

Quality and availability of education: dilemma or unity?

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The importance of education reform is being discussed almost in all countries. In Russia the reform has become acute and if a modern working system is not created instead of degraded remnants of the Soviet secondary and high schools other problems will be less important for the country.

It should be noted that modernization of higher education is bound up with the Bologna process in the public mind. Competitiveness reasons are also mentioned in favor of a European higher education area.

Unfortunately, there are some undesirable consequences here. I'll point out at least two of them. Firstly, there are negative consequences for national identity. It is known, that higher education has a distinct national character. It is determined by social and economic conditions of the country, ancient traditions, psychology, way of life and many other factors. Originally European students are currently educated in the U.S. or Australia outside the boundaries of European values. The inclusion in a common European higher education is undoubtedly fraught with danger for national cultures and traditions, and the multinational Russia is not an exception here. It is important not to lose the national characteristics of our culture in the process of reform. Education and particularly higher education certainly belongs to the sphere of culture. So the famous principle "do no harm!" must be one of the most important principle in the reform in such sensitive sphere as education.

Secondly, there are negative consequences from the economic point of view. Nowadays higher education is a multibillion dollar business, and Europe is interested, whose economy these billions will be invested in. However, no country in Europe can respond to external challenges, is not able to compete with the U.S. both in the field of higher education and in economy and politics. Creating a European higher education area is bound up with the hope to raise the importance of a united Europe. At the same time it should be noted that there are almost two times more countries in the Bologna process than in the EU and these countries differ from each other and from the "old" EU member states in many respects.

Hence, it becomes clear that it is unrealistic to expect that all the "Bologna" countries implement the principles of the Bologna process simultaneously and with equal depth. The Bologna process based upon the so-called "10 Trends" is yet both an evolutionary process (in "mild" forms of implementation) and a revolutionary process in meaningful results. Formation of a pan-European system of higher education as well as world-class universities should be the same.

In the context of the reforms the idea of availability of higher education sounds like a leitmotif. How can access to higher education be provided for? May be due to its availability? There are not so many ways to achieve it. The most common way is "free" higher education. For a student free education means that all the education expenses are paid by the state. It's this scheme that dominates in Western Europe. Recently, there was only budget financing of education in Russia. The three leading countries (Germany, France and England) have the budget financing over 80% in education. The only country with the developed education where the level of budget financing is less than 50% is the United States. By the way, before the 70-ies the leader in education expenditure was the USSR, competing only with the United States. 10-12% of national income from the budget was spent on education in our country. By the 80-ies the USSR had lost the lead. By 1985 education expenditure had accounted for only 6%, in 1995 - 3,6% (and for higher education - only 2%). At the same time the World Bank requires that budget financing of education must be from 4 to 6% of GDP.

Another way to achieve availability of education is creating the economic situation in the country, when the majority of families who want to give their children higher education can afford the pay for their university studies. As a rule, in this case the opportunity of support to families that are not wealthy enough is provided for, e.g. they are given credits, loans on acceptable conditions by the state and other organizations. Together with benefits for ethnic minorities and unprivileged members of society this scheme provides availability of higher education rather well. It is interesting that such a system is most developed in the Anglo-Saxon countries and primarily in the United States¹.

It is appropriate to appeal to the background of paid education. It is known that the debate on legality of paid higher education is being conducted as long as there are the universities themselves. Since the Middle Ages "fees caused condemnation because knowledge is a gift of God and to trade it meant to sell something that does not belong to you"².

¹ See: Problems of Modernization of Higher Education in Russia: Monographs. – M.: MAKS Press, 2010. – p.56-57

² Uvarov P.Y. University // Dictionary of Medieval Culture / edited by A.Y.Gurevich. – M., 2007. – p.545

There is a mixed system in Russia: not only private but also public universities have non-budget places requiring fees. The number of budget places in absolute numeration is increasing, but is steadily decreasing in percentage wise, while the tuition is constantly increasing. Our research revealed that the people's possibility to pay for the education of their children has substantially been exhausted. Low people's mobility because of high travelling costs and of a number of other reasons when a trip to study in other cities becomes a problem worsens the whole situation. The implementation of Integrated State Exam when the applicant can send the documents to the universities by post including the Internet improves the situation but doesn't solve it fundamentally.

And all this leads to a significant reduction of accessibility of higher education in Russia today. It is impossible not to see a dangerous trend. Inability to self-realization of socially disadvantaged groups' members will inevitably give rise to social tension. Not to mention the fact that the failure to obtain higher education by capable people reduces their contribution to society and impoverishes a personality. Responsible state and responsible business should create a real working mechanism that would provide availability of education to everyone who is able (and of course who wants it).

The origin of non-budget (paid) education in Russia is probably the forced situation when the state cut down expenses on education went largely out of education in the 90-ies. Universities would not have survived without tuition. However having returned the state has failed not only to solve but also to formulate problems in development of education for a long time. Unfortunately, the education reform in Russia has followed the path of dramatic commercialization. And it damages the fundamental education. Nowadays there is an unrestrained growth in the number of paid educational institutions, paid education sector and the rise in prices for tuition fees (it has reached an incredible value in prestigious universities that, in its turn, increased the social inequality).

However the crucial issues in higher education can not only be explained by tuition fee and availability (in spite of their importance). Higher education in Russia has actually become mass higher education. Russia is moreover a leader in the number of students per 10 thousand inhabitants. In Russia this index is 556 (in the U.S. 445, in Germany 240, in Japan 233) now. Having reached the mass education of people with higher education, allowing to found thousands of new private universities (and their many thousands of branches that came into existence over several years in the 90-ies) and to admit their students the Russian higher education system has moved to the stage of "mixing equation". Therefore the Russian education quality is in deep crisis now. This is proved not only by places of Russian universities in the Global University Ranking (only several universities such as MSU SPSU, KSU are represented there). This is a paradox but it is true that Chinese

universities are gradually ousting Russian universities in the Global University Ranking in recent years.

The imperative of our time is increasing demand for people educated much better than the secondary school does it. On the background of the fact that higher education has really become a mass one there is devaluation both of a higher education diploma and of evaluation criteria of higher education in Russia. It turned out that the elitist and mass education can not coexist equally successful. It is necessary to place emphasis: it should be either a mass education or an elitist education. The elitist education refers to the situation that occurred 35-40 years ago when one-fifth of all young people who entered high schools. It was the elite of society focused essentially on the most capable talented youth.

The mass "output" out of universities suggests an equal mass "input" today. Therefore there is a need to have a possibility to choose from somebody. We are faced with several challenges here. Firstly, it is different schooling quality. It is known that schooling is different in urban and rural areas, in different regions, at different schools. Secondly, the very type of schooling that is often not aimed at developing creative thinking skills, the real application of knowledge, does not meet the needs of high school (this is especially urgent in connection with orientation of secondary schools just to the Integrated State Exam), to say nothing of the needs of employers.

Thus, the serious problem of higher education refers to the fact that mass education sharpens the problem of higher education quality. It is known that quality assurance is one of the ten officially recognized directions of the Bologna process but it is especially important in the reform period. After all, any reform is fraught with danger of "damage" the old system before the new one is formed that's why a particularly demanding task is to ensure its quality "on the march". The high school has almost lost its innovation, research component. 16 lecturers are only engaged in research. There is a large sector of quasi-education that takes at least 25% of the whole education system. In this sector deliberately understated requirements are made to students and a set of competencies they receive is clearly not enough for professional work³.

State participation in founding world-class universities was not an important factor in the past. The history of the Ivy League universities⁴ in the U.S. shows that they have achieved such a high level as a result of its steadily evolutionary progress rather than of targeted measures by the state. The same can be referred

³ See: Kuzminov Y., Mau V., Sinelnikov-Murylev S. Country where there are a lot of bad high schools // *Expert*. – 2009. - №37 (28.09-4.10). – p.72-77

⁴ The Ivy League is the name of eight private universities and colleges in the USA (Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, Yale and others) and has connotations of academic excellence and social elitism.

to Oxford and Cambridge. Being financed by the state for several centuries at the same time they have full autonomy in management, specifying problems and methods of working. However now it is hardly possible to found a world-class university without targeted state-financing backing if only because forming of advanced research centers and departments needs high costs; and rapid formation of such centers requires significant one-time investment and political support. More than a hundred years ago the question of John D. Rockefeller, that it is necessary to found a world-class university, was answered by Charles Eliot, the then president of Harvard like this: "50 million dollars and two hundred years." Though University of Chicago founded at the beginning of the XX century has reached the global level in twenty years and at a cost of about 100 million dollars. Experts approximately estimate the cost of founding a world-class university as half a billion dollars today⁵.

It stands to reason that government and governmental policy should play a significant role in education. Meanwhile government tends to avoid education. There is no doubt that the search of extra financial sources has always been burning but neither of the developed countries refuses the governmental support in education. At the beginning of the 21st century three leading countries in education had budget financing over 80 per cent (Germany, France and Great Britain) The USA is the only country with high level of education with budget financing less than 50%.

Trying to give the more precise definition of top rate university the researches came to the conclusion that "the foundation of outstanding achievements of these universities (high reputation of graduates, current scientific research and its implementation there are three mutually complementing factors. They are: high concentration of talents (both teachers and students) b) profusion of resources to create favorable conditions for learning and top notch research c) university management structure which contributes to the development of strategic vision, innovation and flexibility that enables the university to make decisions and manage resources without bureaucratic hurdles"⁶.

The high level of provision with resources is one of the significant features that make a world-class university. These universities can afford great expenses for maintenance and exploitation of scientific university complexes. The universities have three main sources of financing: governmental sources to cover current expenses and scientific research expenses; the profit that appears as a result of private capital attraction and money granted to universities; tuition fees. Governmen-

⁵ See: Frumin I. Half a Billion Dollars and Headache // Expert. – 2009. - №30 (12-18.10). – p.78-83

⁶ Jamil Salmy. Development of world-class universities/ Jamil Salmy - M: publishing house "Ves Mir", »,2009.- p.7.

tal supply in Europe is the main financial source while in the USA, on the contrary, among 20 best universities (Universities of Michigan and Berkley) only two of them are supported by the government. Only the USA and Japan have private universities. Their solid financial basis is formed due to the attraction of private income and successful competition of teachers for governmental financing of scientific research. The sponsors' finances create special-purpose capital which profit is used to finance new projects.

The international experience helps to bring out three major strategies of creation of world top rate universities. The first implies the promotion of some of existing universities that have the potential to become top list universities. The second strategy consists in the merging of some universities in one new institution which could provide synergism distinguishing top class university. The third suggests creation of new universities from the start. Each strategy has its pros and cons.

Most institutions of higher learning give preference to the second strategy – the merging. Some universities and schools in France are considering the possibilities of merging on the regional basis. In Great Britain there are almost no independent medical schools left – they have merged with universities for the last 30 years.

In the development of Russian educational system there have been used 2 of the three mentioned above: modernization and merging. In general government plays the key role in changing the management basics and creation of favorable legal conditions to expand the independence of a new university. The government is expected to cooperate financially to form an elite university. A great amount of resources on competitive basis was distributed among universities to maintain their modernization. Besides there are some dramatic changes in higher education underway: the law on two-tier system has been passed; the differentiation of universities and determination of their judicial status have begun; the development of new educational standards has started; the initiatives of incorporation of universities in new educational programs are being boosted. These actions will have a far-reaching effect. But anyway the government has realized the necessity of participation in this process. One has to admit the necessity of training of the intellectual elite, that the system of higher education must have the “flagships”, leading universities which provide with elite education and set a standard. Teachers know that if there are leaders and high achieving students in the group the status of the group rises: the members of the group try to catch up with the group mates. The same goes for universities – they need leaders not only for their existence but for their successful development. Currently, the seven universities including Kazan Federal University have officially got a status of federal universities. The leading universities must have both priorities and obligations. They enjoy more autonomy and higher rates of admission policy to post graduate and magistrate's school and it's natural to have special ways of financing. At any rate to create the appropriate material and technical facilities the government will finance the elaborate program

of development of KSU up to 2020 which was worked out and ratified by the government. As a result there is a task to enter the world top list of universities in the quality of training and competitiveness of graduates in the labor market. By 2020 the number of teachers doing research work will have achieved 50%. Cutting edge facilities for video lectures and videoconferences that have been bought and set up as a part of KSU branch development program in Naberezhnye Chelny has enabled to conduct an international symposium on the quality of higher education on May 11, 2011, thus establishing relations for mutual cooperation with the university of Bologna in Italy. Nowadays the reputation of university is determined mainly by the economic potential of the university itself and its ability to manage resources during reforms and changes. Budget reforms and the switch to autonomy influence the economic status of the university and its development policy dramatically. One of the hypothesis of the further development of the university consists in the intensification of differentiation among universities depending on the economic potential, financially reliable demand of the population, the quality of educational programs and attractiveness of the university for applicants.

Having multidisciplinary specialization and diversified strategy great universities will be able to attract capable applicants to fee-paying places and thanks to efficient management of resources they will provide competition in the educational labor market. The economic status of the region, the income stability of population and the unemployment rate are also of great importance.

There is a hypothesis that feeble universities will lose part of the budget share and will not be able to attract applicants to fee-paying places, so their economic status will fall dramatically. The way out of this situation may be integration with powerful universities (one could expect the wave of merging and take-over). However the process will be erratic both in development and territorial respect. The part of feeble universities can switch to the feeble group that lost the fee-paying share, used inefficient management policy and had no close bonds with employers to employ graduates. The attractiveness of such universities may change greatly.

Nowadays Russian universities can make their position stable due to the diversification of financial resources. Unfortunately, the process is slow moving and for the time being the main additional financial source in Russia is the increase in fee-paying education. It becomes more obvious that it is practically impossible to achieve the trade-off in the structure of income sources without building serious business relationships.

Education becomes the centre of cultural changes for it is the indispensable part of culture but not just a service industry as contemporary reformers argue. Europe takes a cautious attitude when government is inferior to market forces in education.

It's advisable that Russian public should be informed that systems of higher education in most European countries secure a stable position among social values

and are supported by the society for serving its interests (higher education as public responsibility). It's necessary to realize that higher education organization can not yield successful results due to private investments only as the individuals can not catch and take advantage of all the educational benefits. Education benefits society as a whole but not its particulate members. The progress of the system of education as well as public health service reveals that besides individual pay-off from contribution to interior human resources there are great public benefits and positive outside effects. They result in the promotion of general cultural standard of population. Educated individuals have advantages over uneducated ones in terms of adaptation to the conditions of developing information society.

Growing investments in education create new opportunities for economic progress. They eliminate the gap between technologically advanced states and countries that have taken the way of flying geese pattern. That is there emerges a peculiar accumulative synergism effect from investments in education when the expenses for the training of specialists give not only individual but social feedback. Thus it is evident that the rise in intellectual potential is accompanied by greater attention of an individual to his health which enhances concentrated efforts in its improvement and prolongs both economic activity and his lifetime in general. The source of outer social effects is the greater attention of educated parents to their children's health. The intensity of intellectual potential raises the cultural level of the society, consolidates the family unit and promotes greater contribution to individual health and social medical care system. Finally, the public can be and must be healthy not only physically but spiritually. The moral state of the society, the spirit of the nation is one of the major factors of the social development.

During all the years of its existence the branch of Kazan State University that was set up with the solicitation of the republic government is thankful for the support provided by local authorities, and it's this support that secures growth dynamics coming up to our city standards. The testament to it is 17 chairs, postgraduate school in 5 courses, scientific journal, close scientific-educational bonds with leading foreign universities (the USA, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan), construction of a new academic building. Nowadays the branch is ready to shoulder great responsibility that corresponds to its mission in terms of cultural development of a civilized city. Currently the branch trains highly-competitive specialists in 11 courses: journalism, business computer studies, state and municipal management, management, political science, applied mathematics and computer science, psychology, philology: foreign philology, economics, legal studies. Taking into account international links each specialty enables to get an extra qualification "Translator in professional communication", where one can major in English, German, French, Spanish, Chinese. Welcome to our site: www.fksu.ru

Annotation:

The article is devoted to the questions of development of elite education in Russia and its integration into the international system of education. Taking into account international experience the main problems of organization of world-class universities have been considered and possible solutions have been offered.

Key words:

The Bologna process, world-class university, availability, fees and quality of education, financial state of universities, the role of government in education.