

Lifelong Learning in Russia as a Mechanism for the Reproduction of Human Potential: Gender Aspect



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Abstract. The article presents a study of the peculiarities of the involvement of Russian men and women in lifelong learning. The analysis of both Russian and foreign studies allowed putting forward the hypothesis that women and men may have different approaches to the construction of a lifelong learning educational path. The purpose of this study is to assess the parameters of women's and men's involvement in lifelong learning, including the goals and sources of funding, in order to identify similarities and gender asymmetry of lifelong learning path in Russia. The data of the sample survey of population involvement in lifelong learning, conducted by Rosstat in 2020, show that women and men's age profiles are similar, but their levels of involvement in different types of lifelong learning are not the same: men participate more actively in non-formal education, and women – in self-education. The current segregation of additional studies

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for qualification and field generally reflects the existing sectoral and occupational segregation in employment. At the same time, both women and men rarely associate their additional training with the expanded career opportunities, which may indicate the absence of a full-fledged system of vertical professional mobility based on the human potential growth. Our calculations show that employers more often invite men than women to take additional education and, accordingly, women more often than men pay for it themselves. Women with young children experience particular difficulties in participating in non-formal education and more often than others have to pay for themselves. This, in our view, contributes to the formation of gender inequality of opportunities for participation in lifelong learning, which makes it important to consider the gender factor in state programs of lifelong learning development in order to maximize its contribution to the human potential reproduction.

Key words: human potential, gender mainstreaming, lifelong learning, labor market, self-education, vocational training, family responsibilities.

Introduction

Currently, the problem of human potential (HP) reproduction is becoming particularly relevant, acting as the most important factor in the economic development of any country, and increasing its international competitiveness [1]. Education is traditionally considered as the most important mechanism of HP reproduction. Nowadays, there is a consensus in the world about the need for education during the life, or lifelong learning (LL). Modern realities of economic and social life require constant updating of knowledge [2]. The development and maintenance of lifelong skills through various educational activities in recent years have become crucial for maintaining employment opportunities. In the future, this trend will only grow including by increasing the length of working life and increasing the competition of economic environment.

At the same time, when considering lifelong learning, it is impossible to limit oneself to analyzing its impact on a professional career; it is worth taking into account its broader impact, both personal and social. Lifelong learning allows meeting a wide range of individual human needs for knowledge necessary not only for professional activity, but also for organizing interaction with society including on the basis of new social and information technologies

[3]. In this regard, it is important the question of the availability and results of the LL process, as well as the creation of incentives and opportunities for citizens to actively participate in it¹.

Lifelong learning has a long tradition in Russia. Its beginning was laid back in the USSR [4; 5; 6]. Russians traditionally treat education, including professional education, with great reverence. A fairly short period of the 1990s, when the prestige of education, primarily higher technical, was low, was replaced by time, a characteristic feature of which was the desire of population to provide their children with a high level of vocational education. However, researchers note a rather low participation level in the LL, in particular, depending on age – Russians mostly finish their education at a young age [7]. This indicates that the Russian society has not yet fully formed the need for citizens to participate in the educational process during their lifetime, and therefore it is important to study in detail the main parameters of continuing education in Russia including in the gender context, for the formation of educational policy.

¹ Chubarova T.V. Lifelong learning. In: *Knowledge management in modern economy: Study Aid*. Ed. by Mil'ner B.Z. Moscow: Ekonomika, 2009, pp. 184–202.

Approaches to gender problems of lifelong learning: literature review

Quite a lot of works in Russia and abroad have been devoted to general problems of the LL development [8–14], but there are obviously fewer studies on the gender aspects of this problem, especially in Russia [15]. In general, ensuring gender equality in education is considered as the key to gender equality in all spheres of society [16].

We should note that there is a paradoxical situation in the research. The gender factor is given a lot of attention in international documents, where it is considered as one of the most important in the LL system². The studies show that such an approach affects the success and dynamics of the LL development determined by the criterion of the involvement level of both men and women, in addition, it positively affects the gender situation in society as a whole including employment and the accumulation of human potential by representatives of different genders. Moreover, the emphasis is usually placed on the connection of lifelong learning with employment, its consideration in the context of labor market problems [17].

At the same time, a number of studies indicate insufficient attention to the gender factor of lifelong learning; we have noted that the LL analysis mainly concerns individual educational trajectories, while gender aspects are associated with social constructs [18].

The article also considers the issues concerning the consideration of the peculiarities of the status of women and men in the education process and the actual “gender training”. In particular, L. Stolyarchuk identifies such problems of taking into account the gender factor in the lifelong learning development as “the insufficiency of state documents and programs for developing

gender education; society’s unwillingness to perceive gender problems as really relevant; the frequent restriction of gender issues to a female topic...” [19, p. 36].

Studies that reveal the problems of social justice in lifelong learning are primarily focused on issues of equality of opportunities for access to the system [20]. At the same time, as a rule, we are referring not to formal restrictions that prevent women from participating in public relations, but to informal practices that have developed in society [21]. Researchers often refer to gender stereotypes, their impact on women’s careers and earnings, the choice of educational and career paths, which then affects the situation on the labor market, contributes to the formation of horizontal and vertical segregation [22]. Among the reasons limiting women’s participation in the family, the paper notes the presence of family responsibilities, and the need to take care of other members of the household, especially children. We have emphasized that such work is not valued in society, as estimates of economic activity do not take into account unpaid work in the household, although it contributes to training and development of human resources [23].

In Russia, the situation with women’s participation in education is quite specific. Unlike women in many countries of the world, Russians traditionally have access and tend to a high level of formal professional education. The researchers note that more and more Russian women are seeking higher professional education, while more men are limited to its secondary or primary level. At the same time, a higher education level is not reflected in the growth of women’s competitiveness in the labor market³.

It is worth noting that lifelong learning regulation in Russia is carried out within the framework of the general legislative field of the education system. The basis for the LL system

² Adult learning and gender. EAEA background paper, July 2020. Available at: https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ALE-and-Gender-EAEA-background-paper-July-2020_final.pdf (accessed: April 25, 2021).

³ *Gender Problems in Contemporary Russia (According to Official Statistics)*. Moscow: Aleks, 2006. 224 p.

development became the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, dated December 29, 2012, no. 273-FZ. Article 10 of the law stipulates the following provision: “The education system creates conditions for continuing education through the implementation of basic educational programs and various additional educational programs, providing the opportunity to simultaneously master several educational programs, as well as taking into account existing education, qualifications, practical experience in obtaining education”. In general, the legislative regulation of lifelong learning in Russia is based on international experience including UNESCO development.

A significant disadvantage of the proposed strategies for developing lifelong learning is their gender neutrality. At the same time, the analysis of existing studies, both Russian and foreign, allows formulating a hypothesis that the opportunities for women and men to participate in the educational system are not the same, they have different approaches to building educational trajectories.

The purpose and novelty of the research

The purpose of the study is to assess the parameters of the participation of women and men in various forms of lifelong learning in Russia, primarily from the point of view of purposes and sources of funding, and on the basis of the analysis to formulate proposals for taking into account the gender factor in stimulating the LL development in the interests of ensuring human potential reproduction.

The novelty of the work is that on the basis of empirical data, for the first time, we have analyzed the gender aspects of lifelong learning state in Russia, and have shown the influence of the gender factor on its main parameters (primarily purposes and sources of funding) and results. This allows identifying the specifics of the educational trajectories of women and men aimed at the human potential development.

The results in the article can be used in the further working out of state programs for developing lifelong learning in Russia: taking into account gender characteristics will make it possible to increase their effectiveness.

Research methodology and empirical data

The work considers lifelong learning in Russia from the point of view of a gender approach. Gender is understood as “a set of behaviors and positions that are usually associated with male and female persons in any given society”⁴. In society, it is not so much the biological or physical differences between men and women that are important, but their socio-economic status, access to resources and opportunities for their use. The gender approach implies taking into account the position of both genders in the analysis of social phenomena and, accordingly, the development of special measures to ensure equality between men and women.

As an empirical basis, the work uses data from a Sample observation of the population’s participation in lifelong learning (hereinafter referred to as a Sample observation or Observation) conducted by Rosstat in all entities of the Russian Federation in 2020⁵. During the Observation, there were interviewed more than 231 thousand respondents aged 15 years and older. The persons who participated in lifelong learning were those who participated in one of its forms for 12 months. The results of the Observation are extended to the total population aged 15 years and older.

Sociological studies in the field of lifelong learning have been conducted before, but they were of a local nature [24].

⁴ *Theory and Methodology of Gender Studies: Course of Lectures*. Ed. by Voronina O.A. Moscow: MTsGI-MVShSEN-MFF, 2001. P.15.

⁵ Hereinafter in the text, the sources of tables and figures are Rosstat data. Results of the selective federal statistical observation of the population’s participation in continuing education in 2020 Available at: https://gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/trud/inobr2020/index.html

The first Observation round was carried out in 2016. The obtained data are analyzed in studies [25; 26]. However, their comparison with the results of the 2020 survey is difficult due to the partial incompatibility of the classifications of education types.

The paper uses methods of logical analysis and mathematical statistics to analyze statistical data.

In the work, we have used the classification of the LL forms adopted by Rosstat during the Observation which, in turn, corresponds to the UNESCO international classification of education: training in basic educational programs (formal implies obtaining knowledge in educational organizations), training in additional educational programs or vocational training programs (non-formal includes various types of mainly additional training including at the workplace) and self-education (informal is independent non-institutionalized activity for the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and abilities related to education)⁶.

It is worth taking into account that part of the population can be included in several forms of lifelong learning at the same time, so the sum of the shares of the population participating in one or another form of lifelong learning may be greater

than the share of the population participating in the LL.

It is important to keep in mind that in the Russian Federation, primary general, basic general and secondary general education are mandatory. The national legislation guarantees the accessibility and free of charge of primary and secondary vocational education, as well as on a competitive basis – the free of charge of higher education received for the first time.

Gender trajectories of lifelong learning in Russia

In Russia, by world standards, the number and share of adult population taking part in lifelong learning is quite significant. In 2020, 51.5 million people, or 42.7% of the total population aged 15 years and older, were employed in one or another type of education in general (*Tab. 1*).

The observation showed that men and women are involved in lifelong learning in different ways, and the scale and level of their participation have different directions of asymmetry. On the one hand, the total number of women studying significantly (by 3.5 mil. people) exceeds the corresponding number of men which is a consequence of the more active participation of working age women in educational process.

Table 1. Participation extent and level in various LL forms of women and men aged 15 years and older*

| Type of lifelong learning | Population | |
|---|------------|----------|
| | Male | Female |
| Participated in LL, total, thou. people | 24 023.9 | 27 520.8 |
| % of population 15 + | 43.9 | 41.7 |
| including: | | |
| Formal education, thou. people | 5 805.8 | 5 890.4 |
| % of population 15 + | 10.6 | 8.9 |
| Non-formal education, thou. people | 13 662.4 | 13 246.1 |
| % of population 15 + | 24.9 | 20.1 |
| Self-education, thou. people | 14 030.0 | 19 438.5 |
| % of population 15 + | 25.6 | 29.4 |

* Male and female can simultaneously participate in several forms of lifelong learning, so the number of participants in LL is less than the total number of participants in different forms of LL, respectively, and participation level of men and women in LL is less than the sum of the private levels of their participation in different forms of lifelong learning.

⁶ International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011. UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2013. Available at: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-2011-ru.pdf> (accessed: July 12, 2021).

However, on the other hand, on the whole, women's involvement in education (as the share of students among all women of the considered age), on the contrary, is slightly lower than the share of men studying (41.7% vs. 43.9).

This situation is the result of a significant excess of the number of women over the number of men. The imbalance is especially noticeable in the elderly, when the interest in learning among population of both genders is minimized. The age participation profile in the LL shows that in almost all age intervals, women's participation level in lifelong learning is higher than that of men. The only exceptions are the youngest (15–17 y.o.), that is, mainly schoolchildren, who have the highest level (99%), and the oldest (70 years and older) – with the lowest level (10%) (Fig. 1).

Among the important differences between the educational activity of women and men, it is necessary to note its intensity. Calculations have shown that at all ages, women are much more likely to combine two or three types of lifelong learning. However, this result is achieved mainly

due to more frequent self-education by women of all ages. Only in one age range (24–29 years) in terms of the intensity of participation in the LL, women are inferior to men. Most likely, this is due to the fact that a significant number of young women face the need to combine work and study with care and upbringing of young children (Fig. 2).

The parental status, or rather the age of the youngest child, has a very significant impact on women's involvement level in the lifelong learning. However, two clarifications are needed here. Firstly, such a parameter as the “age of the youngest child” has an obvious positive correlation with the age of the mother herself. Secondly, we should assume that this factor also has a certain influence on men's involvement in lifelong learning. However, gender stereotypes deeply rooted in the public consciousness about the distribution of family and household responsibilities in Russian families, primarily for care and upbringing of children, including minors, did not allow the developers of

Figure 1. Age profile of participation level in lifelong learning of women and men aged 15 years and older (proportion of students among all women and men of the corresponding age), %

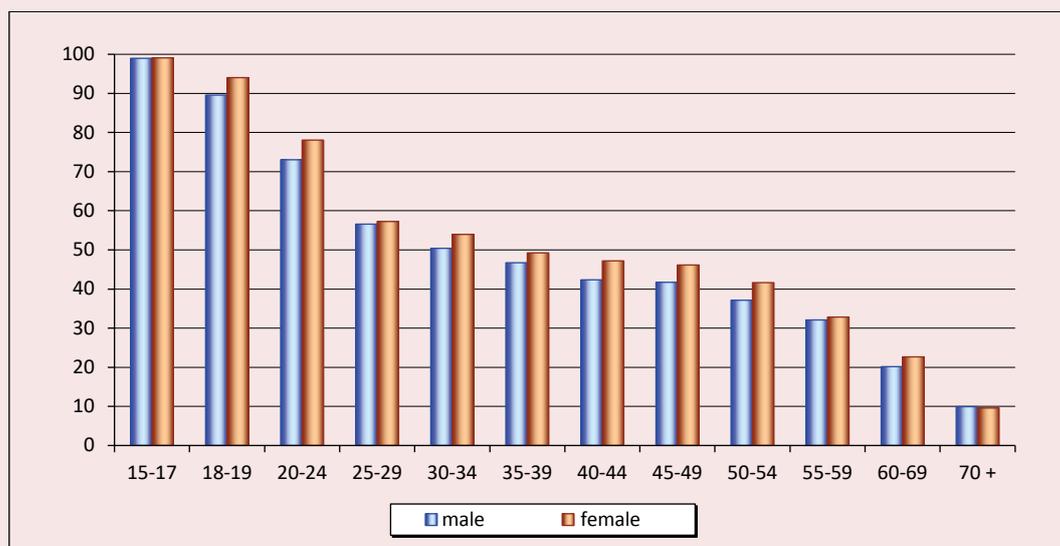
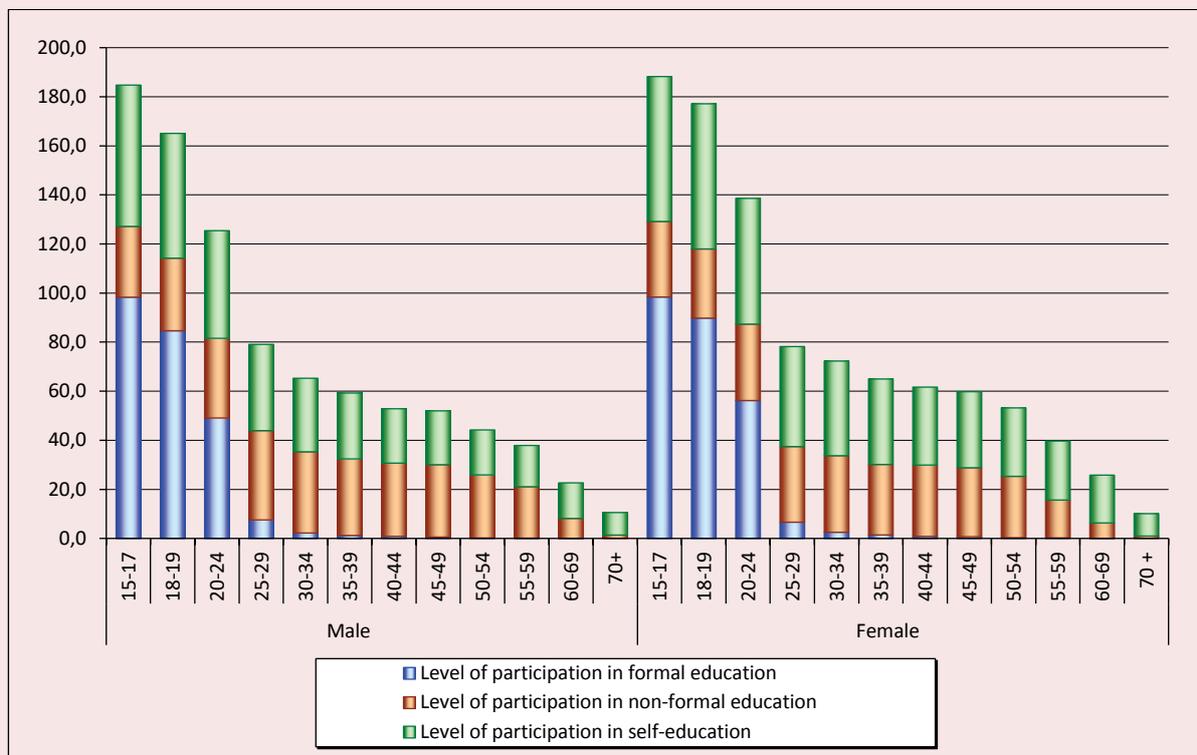


Figure 2. Total participation level of women and men aged 15 years and older in different forms of lifelong learning, %



the Observation to introduce the necessary indicators that would make it possible to test this assumption.

The Observation results indicate a negative impact of a woman having a child under the age of 2 years on her involvement in lifelong

learning. Such women, despite the fact that a significant part of them are at young ages, have the participation level in the LL significantly lower (45.5%) than in the entire population of women with children under the age of 18 (49.3%) (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Participation level in the LL of women with children under the age of 18 y.o., by the age of the youngest child, %

| | Total | among them, according to the participation forms | | |
|---|-------|--|----------------------|----------------|
| | | Formal education | Non-formal education | Self-education |
| Women with children under 18 y.o., total | 49.3 | 2.6 | 27.3 | 34.6 |
| including by the age of the youngest child: | | | | |
| 0–2 y.o. | 45.5 | 4.9 | 15.7 | 35.1 |
| 3–6 y.o. | 54.2 | 3.7 | 30.8 | 38.4 |
| 7–10 y.o. | 51.6 | 2.4 | 30.1 | 35.5 |
| 11–14 y.o. | 48.2 | 1.0 | 29.8 | 32.7 |
| 15–17 y.o. | 45.9 | 0.8 | 28.4 | 31.0 |

Formal education is the basic, but the smallest education form in terms of adult participation (9.7% of respondents). This is due to the fact that obtaining general and formal vocational education traditionally falls on a very short period of life for both women and men (mainly 15–17 years). At older ages, the participation rate gradually decreases, more slowly for women, faster for men, but practically disappearing for both by the age of 30. In absolute numbers, more women are covered by this education form (58.9 mil. women and 58.1 mil. men).

The fact that the Russian population receives formal education mainly in the youth age is reflected in the involvement level of women with children in it. According to Table 2, women with the youngest children have the highest level of such involvement (4.9%), while women with 15–17 y.o. have only 0.8%. However, even the relatively high level of involvement shown by women with young children is almost twice lower than the level calculated for the entire population of the surveyed women. This indicates that the majority of Russians prefer to have children after receiving a formal education.

Non-formal education, which can be considered as the basis of additional education, covers only 22.3% of respondents. In general, women are significantly inferior to men in terms of the scale and level of participation in this type of lifelong learning. At the time of the survey, 13.2 million women (20.1% of all women aged 15 years and older) and 13.7 million men (24.9%; see Tab. 1) took part in it.

Non-formal education accompanies both women and men almost all of their adult life, but it is especially intensive in middle and pre-retirement ages. In all ages, except for the youngest (15–17 y.o.), the share of non-formal education among men is higher than among women (*Fig. 3*). The maximum differences occur at the age of 25–29,

when female educational activity significantly decreases (30.8% vs. 36.4% for men), and pre-retirement years (at 55–59 y.o., male participation rate is 21.0%, female is 15.4%; see *Fig. 2*).

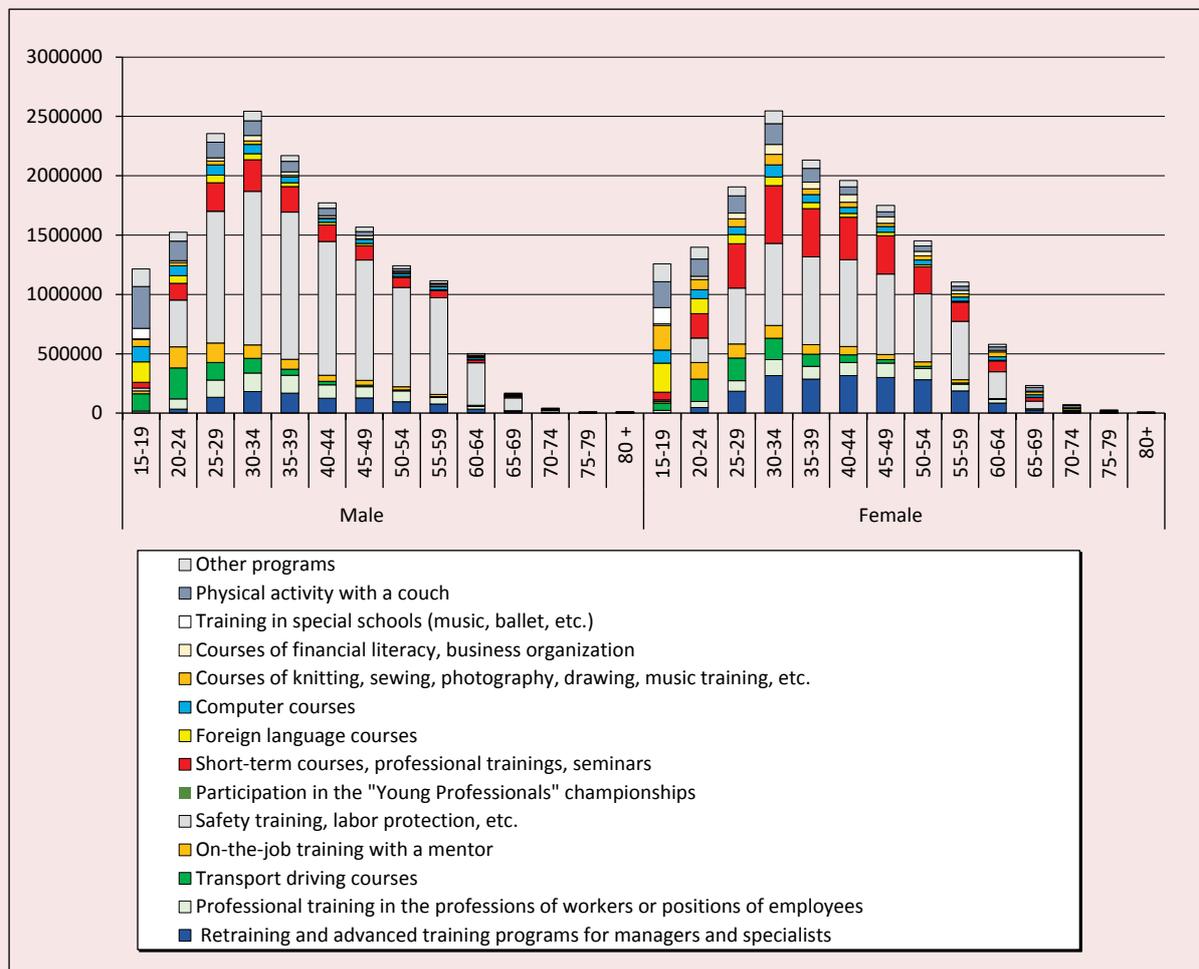
The most likely explanation for the formation of a significant gender gap in participation level in non-formal education in the group of 25–29 years is the appearance of children in many women at this age. Indeed, as calculations show, the presence of a woman with a child up to 2 y.o. almost halves the probability of her participation in non-formal education. Older children do not have such a fundamental influence (see *Tab. 2*).

The Observation revealed a significant segregation by non-formal education specialties: although there are no exclusively or predominantly “female” or “male” non-formal education programs, the respondents’ participation in most of them has a significant gender asymmetry.

The most feminized programs were “training in knitting, sewing, photography, video shooting, drawing, music, dancing, singing, etc.” (the number of women exceeded the number of men by 3.8 times), “training in professional retraining programs, advanced training for managers and specialists” and “training in financial and budget literacy courses, on the study of management issues, business organization” (2.2 times), “training in short-term courses, professional trainings, seminars, conferences, master classes” (2.1 times), “training in specialized schools (Olympic reserve, music, ballet school, etc.)” (1.6 times).

The most masculine programs were “training in safety, labor protection, fire safety, safe handling of weapons” (the number of men exceeds the number of women by 0.5 times), participation in the “young professionals” championships (0.6 times), mastering professional skills in the workplace under the guidance of mentors, training in vocational training programs for the professions of workers or positions of employees (0.9 times).

Figure 3. Age profile of distribution of the number of men and women in non-formal education specialties, thou. people



It seems that such segregation by non-formal training specialties generally reflects the existing sectoral and professional segregation in the field of employment. A certain optimism is inspired by the high women proportion among those studying in programs for managers and specialists, as well as in courses of financial and budgetary literacy, management, business organization, as in the future it may contribute to their gradual overcoming of the “glass ceiling”.

The Observation allows revealing gender differences regarding the *purposes* of obtaining non-formal education, its *initiators*, as well as *payment methods*.

The structure of the purposes pursued by women and men in obtaining non-formal education is generally very similar. Respondents of both genders most often call the purpose of obtaining it “new knowledge” (33.9 and 33.5% of all students, respectively). It is noteworthy that it is in the first place among students of all ages. In the second place, by a large margin, both women and men (18.6 and 18.2%) have a desire to achieve high work results through training. For the youngest respondents, as well as for the oldest ones, this goal turned out to be irrelevant. In the third place is the option “other”, and in men with a large margin (21.6 vs. 16.9% for women). Such a high value of the indicator show the

need to improve the survey methodology in order to more accurately take into account the purposes of obtaining non-formal education.

Relatively popular goals of training are also improving the cultural level and the opportunity to acquire new contacts which women strive for more often than men (9.9 and 7.1%, as well as 6.4 and 4.2%, respectively).

“Employment, new job”, “salary increase” and “career promotion” turned out to be the most unpopular purposes for obtaining additional education for representatives of both genders (the share of each of them in the total structure is less than 6%). It is worth noting that all three of the above purposes are at least somewhat popular only among young people of both genders, their value decreases significantly with age. In our opinion, this indicates that the current system of additional vocational education does not correlate well with the needs of labor market, and in the field of employment, a system of vertical professional mobility based on human potential growth has not yet developed.

The parenteral status among women only slightly transforms the hierarchy of purposes for obtaining non-formal education, and even then this applies mainly to women with children up to 3 y.o. (Tab. 3). New knowledge is important for them (32.4%), but they are less concerned about high work results, but raising the cultural level and

finding new contacts become more significant. Young mothers are almost twice as often as women in general, the purpose of their participation in non-formal education is called “employment, a new job” which underlines the relevance of the program of the State Employment Service for retraining, advanced training of persons on parental leave up to 3 y.o.

As children grow up, the importance of new contacts, increasing the cultural level, as well as employment for a new job as reasons for obtaining non-formal education decreases quite significantly, for example, for employment almost twice, from 8.6 to 4.3%. At the same time, the importance of achieving high work results increases significantly – from 12.8% for women with children up to 3 y.o. to 20.6% for women with children up to 18 y.o.

Thus, women’s participation in non-formal education is more related to personal, non-working interests (54.4% of the surveyed women), while men’s participation is related to work, professional interest (52.1%). This indicates a lower desire of women to undergo training in order to build a career and indicates, if not self-discrimination in official growth (lack of self-confidence in building a career), then at least insufficient efforts in breaking the “glass ceiling” or disappointment, the assumption that such efforts are useless, lack of internal motivation to build a career.

Table 3. Purpose of participation of men and women in non-formal education, %

| Purpose | Population, total | | Women of 15 years and older with children | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------|---|--------------|---------------|
| | male | female | up to 3 y.o. | preschoolers | up to 18 y.o. |
| Employment, new job | 4.9 | 4.2 | 8.6 | 6.5 | 4.3 |
| Salary increase | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.5 | 5.6 | 5.4 |
| Career promotion | 5.9 | 5.4 | 4.2 | 5.8 | 6.2 |
| High work results | 18.2 | 18.6 | 12.8 | 17.7 | 20.6 |
| New knowledge | 33.5 | 33.9 | 32.9 | 33.9 | 34.1 |
| New contacts | 4.2 | 6.4 | 7.9 | 6.11 | 5.1 |
| Increasing culture level | 7.1 | 9.9 | 13.1 | 9.36 | 8.0 |
| Other | 21.6 | 16.9 | 15.9 | 15.00 | 16.2 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 4. Initiators of the latest non-formal education for women and men, %

| | Population | | Women of 15 years and older with children | | |
|--|------------|--------|---|--------------|---------------|
| | male | female | up to 3 y.o. | preschoolers | up to 18 y.o. |
| On one's own initiative | 23.8 | 35.7 | 54.5 | 39.7 | 32.0 |
| On the initiative of the family, parents | 3.5 | 3.6 | 1.8 | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| On the employer's offer | 70.2 | 58.5 | 38.8 | 56.0 | 64.6 |
| Other | 2.5 | 2.3 | 4.9 | 3.0 | 2.2 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

If the differences between the purposes for which women and men receive non-formal education are generally small, then the lists of education *initiators* differ significantly. As can be seen from *Table 4*, women are more likely than men to study by showing personal initiative (35.7% vs. 23.8). At the same time, men are obviously much more likely to receive offers to continue their education from an organization or employers (70.4% for men vs. 58.5% for women). Families and parents equally rarely initiate additional training for both men and women; it is obvious that there is no gender discrimination in this issue.

As we have shown above, respondents of both genders do not always undergo additional training in order to build their career. However, the data on the initiators of such training indicate the important role that employers play in creating a “glass ceiling” for women.

The structure of initiators of training for women with children differs depending on the age of the children. The majority of women with children up to 3 y.o. (54.5%) study on their own initiative, respectively, a minority received this opportunity from an employer. The older the children, the more

this ratio changes. Among women with children up to 18 y.o., the participation level in programs, offered by the employer, almost doubles.

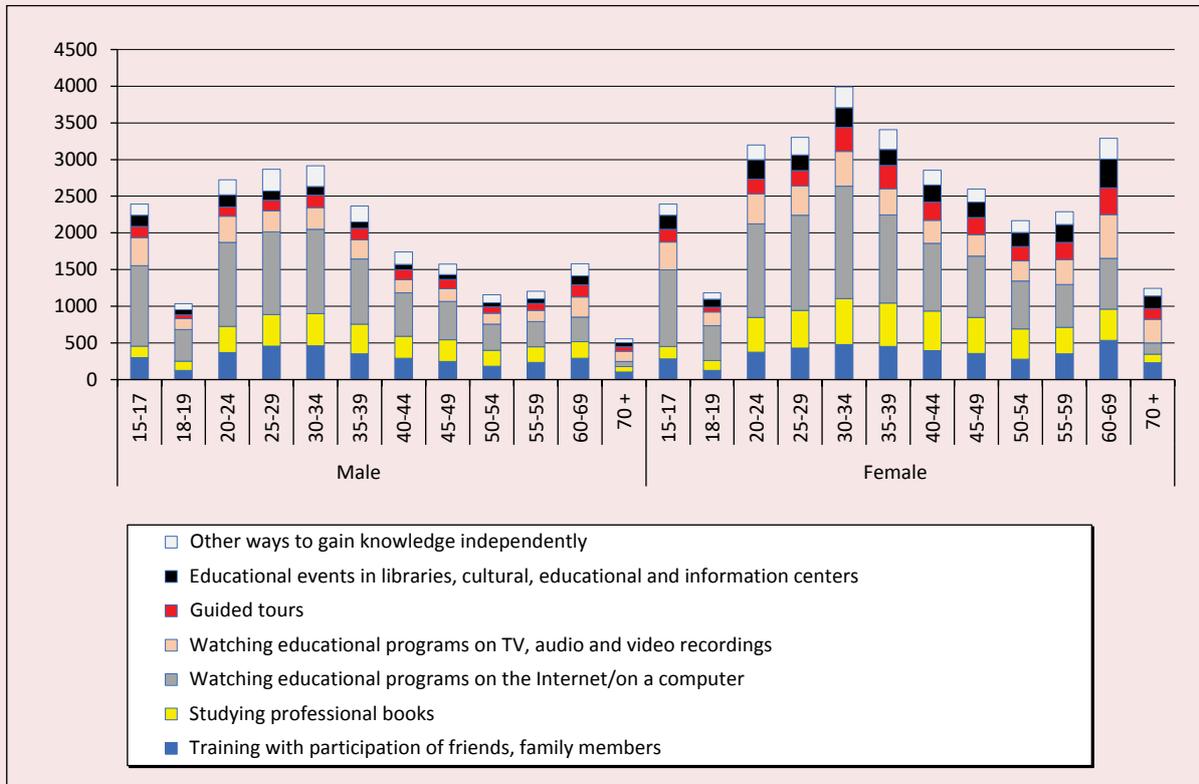
The sources of *payment for non-formal education* for women and men generally correlate with its initiators. Women, more often than men, who study on their own initiative, respectively, are more likely to pay for training themselves, and men are more likely to study at the invitation and at the employers' expense (*Tab. 5*).

The survey has showed a rather modest participation of the state employment agency (SEA) in the financing of non-formal education, although it is somewhat more relative to women – the state paid for the education of 0.6% of men and 1.3% of women. Even among women with children under 3 years of age who are beneficiaries of specialized educational programs of the SEA, the share of those who study at the expense of this service is only 1%. Moreover, among women with children up to 3 y.o., the article reveals the largest proportion of those who independently (or with the help of their family) pay for their education. However, the older the children, the more often their mothers' education is paid for by employers.

Table 5. Ways for women and men to pay for their last non-formal education, %

| Payment method | Population | | Women of 15 years and older with children | | |
|---|------------|--------|---|--------------|---------------|
| | male | female | up to 3 y.o. | preschoolers | up to 18 y.o. |
| Completely by oneself (family) | 21.7 | 32.0 | 48.9 | 35.6 | 28.4 |
| Employer | 61.0 | 49.8 | 33.3 | 46.9 | 55.3 |
| Employment Service, other State organizations | 0.7 | 1.3 | 1.0 | 1.1 | 0.9 |
| Several sources | 0.6 | 0.8 | 0.7 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
| Payment for learning is not provided | 13.7 | 13.6 | 11.3 | 12.4 | 12.2 |
| Another source | 2.3 | 2.4 | 4.9 | 3.1 | 2.4 |

Figure 4. The age profile of the distribution of men and women by forms and methods of independent knowledge acquisition, thou. people.



Self-education of women and men

Self-education is the most widespread form of public participation in the LL system. According to the Observation data, in 2020, 14.0 million men and 19.5 million women were engaged in self-education, which was 25.6% of all men and 29.4% of all women aged 15 years and older (see Tab. 1).

At the same time, self-education is a form of education characterized by the most significant gender differences in the parameters of population’s participation in it.

In general, the age profiles of activity in self-education in women and men are similar. The youngest respondents, regardless of gender, show maximum interest in this training type. With aging, the activity gradually decreases, but remains significant even in older ages. At the same time, in all ages, except for the oldest, the proportion of

women engaged in self-education is significantly higher than among men. The greatest difference occurs at the age of 40 years and older, when the share of women engaged in self-education exceeds the corresponding share among men by 1.4–1.5 times (see Fig. 2).

Gender differences in the specialization of self-education are huge, especially in two positions: self-education on healthy lifestyle issues (11% of women over 15 years old are interested in this problem, only 4.9% of men are interested in this problem) and mastering the skills of applied needlework and artistic creativity: playing musical instruments, singing, drawing, dancing, etc. (3.9% of women and 1% of men). In addition, women are slightly ahead of men in classes to improve financial and budgetary literacy, literacy in the field of housing and communal services, public services, etc. (4.7 and

3.1%, respectively). Men have a certain advantage in obtaining knowledge or skills on the use of new household technical means (mobile phone, “smart” house, etc.): 6.1% vs. 4.3% for women.

The analysis of the participation forms in self-education gives an interesting gender cross-section. In general, these forms can be combined into two groups: the Internet, TV and reading, on the one hand, and live communication, on the other. Men mostly watch educational programs on the Internet or on a computer (14% of respondents), with the help of TV or audio recordings (5.1%), read professional books and magazines (5.9%). 6.2% use live communication with friends, colleagues, and family members to master new knowledge, 2.7% use visiting museums with a guide, 2.1% use libraries, cultural centers, and lecture halls. Thus, the Internet is the most popular source of information for self-education, although to varying degrees for people of different generations (45.1% of respondents aged 15–17 y.o. use it for self-education, and only 1.7% is 70+) (*Fig. 4*).

Women use the Internet even more actively (16.1%), read professional magazines (7.4%), watch TV and listen to audio recordings (6.6%). At the same time, they are almost twice as likely as men to personally attend various educational events. In addition, we should note that women use a computer and master professional magazines more evenly across all ages and more intensively than men.

The high participation level in self-education, together with the purposes of obtaining non-formal education discussed above, indicates that women are more inclined to self-development which is not always associated with professional employment.

In general, the participation level of women with children up to 18 y.o. in self-education is slightly higher than the average for the sample of women (34.6%), especially with children aged 3–6 y.o. (38.4%), and in comparison with other types of lifelong learning. In our opinion, this indicates

that there are not enough favorable conditions for women with children, especially young ones, to participate in lifelong learning.

Conclusion

Rosstat study proves that both absolute and relative indicators show a fairly significant involvement of Russian women and men in lifelong learning, but the strategies for obtaining it have significant gender similarities and differences.

In both cases, age has a significant impact on obtaining lifelong learning, and in women and men, the age profiles of participation in the LL are similar, although the participation levels in different types of lifelong learning do not coincide.

The Observation has confirmed the fact that formal education ends at a young age, regardless of gender. At the same time, men are more actively involved in non-formal education; women are more actively involved in self-education. In addition, women are more often involved in different types of lifelong learning.

In general, there are no purely “female” or “male” areas of training in the framework of non-formal education and self-education, and the existing segregation in the specialties of such training reflects the existing sectoral and professional segregation in the field of employment. It is worth noting that there are a high proportion of women among those studying in programs for managers and specialists, in courses of financial and budgetary literacy, management, business organization which can become a factor in reducing vertical (job) segregation.

At the same time, an analysis of the survey results on the purposes of obtaining non-formal education, its initiators, as well as ways of paying for training have showed that participants of non-formal education of both genders rarely associate their training with expanding career opportunities. This indicates that the country has not yet developed a full-fledged system of vertical professional mobility based on human potential growth.

It is also a matter of concern that men are more likely to receive an invitation from employers to undergo additional training than women, respectively, women are more likely to bear the burden of paying for it themselves.

Women with children, especially young ones, in comparison with men and with the entire female population, experiencing obvious difficulties in participating in non-formal education, are more often than others forced to pay for their needs for new knowledge themselves, to satisfy them through more intensive use of self-education opportunities which primarily indicates insufficient favorable conditions for women with children to participate in lifelong learning.

Thus, there is a formation risk of gender inequality in developing lifelong learning. In the traditional educational paradigm, according to which professional knowledge was obtained by a person in a specialized educational institution before entering the field of employment or at the initial stage of a professional career, with the subsequent use of this or somewhat updated knowledge before retirement age, female education level has exceeded male education level in all age groups acting as a competitive female advantage in the labor market. To a large extent, this situation has become possible due to the fact that young men and women receive basic professions in the

first years of adult life, when most of them are not yet burdened with family responsibilities and the traditional gender division of labor does not affect their educational opportunities. However, the highest rates of technological development, the accelerating rates of obsolescence of knowledge, obtained in professional educational institutions, are increasingly demanding the formation of lifelong learning system in Russia; its main semantic load is going beyond formal education, namely, getting at the ages coinciding with the time of the family formation, birth and upbringing of children. In the context of the widespread gender division of labor, this situation calls into question the real implementation of the equality of opportunities for non-formal education and self-education for women and men and requires the adoption of state measures to support women in overcoming these barriers and the opportunity to receive lifelong learning.

Thus, we can conclude that for developing lifelong learning in the context of human potential reproduction, it is necessary to identify two activity areas, namely: ensuring greater connection with labor market and combining family and work, and creating conditions that promote a more comfortable combination of training within the framework of lifelong learning, work and family responsibilities.

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