives of the family choice of non-state schools at different stages of schooling.

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