

## REVIEWS



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### INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO THE MODERNISATION OF RUSSIAN EDUCATION MEDITATING ON THE BOOK

**Российское образование: тенденции и вызовы [Russian education: tendencies and challenges]. М.: Дело АНХ, 2009. 400 pp.**

The collection of papers brings together articles and analytical reports published in 2006—2009 in the leading academic, popular science and analytical journals, among which are *Voprosy ekonomiki*, *Ekonomicheskaya politika*, *Voprosy obrazovaniya*, *Expert*, etc.

In effect, the collection of papers is an extended "modernisation manifesto" in the field of education, which lays stress on the issues of higher education and postgraduate training.

J. March is believed to have said once that almost any educated person could deliver a lecture on the objectives of higher education and almost nobody would be willing to listen to it [1]. Paraphrasing J. March, this collection of papers is a book one wants to read and willingly to reread.

The systemic problems of general and professional education are considered through the prism of the international quality criteria and competitiveness of education systems.

The collection of papers is highly "economics-centric" both in terms of the authors and their perspectives. Most of the authors are either "pure" high-class economists, or scientists and technocrats who turned to economics and public administration, which has a significant impact on their argumentation. The problems are sharply outlined; the solutions can be easily resolved into cost estimates and socioeconomic effects.

The publication is well-timed — it presents a reflection on the results of the modernisation process, and it is rather *modern* — aimed forwards, it is action-oriented and precise. The complaints about the traps of the "distance covered", which are abundant within works on the topic discussed, are kept to a minimum.

The collection of papers opens with a thematic report co-authored by the Minister of education and science A. A. Fursenko as well as A. Ye. Volkov and D. V. Livanov. The main agenda for Russian education is the realisation of the fact that the systematic effect of development can result only from simultaneous structural, institutional and content modernisation of higher education. The authors emphasise that the commercialisation of education, its informational transformation and an increasing number of students are the

main tendencies, which not only contribute to the global crises in the sphere of higher education but, at the same time, open up modernisation opportunities. In particular, we are witnessing a shift from the current estimate-based to the standard per capita financing model, the transition to two cycle higher education, and the adjustment of the quality control system. However, a model of the adjustment remains open.

The article entitled *Russian education — 2020: an education model for the innovative economy* emphasises the impossibility of directly drawing on the international education experience and suggests symbiosis of the adopted international and valuable Russian experience in practical education. The new model is meant to change the mechanism of its implementation but does not address the fundamental functions of education. The education process should become "life-long", the culture of mastering knowledge should be replaced by the culture of individual search and knowledge upgrading; the level of secondary education social standard should be raised to that of applied bachelor's degree. The implementation of the new model should lead to open education, which would take into account the interests of three parties: parents (citizens), employers and the state. However, it can function only against the background of an increase in expenditure on education up to 4.7 % of GDP, the growth in personal incomes, and a contribution from the private sector.

The quality, availability and effectiveness of education are stressed in the article by T.L. Klyachko and V. A. Mau entitled *The tendencies in the development of higher professional education in the Russian Federation* as the key objectives of transformations in the sphere. The authors consider two sets of problems, which are to be solved in order to modernise education: firstly, the allocation of extra budget resources for ensuring an increase in remuneration and creating effective incentives for those employed in education; secondly, the implementation of institutional (and structural) reforms. The transition to the two-cycle education model should be accompanied by the change in the financing model. Budget financing should predominate at the bachelor's level. However, at the master's level, financing should be targeted (private, corporate, public). T.L. Klyachko and V.A. Mau emphasise that, today, the introduction of the two-cycle (Bologna) model seems to be a tribute to fashion, and if its implementation is reduced to artificial division of the specialist programme, it can have negative consequences.

In modern economy, the higher education system is the key factor of the country's success. Universities create the critical mass of talents for the dynamic competitiveness of the state. This is, in our opinion, the main thesis of S.M. Guriyev's article entitled *Our higher education*. The author focuses on two problems of higher education: the lack of incentive for universities to quality improvement and low financing — and emphasises their interdependence proposing solutions by means of a drastic increase in financing in exchange for structural changes. S.M. Guriyev explains the need for a new social contract between universities, the state and the society, and the solution to the brain drain problem through increasing researchers' salaries, competition-based distribution of grants, and charity. The author believes that the

responsibility for the development of new programmes and demonstration of their competitive advantages rests with universities themselves rather than the state. The role of the ministry is to explain the principles of the Bologna system to universities and society, and guarantee similar competitive conditions for the old and new formats.

One of the centrepieces of the collection of papers is the report of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation entitled *Education and society: is Russia ready to invest in its future?* prepared by a team of authors under the supervision of Ya. I. Kuzminov. The report outlines two main objectives of Russian education: 1) the preservation, development and consolidation of the Russian people; 2) the establishment of a competitive education system. The authors of the report believe that education has lost the mobility function and we are witnessing its overall commercialisation, which results in growing disparity based on the wealth of the students' parents rather than on their own faculties. The cause is unfair distribution of resources. Nevertheless, the situation is gradually improving through an increase in financing and its more equitable distribution through a mechanism of per capita financing. On the basis of the analysis of education actors, the authors arrive at a conclusion that the key resource of the education development is the initiative of the participants of the education process. However, the structure of the education system leaves no room for independence and initiative, thus a special emphasis is laid on the autonomy of teachers, which is achieved through granting methodological freedom to an education institution and an increase in salaries. A necessary component of modernisation should be the revival of an innovation component of universities against the background of the extinction of "pseudo-education institutions", public support for research universities and research teams should be offered on the basis of grant awarding and be aimed at the optimisation of curricula and improvement of education and research infrastructure.

The experience of the best international universities of the world analysed by J. Salmi and I. Frumin provides a clear view of the proportions of a modern world-class university and three strategies of their formation. These strategies are as follows: an increase in the level of the existing universities; 2) establishment of new universities; 3) consolidation of several universities. In all cases, the pivotal role is played by the state. The analysis of international ratings shows that the top 20—30 universities share common characteristics such as high concentration of talent (high percentage of talented teachers and students), sufficient resources for the creation of high-quality conditions for academic activities and advanced research, and a system of administration that gives the universities room for the application of flexible approaches and resource management without unnecessary bureaucracy. The analysis of numerous factors shows that these characteristics are not just an element of the outside appearance of the best universities but the actual reasons of their success. The causes of failure of some universities, in the authors' opinion, are insufficiently thorough selection of students, lack of competition between universities, strict employment regulations, and formal control procedures.

In the article entitled *Qualification capital and the development of the continuing education system in Russia*, A. Ye. Volkov and A. A. Klimov, suggesting a number of measures aimed at the formation of the continuing education system, emphasise that the classical formal education system is out of date. The establishment of a modern education system is possible only through the formation of highly competitive environment and its saturation with various educational services, the development of continuing education infrastructure, the exploitation of the institutional potential of continuing education, the introduction of modern technologies in continuing education, the creation of new financing mechanisms in continuing education, including financial interest of employers in higher qualification of their employees, an increase in tax deductions, etc. It is very important to let international specialists and organisations get involved in continuing education but only in the sectors without Russia's presence.

In the article *Mass higher education*, Ya. I. Kuzminov assesses factors of the development of economy in general and labour market in particular both in Russia and abroad. He suggests four directions to preserve higher education (provided it remains efficient "for everybody"): firstly, the elimination of the artificially maintained social gap between vocational schools and universities; secondly, the establishment of a functional mechanism of quality control in higher education; thirdly the development of professional standards and a system of professional examinations beyond the education sphere; fourthly, the reformation of extramural education through the creation of a network of national open universities. The article offers two arguments against "overeducation": the concern about the formation of a layer of chronically professionally dissatisfied people in the country and mass emigration. All in all, Ya. I. Kuzminov gives a positive assessment of aspirations of Russian people to receive higher education and forecasts that Russia will get a relative advantage by 2025.

The programme of the academic mobility development and increased competitiveness of the Russian higher education system are considered by Ye. A. Karpukhina and M. V. Larionova as one of the most efficient tools to raise the quality of human capital. The solution to the problem of academic mobility lies in an increase in the quality of education, the formation of individual educational trajectories, and the concentration of university resources for more effective performance in the conditions of increasingly strict resource limitations. According to the authors of the article, the transition to the two degree system will facilitate the national student mobility provided the interuniversity programmes are coordinated. There is a need to overcome the dissociation of the mobility infrastructure elements; academic mobility should develop not only at the level of universities by also in view of an integral approach to the institutions of all levels.

As to the issue of reformation and modernisation of the national education system, one should address international experience. In the article entitled *Academic Conventions*, Ya. I. Kuzmenkov and M. M. Yudkevich consider the features of the academic market in Russia, predominantly, in comparison with the US education system. The principal difference between the

two education systems is the students' approach to the selection of main courses. The American system is effective when labour markets are relatively sustainable and it is easy to predict what competences will be in demand. The article describes three types of students: competence hunters, would-be researchers, and the indifferent ones. The American model is appreciated by the first two groups, in the authors' opinion, while the indifferent students do not understand it. Thus, to become competitive, Russia needs professional academic managers and a rather professionally strong academic community. The model of its management should follow the US and European examples.

International experience is also approached by I. D. Frumin and P. P. Pol-yarush. The article entitled *Private-public partnership in education: the lessons of international experience* states the fact of the increased private sector in education throughout the world. The reason lies in the number of advantages offered by the private sector such as financial efficiency, accountability, and the quality of the service provided. Despite all the advantages, the private sector, in certain cases, requires public support, for instance, in the form of subsidies and tax benefits. Analysing international experience, the authors come to the conclusion that the public-private partnership increases the education system efficiency (the education quality improves, and new education and innovation opportunities emerge).

The current situation in Russia is characterised by insufficient development of the private sector in education. A team of authors — T. L. Klyachko, V. A. Mau and S. G. Sinelnikov-Murylev — in the article *On the budget institution reform* — prove the need for such a reform, which would create the conditions for the reduction in the misuse of budget funds and increase their efficiency. The central mechanism of the reform should be the competitive principle of budget funds distribution. There are two ways of its implementation: 1) the change in the procedure of the estimate preparation, which should become the organisation's planning tool and cease to be a tool of expenditure management; 2) a change in the type of the institution. The first step to implement the reform was the federal law "On autonomous organisations".

Innovative education technologies and training methodologies are discussed by a team of authors bringing together D. V. Kaisin, O. S. Kaisina, D. S. Konanchuk, and V. V. Shoptenko. One of the most effective training technologies, in the authors' opinion, is business simulations, which are being introduced at Russian and international business schools. The analysis of the curricula of the leading business schools and major international training corporations help identify progressive education forms (breakthroughs), including training models based on business simulators, participation in a real consulting project and a prolonged business project, managing real capital, etc.

The article *The formation of the managerial potential in public administration* by S. E. Zuyev, A. A. Klimov, and V. V. Galkin focuses on the four major problems of public employee education and training: the objectivity of the selection and appointment of candidates, a strictly limited social base for recruiting public employees, the capability of training to respond to the challenges of modern society, and the inertia and dissociation of the key levels

and formats of training. The authors give priority to the international standards in training of public employees.

In his article entitled *Notes on business education*, academician A. G. Aganbegyan stresses a low level of management efficiency in Russia. The proposed solution to this fundamental problem lies in the improvement of the system on the basis of approaches employed in business education — a counterweight to the education system, which has developed in our country. Thus, admitting the importance of theoretical knowledge, he mentions the peculiar to Russia exaggerated emphasis on this component. Drawing on the personal experience, the author shows that a class should resemble a 'well-rehearsed performance' featuring the integral application of case analysis, business games, and involvement of experts. In this relation, important components are individual work, the development of paper writing skills, and, the most important one, the development of a strict self-control system.

The article *Business education at the turn of the centuries: the challenges of time and development tendencies* by V. A. Mau and A. G. Seferyan emphasises the role of cooperation and joint programmes with different education institutions including international and regional ones. The author states that the system of education credits will be effective, first of all, for the development of business schools.

Ya. I. Kuzminov in the article *Possible impact of the economic crisis on the education system and the quality of human resources in Russia* suggests a number of measures aimed to overcome the repercussions from the crisis at different education levels. The crisis condition should not result in a decrease in the per capita financing in general education; thus, to this end, the budget should allow for support to the regions affected by the crisis. The major risk to secondary and basic professional education is out-of-date curricula. Thus, there is a need to complete the restructuring of the system at this level of education. There is also a need for further public financing of university research programmes and development of education loan support for students of all levels.

The topic of interconnection between education modernisation and economic crises is concluded by an article by T. L. Klyachko. It considers education as a method of alleviating mass, especially youth, unemployment. The prolongation of the training period, which is facilitated by the transition to the two-cycle system, is analysed as an anti-crisis measure. In order to keep young people in the sphere of education, it is necessary to optimise the education credit system, introduce advanced training for graduates and simplify the admission process. The crisis experience is considered as an incentive to thoroughly analyse and adapt training programmes to the requirements of the long-term development of the country's economy.

Thus, the collection of papers closely examines the institutional barriers to the development of Russian education: motivation difficulties in the transition to objective ratings, low spatial mobility of the academic staff and, as a result, the isolation effect, and the low social mobility of specialists in the field of education and research.

The authors show that provided we take on ambitious and credible commitments, institutional barriers can be overcome. Such responsibilities embrace new contracting systems (including employment), recruitment of international experts within executive structures of education institutions, overcoming isolation (the downside of "research traditions" and "pedagogical dynasties"), the transition from line and staff to project management, introduction of foreign language courses, games and simulations into training programmes, stricter requirements for mastering training programmes, etc.

The introduction of organisational innovation is possible only as a result of transition to diversified funding, the upgrade of education institution management principles, greater autonomy for education institutions, and social control mechanisms.

Opportunities for education system development lie in the attraction of research grants and income generated through innovative activities, launch of advanced training programmes, and the formation of special purpose capital funds with the participation of sponsors and investors.

A definite advantage of the collection of papers is that the issues tackled are considered by the authors representing the institutions which are successful *in their own way*. They analyse their experience, and some of their suggestions are implemented at certain universities.

However, dialectics suggests that our faults are often the extension of our virtues. The examination of the collection of papers and its structure gives a feeling that the challenge to the out-of-date rent sources in the system of education and research (hence, also its receiver) looks like *seeking new innovator's rent*. Success in the competition for social resources requires new and sometimes *drastic solutions*.

Recognising success of certain institutions in a certain field, one should not forget that these are very particular cases, due to both a narrow disciplinary field and the proximity of these institutions to socio-political and governmental lobby.

The actual question is whether it is possible to replicate the success story at the scale and in the context of goals set by the history for the Russian education systems.

The collection of papers does not tackle a number of issues which are to be discussed in the future. For example: what should we do with the language of education and research in Russia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Certainly, the restoration of declining standing of the Russian language and its promotion will require extra resources and efforts aimed to support at least a two-language system. Small countries have to abandon their national languages of education and research in favour of English to save the costs of research bilingualism. One may recall the criticism of France or the example of Germany, which gradually abandoned its original education model in favour of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Even China has to put up with the global spread of resources in English and develop a long-term strategy regarding publishing English academic journals.

This challenge, which is seemingly peripheral against the background of the competence approach introduction, a unified state exam and standard per

capita financing, is, in our opinion, significant. It relates to the large-scale issue of the integration of Russian education into the global information field as well as the local issue of equipping Russian education institutions (especially multi-disciplinary universities) with up-to-date electronic resources against the background of *rather odd* and extravagant accreditation indicators as to the purchase of textbooks and study materials.

In the context of the establishment of a federal university network, it could be logical to expect from the collection of papers an overview of the issue of *spatial* distribution of research and education resources in our country. Concentration of research and education potential in capitals — which is typical for Russia — is hardly the case in the developed countries; the introduced unified state exam and two-cycle education can give a new look to the "centre-periphery" problem. The understanding that the best university is made by the best students and not only by the "best researchers" gives priority to the demographical challenge in the context of mid- and long-term modernisation of education. Another issue is the results of stratification of education institutions and the inevitable collapse of the "locker room" model.

However, such a collection of papers has been long awaited. The state and the society send a clear sign to the education system that both ideological and financial support can be expected only if it takes on credible commitments as to the effective introduction of organisational innovations.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasise once again that the reader is offered a collection of articles, which gives a comprehensive rather than complete overview of tendencies and challenges of the modernisation of Russian education. An important conclusion, at which, in our opinion, one can arrive upon reading this collection of papers is that education modernisation can be systemic: given the "international" level of ambitions and the "credibility" of commitments regarding their implementation, the modernisation problem resolves into a transparent set of efficiency indicators. They will be closely connected with the criteria underlying the international education system competitiveness ratings, while the indicators themselves should approach the levels of world-class systems.

The major challenge of education modernisation is to avoid turning it into the realm of "postmodernists" reducing simulations to simulacra. This challenge appeals to the level of basic values — psychological readiness of current elites to share control in exchange for development, the readiness of intellectual classes to face highly competitive conditions of survival in the sphere of education and research, and the readiness of future Russian students to build the best organisations in the world.

### References

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