
Problems and Prospects of Higher Education System Development in Modern Society

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Abstract:

Education as a subsystem of economy is a structural component of production, exchange, distribution, consumption and reproduction of economic values. At the same time, education produces specific value added, market commodity – educational service, and transforms an ordinary person into a rare labor resource under conditions of extremely dense specialization of economic activity. The decisive role in this process belongs to higher education.

In the paper, the problem of development of the European higher school is considered. Attention is focused on priorities of European higher education, which are directed at improvement of the organizational structure and quality of scientific and professional training: internationalization and trans-nationalization of educational processes, higher education quality assurance, actualization and a rise of the level of doctoral training, development of the culture of academic autonomy and creativity of higher educational institutions as a guarantee of sustainable self-development, orientation to a harmonious combination of scientific studies, business and practical training.

Basic trends of the experience of European countries in the mechanism of promotion of higher educational institution activity and formation of the educational system in Russia were considered.

Keywords: higher education, higher educational institution, European higher school, development trends

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1. Introduction

Development of higher education and professional training at the modern stage is considered through the prism of the newest world trends, which is accompanied by revision of educational strategic priorities and value conceptions, methodological and methodical bases, by specification of functions.

The end of the XXth – beginning of the XXIst century is characterized by emergence of new approaches to the development of ideas of higher education, owing to which the solution of modern educational and economic problems is possible. Among them, there are ideas of diversity of the models of educational institutions; priority of professional training, development of professional skills; fairness in the interaction between global economy and labor market; international and social partnership in the field of higher education.

The relevant trends of development of higher education and professional training at the beginning of the XXIst century are: strengthening of the activity of educational institutions on the international level; recognition of knowledge and information as a basis of social integration and their interaction – as a basis of global competitiveness; realization of global, social and economic goals by international organizations, governments and parliaments, business circles, civic society; building up a dialogue, partnership relations as democratic instruments of formation of the fair world order; investment in development of higher education for the purpose of ensuring the efficiency of the training of future specialists (Halonen, 2004).

International organizations have determined a number of strategic trends of higher and professional education for the period until 2020. Turning the main efforts to the completion of the begun reforms; development of academic freedom, autonomy and responsibility of higher education institutions as principles of European space of higher education; assistance in establishment of student-oriented educational environment; building up efforts in the context of social dimension for providing equal opportunities of obtaining quality education, being a main drive for innovations in the context of economic and social development in the knowledge-oriented world (Annamaria, Campanini. 2015).

2. Methodology

Considering the above-mentioned information, the paper is aimed at determining and characterizing main problems, trends and prospects of development of higher education in European countries and opportunities of using European experience in Russian conditions. In the process of work, the following was used:

- general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, correlation, generalization) for studying scientific literature on the problem of research and

materials, characterizing problems and prospects of development of the higher education system in the modern society by the example of European countries;

- theoretical forecasting for determining the ways of creative use of progressive ideas and pedagogically valuable experience of European countries in the development and modernization of the Russian higher education system;
- specific scientific methods; a retrospective one – for determining specifics of development of the European higher education system at the end of the XXth – beginning of the XXIst century; a systemic structural one – for the purpose of systematization of advanced ideas of development of the European higher education system and generalization of the experience of its realization in the European practice of the higher school.

3. Results

At the end of the last century, the condition of higher education in the world was defined as crisis one by leading scientists, experts of international organizations, as well as by officials of almost all countries, including the most developed ones. Thus, the report, which was prepared in 1994 by a special group of international experts of the World Bank, headed by Hamilton and Verspoor, contained a separate part named as “Crisis of higher education”, in which, in particular, it was stated that “all over the world, this sector is in crisis” (Shawn and Hewer, 2014). Crisis of higher education, in the opinion of western and domestic experts, has notably manifested itself in:

- in a certain lag of scientific research results of the higher school behind the demands and needs of life;
- slow reorientation to the training of new specialists that are scarce in the labour market;
- lowering the quality of the educational process;
- sharp decrease in the level of knowledge of graduates;
- growth of inequality of chances for entering higher educational institutions and their successful completion for representatives of different social layers;
- growing dissatisfaction with conditions of training on the part of students, their parents, etc.

Excessive interference of the state in the functioning of the national educational systems, reduction of state funding, imperfection of the system of higher school management, rapid growth of tuition fee, etc. were named as the main reasons of crisis, in the first place.

During the study, it was established that at present, European countries spared no effort to improve the higher education system, to establish favorable conditions for self-development of the individual in achieving success in professional activity. In this connection, the most interesting and promising process in the field of higher

education was the Bologna process, in which Russian higher education had been being actively involved.

Characterizing the essence of the Bologna process, it is worth mentioning that the initiators were the ministers of education of France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. Entering the politics of the Council of Europe, the European dimension in education was actively advocated during the 90s of the XXth century. Thus, in 1997, the Lisbon Convention on recognition of qualifications, related to higher education of Europe, was adopted, which was signed by 43 countries. Subsequently, the Sorbonne Declaration, containing main trends of collaboration concerning the problems of higher education in Europe, was signed.

Hereinafter, approval of these decisions was reflected in the Bologna Declaration of 1999, which was signed by 29 European countries. It was aimed at the beginning of the ten-year process of coordinated actions, reforms and changes in European higher education (Baidenko, 2004). In the Bologna Declaration, the motivation of establishing the integrated educational space is formulated as a necessity of strengthening the intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions of the European community, as well as development of European citizenship, stable and democratic society (Rich, 2010).

The modern condition of development of the Bologna Process and the European higher school shows that in all highly developed countries, governments and community, despite economic crises and social transformations, pay sufficiently much attention to educational processes and the higher school, facilitate the establishment of conditions for equal access to education for domestic and foreign citizens, first of all understanding that the primary goal of the educational process is formation of intellectual potential of the state (Davies, 2008).

Forming the European space of higher education, scientists, politicians determined the primary goal and fitting criteria of education, which have international dimension. These criteria cover the quality, trust formation, compatibility, mobility, comparison of qualifications of the education levels and attractiveness. Ground conditions of conformity, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European space of higher education are its quality, which was mentioned in the Communiqué “*Realizing the European Higher Education Area*” at the Conference of Ministers of higher education (Berlin, Germany, September 19, 2003).

Overall, the analysis of literature and documents, regulating educational processes in the European educational space (Baidenko, 2004; Rezaev, 2010; Lukichev 2004; UNESCO, 2005; Tortorella *et al.*, 2017; Alkhathlan and Al-Daraiseh 2017; Stone, 2016; Egorova *et al.*, 2015; Gorina, 2016; Medvedeva *et al.*, 2015; Vovchenko *et al.*, 2017; Sultanova and Chechina, 2016), allows identifying the following tendencies:

- internationalization and trans-nationalization of higher education;
- assurance of higher education quality;
- an increase of the role of universities in consolidation and strengthening of social unity;
- development of culture of academic autonomy and creativity of higher educational institutions as a guarantee of sustainable self-development;
- a harmonious combination of scientific studies, business and practical training.

All of them should be considered in detail.

Internationalization and trans-nationalization of higher education are conditioned by globalized processes and active introduction of informational technologies, realized through the following directions (Saginova *et al.*, 2007; Pérez-Montoro and Tamaro, 2012; Lavy and Rashkovits, 2016; Krupa *et al.*, 2015):

- engagement of foreign students in training as one of the ways of guaranteeing labor potential of the country and competitive recovery of higher education;
- establishment of foreign branches, which can implement educational activity on terms of franchising, programmes “twins”, mutual recognition of programmes, etc.;
- “export of educational services”, which implies a set of organizational measures of entities of the national education system on rendering the educational service on a commercial basis to a consumer, both on the territory of the country and beyond it, for the purpose of satisfaction of the needs of a foreign consumer – a customer of the service;
- raise of the international profile and competitiveness of universities, which implies the ability of the higher school to assure a proper quality of specialists’ training in the corresponding area and specialty of training; ability of the students of this educational institution to master necessary professional knowledge and skills; ability of employers to intrinsically assess the level of qualification of higher school graduates for corresponding professional activity;
- realization of the programmes of distant education.

Assurance of higher education quality is a tendency which is an adequate response of the educational community to the challenges of education globalization, and which is connected with the increase in the number of students and educational institutions in recent years, with the advent of new educational technologies, with the increase in the autonomy of universities and their openness for local communities and society as a whole, with problems related to the financing of higher education and its proper use for satisfaction of social needs.

The basis for building up university systems of quality is Standards and recommendations of the European space of higher education, in which special emphasis is put on the necessity of introduction of new culture of quality, the responsibility of all participants of the educational process for end results. An

important instrument of quality assurance is international collaboration since it orients universities to demonstrate high standards to all partners.

Other studies contacted by Bazhenov *et al.* (2015), Ard *et al.*, (2017) identify internal and external factors of education quality, characterizing the educational process, its result and the system of education. Internal characteristics of education quality include:

- the quality of educational environment (technological effectiveness of the educational process management, efficiency of scientific and methodological work, resource support of the educational process, personnel potential, etc.);
- the quality of realization of the educational process (scientific character and accessibility of the educational content, pedagogical mastery of the teacher, effectiveness of educational means the quality of manuals and textbooks, satisfaction of various needs, etc.);
- quality of the results of the educational process (the level of academic achievements of graduates, their competency, development of critical thinking, general and communicative culture, the degree of social adaptation).

In the wide sense, the education quality is determined as a correspondence of the invested resources of the educational process itself and the obtained result and consequences of the education goal, standards and requirements of society. Study and generalization of scientific and pedagogical sources lead to the conclusion that in European higher schools, different variants of quality assessment of training of future graduates are applied.

In general, foreign higher schools have the right to independently define their own point system. For example, in higher schools of Germany and Austria, the 5-point system is also used, but in contrast to the English language countries, this grade scale is presented in a digital form (“1” – “very good”, “2” – “good”, “3” – “satisfactory”, “4” – “sufficient”, “5” – “insufficient”). In the majority of universities of Great Britain, a 100-point system of knowledge evaluation is widespread.

An increase of the role of universities in the consolidation and strengthening of social unity, in development of culture of academic autonomy and creativity of higher educational institutions is a guarantee of sustainable development. One should note that successfulness of economy in the modern global economy depends on its ability to constantly produce innovations – in production, in the sphere of services, education, management, marketing, etc. The leadership of the country (region, city) that has decided to become a leader in its region or in the world markets in a certain segment, first, invests financial means in the development of education, studies and applied developments to increase value added of products and services, as well as in infrastructure to increase the level of “accessibility” of the territory for investors, companies and highly qualified specialists.

Today, performance of the main functions in the training of highly qualified specialists, who are competitive in the international labor market, for working in scientific and educational institutions of the state, assistance in integration into the world economic space as an equal partner, including in the market of rendering educational services, are imposed on universities. Performance of the role of a leading scientific center by the university requires establishing clear reference points of its development and determination of priority trends of modernization. The university is continually considered as a “university-enterprise”, which can offer the market the following:

- educational product – curricula, manuals and textbooks;
- technologies of the educational process;
- results of studies and elaborations, which can be introduced and used in production;
- determination of forms and methods of organizing the educational process and even management (systems of educational management, methods of labor stimulation in education, etc.) (Slaughter, 1997).

The university is interested in both gaining profits and consolidation of its image as a scientific and educational center.

At the beginning of the XXIst century in Europe and in the world, virtual universities, such as web-systems of distant education of corporative model, meant for solving the problems of distant education of companies and educational institutions of any scales and levels, acquire actual meaning. At the present stage, online universities have three models of functioning:

- a bimodal model – an organization which simultaneously offers a traditional system of education and a system of the online university and/or distant education. The modes of study are common for full-time students and distant students;
- a distant model – an organization that is engaged in exclusively distant education and has not got a traditional campus. At that, each institution pursues its own educational policy and awards its own educational degrees, preserving “national” peculiarities. In this group, the leading positions are occupied by “The Open University” of Great Britain, the educational model of which is used in many countries of the world;
- a consortium model – an organization, consisting of several interacting online universities, which can share resources and equipment for rendering educational services (Martinez, 2015).

Harmonious combination of scientific studies, business and practical training, establishment of the system of social responsibility consists in the fact that mastering the strategies of technological re-equipment of production, aimed at mastery by prospective scientific personnel of theoretical programmes of implementation of strategic changes in the process of psychological adaptation to

them and establishment of such conditions under which they themselves will be aimed at a continuous renovation of production, becomes a significant component of scientific and technological education.

Attention is concentrated on interaction in the development of online education of the so-called quadrium: regional level and triple spiral (academic institutions, society and industry), which allows attracting all concerned parties to training. The quadrium approach facilitates the increase of the requirements for interuniversity collaboration, the use of open educational resources at the national and international levels for development of competences and intellect: qualitative educational material will be widely used, heightening the rating of the teacher and the university image.

Open publication can stimulate the quality; future students can view the courses that they would want to master, receiving free access, which will facilitate the increase of the quality of informal education; the future role of the pedagogue will consist not in information transfer, but will transform into the system of tutorship and assistance (Flak and Sein, 2011). On the other hand, theoretical studies in the field of social and humanitarian sciences, pedagogy, require intensification, which provides for analysis, assessment, systematization of empirical and generalized material from a position of the definite conceptual paradigm.

In European countries, for effective professional training, non-traditional methods and forms of education are widely used along with traditional ones, namely: simulation, role and didactic plays, microteaching. Alternative forms of education can include also “free group discussion”, when students discuss the problems and the teacher acts as a listener (Great Britain, Austria).

Progressive changes of organization of the teaching and educational process include also trends of transition from group forms and methods of teaching to individual-group ones: tutor lessons, trainings, work in small groups, internships; interdisciplinary models of education, which imply a study of a certain problem and require creation of the project of its solution (introduction of problem and project study). Among active methods of teaching aimed at activation of communicative, cognitive and creative activity of students, the preference is given to active lectures, lectures-discussions, to writing and defense of abstracts, to independent work.

It is worth noting that each country has both common and specific forms and methods of teaching at the higher school. Thus, an original form of study at the higher school in Austria is specialized research seminars, during which the studies are being prepared – abstracts with the volume of 20-25 pages. The main task of such seminars is to teach the student to have one’s own viewpoint and defend it. In Germany, a compulsory term of receiving a prestigious job is at least short-term (a year or half a year) study of the student abroad.

In the system of higher education of Great Britain, leading place belongs to disputes and discussions since such lessons, as specialists in the field of higher education think, facilitate the acquisition of communicative competence – ability to express one's opinion and to give arguments for it, to listen to others, to act as a critic, to develop skills of spontaneous literature speech; to form independence, criticality of thinking in future specialists.

However, at the higher school in Great Britain, the tutor method, which provides for regular lessons of the teacher-tutor with 2-3 students during the whole training course, is no less popular; at that, each student is simultaneously attached to the tutor, who constantly follows the progress, formation of student's professional skills, worldview. According to the curriculum, the students do independent works and write abstracts during their holidays, which are the most rational time for independent activity.

Therefore, new sociocultural requirements focus attention on the professional competence of the future specialist. Education is considered as a way of mastery of effective means of acquisition of information and skills of self-education. It should create such human being who can ask questions and independently finding the answers to them, proposing hypotheses, making conclusions and generalisations, knowing the technologies of self-improvement and self-realisation.

4. Discussion

Analysis of the experience of European countries gives grounds for conclusion that a reform, which can facilitate the overcoming of the problems of the Russian higher education, provides for:

- development of the scientifically substantiated state concept of development of higher education and implementation of clear and consistent policy of its reforming;
- emphasis on market oriented means of implementation of this policy;
- encouragement of establishing the variety of types and forms of higher educational institutions;
- motivating state higher educational institutions to effectively use state funds and to widen the scope of funding sources;
- revision of the role of the state and the government in the development of higher education, significant limitation of their administrating and interference in the educational affairs;
- implementing decentralization and providing the state educational institution with greater autonomy in management;
- encouragement and assistance in development of the private sector of higher education;
- identification of priorities and intensification of attention to qualitative and fair goals of education.

Based on the above-mentioned information, it is possible to state the presence of three basic strategic approaches of withdrawing higher education from the permanent crisis condition:

- conceptual development of education;
- autonomation, democratization of the activity of educational institutions;
- promotion by the state of the activity of educational institutions through establishment of conditions for education quality assurance.

For the Russian system of education, the problem of its autonomation and decentralization is almost one of the most difficult problems in the aspect of reformation. On the one hand, democratization of educational relations, and autonomation of educational institutions in particular are an inherent condition of development of the modern domestic educational complex. On the other hand – the condition of the higher school, the improper order in it and existing abuses determine the necessity of administrative control, from which state authorities of higher education benefit at all levels, building up the pressure on educational institutions.

The way out of the situation is improvement of legal regulation with provision of broad university democracy and, simultaneously, establishment of clear boundaries of rights vested in authorities to control the at the higher educational institution without centralized interference in the educational process, which is an internal affair of the educational institution.

Social, economic and political changes, occurring in the European multicultural space, both influence educational ideas of Russia and, to a large degree, determine the nature of training of future specialists.

Analysis of modern European and domestic tendencies of higher education showed a relevance of transition from the simple awareness or even enlightenment to a higher level of formation of competency of future specialists. Such organization of professional education, the result of which is a high quality of competence, ability to adequately perceive pedagogical novation's, to establish its own system of activity, to adapt itself easily to the life changes, to develop its own competence, is of relevance.

The considered European strategic guidelines imply formation of a professionally competent specialist, realization of individual and creative credo of the individual during preparation of the student for professional activity, who can be flexible when responding to changes in social and economic life of society, to implement effective social and professional communication, to analyze more flexibly and to solve different cases by means of communication. Thus, based on the stated above material of the paper, it is possible to assert that under conditions of overcoming the traditionally established mass-reproductive nature of the development of higher

education and raising it to an individual level, significant role belongs to European progressive approaches, built on a humanistic base. The characterized trends and priorities of higher education in Europe must be logically reflected and adapted at the Russian higher school that needs modernization and development.

5. Conclusion

Modern condition of higher education is accompanied by the crisis phenomena, the negative consequences of which are manifested in: a definite lag of scientific research results of the higher school behind the life needs and demands; slow reorientation to training of new specialists that are scarce in the labor market; reduction in the quality of the educational process; sharp decline in the knowledge level of the graduates; increasing inequality of opportunities of entering higher schools and their successful graduation for representatives of different social strata; growing discontent about the conditions of education on the part of students, their parents, etc.

Understanding main trends of development of higher education, mechanisms of their realization allows a profound analysis of educational processes. Considering main trends of development of the European higher school will enable their introduction in the national education, a guarantee of comprehensibility of educational results, acquired competences and qualifications, degrees for all concerned parties.

Greater responsibility for establishing proper internal systems of quality assurance of educational programmes and qualifications and their realization, assistance in their introduction into the educational theory and practice of modern terms, concepts, principles and approaches must become priority areas of the Russian higher school. That is, the practice of realizing higher education as a whole must be modernized; conditions for activation, stimulation and encouragement of the natural process of enhancing the institutionalized ability and independence of higher schools must be established.

The problems of higher school competitiveness, provision of ethic bases of the university activity, social responsibility and professional orientation of future specialists' training can be subsequent research studies regarding development of the higher European and national higher school.

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