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EXPERIENCE IN USING QUALITATIVE PROBLEMS IN TEACHING THE COURSE OF DEMOGRAPHY FOR BACHELOR ECONOMISTS

One of the tasks that the teacher must deal with when preparing the Demography course for bachelor students who do not specialize in demography is to interest students with the subject by demonstrating the application of the indicators and trends they study. Another important task is to check the learning outcomes both during the semester and during the exam. Qualitative problems can be used to simultaneously solve both problems. Unlike traditional calculation tasks that require the knowledge of formulas of indicators, qualitative tasks are designed to help students see the links between demographic processes and population structures, better understand the nature of demographic indicators, pay attention to the possible socio-economic consequences of demographic processes in dynamics. In discussing a text problem, it is important to draw the attention of students to the need to build logical chains of reasoning, rather than simply listing the reasons or factors required by the statement. Such exercises teach students to critically comprehend the information they receive from journalism and when reading scientific publications, employ the knowledge they received in the course of Demography to solve applied problems.

The structure of the qualitative problem implies some initial information, which serves to formulate the conditions of the problem and questions. Sources for the initial information can be scientific publications, articles on demographic topics in the media, written work of students themselves (errors in the work), etc. Qualitative tasks can be offered to students during the semester at seminar

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sessions to consolidate the topics studied. For these purposes, scenarios related to the discussion of individual indicators are most suitable. In the exam, you can offer such tasks, for the solution of which students should involve a wide range of topics studied in the course, and also link these topics with the issues of other courses, in particular, applied economic disciplines, such as, for example, Health Economics, Economics of Nature Management, Economics Education, Institutional Economics, etc.

Below are examples of qualitative problems offered to undergraduate students of the Faculty of Economics of the Lomonosov Moscow State University in different years, with reference to the source materials that served as the basis for designing the tasks.

Example 1. The task for the seminar on the methods of standardization of demographic coefficients. In 2015, an article appeared devoted to the analysis of mortality in the United States [Case, Deaton, 2015]. The authors of the article, one of which was the Nobel Laureate in Economics, A. Deaton, in 2015, claimed that between 1999 and 2013, an unprecedented increase in the death rate of white non-Hispanic middle-aged population was noted in the United States. The increase in mortality was due to an increase in death rates from alcohol poisoning, the use of narcotic drugs, and cirrhosis of the liver. Immediately after the publication, the article received a number of critical remarks, all of which concerned the same "shortcoming" in the data analysis, which the authors themselves pointed out, but disregarded it. What kind of shortage is it? How could it influence the conclusions of the authors of the article?

Example 2. The task for a seminar on demographic indicators (for students' understanding of the difference between absolute and relative characteristics (intensity indicators) of the demographic process)¹. The report "On the situation of children and families with children in the city of Moscow in 2015" (О положении детей и семей, имеющих детей, в городе Москве в 2015 году, 2015) gives a graph (Figure 1), which shows the growth in the number of disabled children under 17 who receive social pensions. 1) Is it possible to state on the basis of this graph that in Moscow the level of disability of children has increased over 5 years? Justify your answer. 2) List the reasons that could determine the dynamics of the indicator shown in the graph, suggesting a criterion by which these reasons can be divided into groups.

¹ The example is drawn from: Kalabikhina I. E., Kalmykova N. M., Ivanova Y. D. Analytical report "Development of a matrix of indicators characterizing the situation of children and families with children, as well as the effectiveness of social policies for children and families in the city of Moscow." Preprint. ANO "Council for Management and Development", Moscow, 2017.

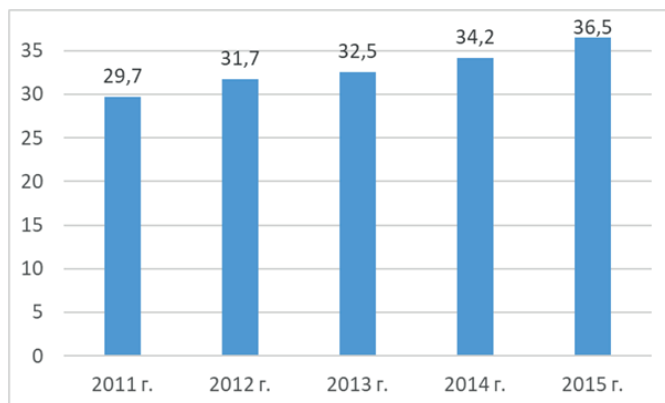


Figure 1 . The number of disabled children under 17 years of age receiving social pensions, Moscow, thousands of people.

Example 3. The task for the exam. Involves students' knowledge of current trends in fertility, marriage and family formation, demographic transition. In 1981, the notion of “sandwich generation” appeared (The Sandwich Generation, n.d.), and in 2006, thanks to Carol Abaya's papers in the US, it was included in official dictionaries. Sandwich Generation are adults who must simultaneously take care of their parents and their children (grandchildren). Club Sandwich: 50–60-year-olds, caring for their aging parents, adult children and grandchildren, or 30–40-year-olds with young children, aging parents and grandparents.

1. List economic and demographic reasons that lead to the formation of the sandwich generation.
2. List the economic and social consequences of the formation of such a population group.
3. Do you think that there are prerequisites for the formation of sandwich generation in Russia? Justify your answer: list the available prerequisites or explain why there are none.

If the task is offered to students in regular classes in the course of the semester, we can recommend students to explore articles on demographic transition, for example, [Murphy, 2011], and socio-economic consequences of the formation of the sandwich generation [Grundy, Henretta, 2006; Cravey, Mitra, 2011] About the “sandwich” generation in Russia — see [Sheresheva, Kalmykova, Kolkova, 2015].

Example 4. The task to discuss the consequences of the epidemiological transition in different countries. At present, Russia is in the third stage of the epidemiological transition, characterized by the predominance of endogenous causes in the mortality structure, often leading to the development of chronic diseases.

1. In your opinion, to which group of countries is the situation in Russia closer in terms of the level of prevalence of chronic diseases: to developed or developing countries? In which group of countries are the morbidity and mortality rates from these reasons higher? Why do you think so?

2. If you had a choice between treatment and prevention of chronic diseases, what would you choose? Why? Give arguments for short and long-term prospects

The discussion of the problem should be preceded by students' reading the articles devoted to the epidemiological transition, and [Mayes, Oliver, 2012] can also be recommended, in which the reasons for refusing to finance measures for the prevention of chronic diseases are given.

Example 5. The task for discussing short-term and long-term consequences of demographic policy on the example of the PRC “One family — one child” policy.



“Late marriages. Late childbirth. To give birth less, but to children of excellent quality”

Рожай, Китай

В КНР отменен принцип «Одна семья – один ребенок»
Владимир Ващенко 29.10.2015, 19:28



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Руководство Китая пошло на отмену принципа «Одна семья – один ребенок», который действовал в стране несколько десятков лет. Самы граждане КНР отнеслись к этому с большим энтузиазмом, однако эксперты отметили, что резкого роста численности населения китайского государства ожидать все равно не стоит. Опрошенные «Газетой.Ру» китайцы рады в первую очередь возможности зачать мальчика, который в Китае важен как наследник.

At the end of 2015, China abolished the “one family — one child” policy of curbing the growth in the number of births, which had been in force since the early 1980s. A family with one child was considered exemplary, which was never typical of Chinese culture. The only child became the center of family interests, in China even the term “little emperor” appeared.

For spouses with two or more children, economic and administrative sanctions were introduced. The inability to have two children in the family pushed

Chinese families to ensure that the only child was a boy, since it is the sons who are support in old age, they are obliged to take care of the elderly parents, because a girl usually leaves for her husband's house.

Formally, China's demographic policy was, of course, successful: population growth has decelerated. According to the 2010 China Population Census, the country's population, number 1 in the world, was over 1.34 billion people.

At the same time, China begins to face the long-term consequences of the "one family — one child" policy, which lead to significant problems in different areas of the country's life.

List possible consequences of the "one family — one child" policy, related to the reproduction of the population, the development of the family, the socio-economic development of the country.

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