

The Priorities of Higher Education in Russia

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Abstract—A characteristic feature of the modern economic system is the high dynamism of transforming knowledge into a key resource for progressive changes in socio-economic and technological development of countries. The main feature of higher education in knowledge economy becomes the shortening of the life cycle of professional knowledge. This causes the need for countries that want to take a leading position on world markets in terms of total expansion of globalization process to shape a new paradigm of higher education. The focus on inculcating the individual desire for fulfilling one's creative potential, the continuous replenishment of one's store of knowledge, the expansion of the general and professional horizons and readiness for innovative activities should become the central ideas of the new educational paradigm of higher education in Russia. In the article, the authors attempted to investigate the accumulated problems in the training of highly qualified specialists, to identify new priorities for the Russian higher education institution, to formulate the main paradigms of the development of the higher education system for the knowledge economy. Orientation to instill the personality of the desire for creative implementation, the constant replenishment of the "baggage" of knowledge, the expansion of the general and professional horizons, and readiness for innovation should be the central ideas of the new educational paradigm of higher education in Russia.

Keywords—higher education, priorities, public policy, knowledge economy

I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the theoretical and practical aspects of the state policy in the sphere of higher education was performed in the works by Yu. Bazhal, A. Gromtsev, A. Dabagyan, E. Dneprov, C. Colin, D. Konstantinovskiy, A. Novikov, A. Palchikov, A. Sysoev, N. Sukhanova and others. Thus, in the article by A. Palchikov and A. Gromtsev "The Problems of Higher Education and the Ways of Their Solution" the continuity of education and the preservation of scientific and teaching schools, training facilities and teaching personnel were named as the main task of higher education reform. According to the authors, academies and universities are to become powerful educational and scientific centres, sources of progressive thought and methodological skills, being a key link

in the system of continuous education [1]. The economists A. Novikov, A. Sysoev, and N. Sukhanova focus their attention on the need for serious restructuring of the funding mechanisms of higher education system with the purpose of ensuring their transparency and competition between higher education institutions and increasing the investment attractiveness of higher education system [2; 3].

Significant contribution to studying the role of higher education in the system of knowledge economy has been made by V.P. Aleksandrova, Yu.M. Bazhal, V.M. Geyets, V.L. Inozemtsev, E.P. Mayminas, V.L. Makarov, I. Nizovtseva, and others. Thus, the articles by A. Gladisheva and I. Nizovtseva substantiate three main areas of activities of the higher education system, the implementation of which contributes to the knowledge economy formation: 1) support of innovations by creating new knowledge, providing access to global knowledge sources and adapting knowledge to local conditions; 2) contribution to human capital formation by training the qualified and flexible workforce; 3) creating a foundation for the development of democracy, state-building and social interconnectivity [4; 5].

Various aspects of education are considered in the works by A. Vashekin, M. Muntyan, A. Ursul, V. Gorshenin, M. Colin, M. Kitaigorodsky, A. Muromtseva, A. Novikova, and others. In their works they explain the necessity of priority development in education, based on the topicality of the global problems of humanity and the desire of countries to achieve sustainable development [6-10].

The new paradigm of higher education in Russia should be aimed at the expanded development of the class of intellectuals, the so-called intellectual elite, which would form the core of the educational potential of the society. It is the class of intellectuals that should become the foundation for the workforce of new formation, capable to work in conditions of intellectualization and informatization of job functions. Class of intellectuals in the knowledge economy is the guarantor of development of intellectual potential of the state, a key to social progress and a driving force for innovative development.

II. PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is substantiating the principles of strategic, operational and search directions of the state policy in the sphere of higher education.

Based on the purpose of the study, the authors attempted to highlight the following key issues.

1. What global trends should be included in the paradigm of development of the system of higher education in Russia.

2. To determine the main directions and objectives of the state policy in the field of higher education in the context of the transition to a knowledge economy.

3. Formulate scientifically based priorities for a long-term state policy in the field of higher education based on the characteristics of the socio-economic development of our country.

The domestic paradigm of higher education should take into account the following global trends in the development of society:

- the rising demand for highly educated specialists, and the accelerated intellectualization of work: while in the industrial era the labor consisted in the performance of strictly regulated operations, in the post-industrial society, the knowledge-based information component and the proportion of mental operations increase in the content of labor; so, a need arises for the searching, systematization and analysis of information from multiple sources. In such circumstances the importance of having employees with the well-developed professional competence, formed by active and interactive teaching methods in higher education institutions (universities) increases;

- the appearance of specialists of the new formation, whose educational and qualification characteristics meet the requirements of the global educational environment;

- high dynamism of socio-economic phenomena and processes in the world community, and our country in particular: the strengthening of the influence of education on the economic growth of countries; the formation of a person-centered model of economic relations and the promotion of universal values and norms' importance; development and implementation of the strategy of corporate social responsibility at micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

In the knowledge economy the state educational policy in higher education should focus on the following objectives:

- transformation of the current organizational and economic mechanism of state regulation in the higher education system on the basis of searching the qualitatively new organizational, legal and socio-economic approaches that would allow modernizing the higher education in the interests of the expanded development of highly qualified specialists;

- identifying the current and future needs of the sectors of national economy for highly qualified specialists with account of the Russian and world trends in the development of priority directions in production, science and technology;

- diversification of opportunities for obtaining higher education for all social strata.

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the state policy in the sphere of higher education should be implemented in accordance with the following principles:

- recognition of the education as a sector of the national economy, producing the main productive force of the society in form of skilled professionals, which ensure the sustainable development of the state and the formation of the national innovative model of the economy;

- preservation of the domestic educational traditions and their further development, taking into account the latest scientific achievements and the best international practices;

- use of the practice-based and activity-based approach in developing the directions, recommendations and measures for improving the state management of higher education system;

- departure from the "residual principle" of higher education financing and creating a stable economic platform for an organizational-economic mechanism of state regulation of higher education through a balanced development of budgetary and extra budgetary sources of financing;

- implementing the educational policy "with a human face", that is, combining its humanistic character and content that would contribute to a more rapid transition to a personality-oriented paradigm of education;

- improving the publicity of measures to improve education, taking into account the public opinion concerning their implementation.

According to these principles, it is reasonable to group the priority directions of state policy in the sphere of higher education into three blocks: strategic, operational and searching.

The strategic directions determine the overall long-term priorities of the state policy in the sphere of higher education on the basis of characteristics and specifics of the historical period. The priority strategic directions of the state policy in the sphere of higher education are:

1. Developing the integration of the Russian higher education into the international educational space. The isolation of the domestic educational space from the external positive impacts pose a danger of lagging behind the international educational norms and standards, the inability of domestic educational institutions to compete on the world market of educational services. This area involves the development of multilateral international contacts in the sphere of education with the purpose of increasing the competitiveness of the domestic education system. At present there is the integration of the domestic education into the European educational space, as evidenced by the partial accession of Russia to the Bologna process. The further development of integration processes in the field of higher education would facilitate the introduction of universal education and information technologies, and, consequently, providing the equivalence of education documents and the international recognition of national diplomas.

2. Transformation of the traditional paradigm of higher education into the virtual-remote one. Implementing such a transition requires the study of needs for the development of distance education at the higher school of Russia; the development of State program of distance learning

development for the future period on the basis of thorough analysis of domestic and foreign experience; the development of innovative distance learning projects and their methodological, software and technical support; the creation of conditions for training the teaching staff for implementing distance learning programs.

Besides, on the agenda there is the creation of a multidisciplinary inter-university information system – a geographically focused, decentralized and modular structure, which would contribute to the creation of a unified educational space, in which all the participants of the educational process would be able to use electronic libraries and to build an individual pattern of training and advanced training. One of the functions of such an information system is cooperation with the Western centers of distance education and using the foreign experience in organizing distance learning and determining the content of open-learning training programs.

The implementation of transition to virtual and distance learning would improve its quality and expand the opportunities of the population to receive certain educational-qualifying levels (this is especially useful for people with the limited time or physical capacities).

3. Development and implementation of science-based educational standards aimed at improving the quality of teaching in the sphere of higher education. In terms of educational services' diversification the latter is a tool of the paradigm transformation of education in line with the national culture and mentality characteristics and the global trends in education, and a guarantee of improving the educational level of population, designing the national educational space and achieving the international requirements for graduates of educational institutions. An educational standard should be considered not only as a means of defining requirements for the content, volume and level of education and professional training, but also as a form of the growing responsibility of educational institutions; a tool of support for educational diversity; a method of reacting by the subjects of educational sector management to the change of the role and place of education in social development; and the key to improving the quality of educational services and increasing the competitiveness of graduates of higher educational institutions.

Development of new educational standards should focus on the following initial assumptions: the modern requirements of the information society; the personal orientation of education and providing variation and freedom of choice in education; the activity-oriented character of education providing for a student' gaining experience from the academic, communicative, cognitive and creative activities; actualization of the competence approach to the content of education, i.e. the formation of students' ability of using the knowledge and skills, acquired in the process of learning, in solving practical problems in real life.

4. Increasing the employment of graduates of higher educational institutions, which is a key to prevent the external migration of highly-qualified specialists, preserve the educational potential of the society and achieve the unity in the phases of its reproduction. The main components of this direction are:

- finding the balance between the amounts of personnel training and the needs of the industries;
- optimizing the structure of personnel training and the distribution of educational institutions in territorial and sectoral contexts.
- improving the system of state order for personnel training;
- increasing the competitiveness of graduates of educational institutions by focusing their training on the international standards and updating the learning content in accordance with the requirements of scientific and technological progress and information technologies development;
- increasing the attention on the vocational guidance (revitalization of the functioning of vocational guidance offices and laboratories in secondary schools, vocational education institutions, branch offices of vocational guidance and laboratories of professional selection at enterprises and organizations, territorial interagency career centers and employment centers; distribution of professional information, professional propaganda and agitation);
- organization of communication courses for university graduates, aimed at developing the ability to present oneself as an expert, to convince the employer in their abilities, capabilities, qualifications and competence.

The operational directions of the state educational policy are short-term and aimed at overcoming the most urgent problems in the field of higher education. Such directions can include:

1. The formation of a continuous multistage system of education, the purpose of which is to inculcate on every individual a need for knowledge, an ability to continuously improve their educational and professional level. The implementation of this direction is possible by solving the following tasks:

- creating a single, harmonious system of continuous education based on coordination of all educational elements using the principle of continuity;
- creating the conditions for the timely and continuous identification, formation, development and implementation of various abilities and inclinations of an individual, implying the achievement of the maximum integration of formal, non-formal and informal education;
- developing and implementing the evaluation system of knowledge acquired through non-formal and informal education;
- overcoming the isolation of disciplines, finding the relationships between them in order to ensure the system integrity.
- forming the public opinion concerning the value of continuous learning and self-education for solving the pressing individual, social, national and global problems.

2. Increasing the accessibility of higher education for all layers of population. This direction requires:

- creating the legal, socio-economic and organizational conditions for ensuring the social guarantees for the higher education for every citizen;

- paying more attention to providing the educational services for socially vulnerable groups – orphans, children and youth from troubled or needy families or individuals with disabilities;

- further development of the state loan system for education (for example, the introduction of personalized educational checks-vouchers, allowing for the targeted subsidizing of the consumers of educational services) with the aim of enhancing the opportunities of young people in obtaining a high educational and professional level;

- development and implementation of a system of benefits in obtaining higher education for gifted and talented youth.

3. Improving the mechanisms of financial provision of higher education which requires:

- implementing the principle of state financial support, rather than the full financing of higher educational institutions;

- navigating to the outpacing growth of public expenditure on education over the growth of the current needs of an industry;

- expanding the autonomy of higher educational institutions and granting them greater autonomy in managing budget allocations and resources obtained through extra-budgetary sources of funding;

- developing the state system of regulatory prices for educational services (tuition fees should be determined taking into account the underdevelopment of the market environment and low income level of the majority of population; and the higher education institutions when establishing contract prices for educational services should orient on regulatory-defined rates);

- expanding the funding sources through the implementation of multi-channel and multi-level funding.

The search directions of state educational policy in the sphere of higher education are aimed at finding new methods and technologies of training and the implementation of qualitative changes in the content of education. The main search fields are:

1. Performing consistent updates in the training content. In this direction two sub-directions can be singled out:

1.1. Modernization of the educational process – i.e. moving it closer to the modern requirements of society and the state. In the course of modernization of the educational process it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

- increasing the level of acquisition of social and practical skills and abilities in the learning process, providing the best professional and social adaptation of graduates of higher education institutions;

- overcoming the discrepancy between the quality of teachers' staff potential, the logistics and the training and technical tools, bringing them in line with the requirements to improve the quality of teaching;

- replacing the teaching process, based on the content of the subject, with the student-focused teaching that would

enable the transition from the logic of knowledge to the logic of professionalism;

- reducing the distance between students and teachers with the purpose of creating in higher education institutions the atmosphere of co-creation and cooperation of all participants of educational process;

- improving the orientation of educational process on the training of active assimilation of knowledge, abilities and skills of students, inculcating on them the ability to form their own opinions, to have open, independent and creative thinking. The solution of these problems requires:

- reproduction and preservation of the highly-qualified potential of teaching personnel by increasing the prestige of a teacher's profession; the constant care about the training of the teaching staff for all levels of the education sector; promoting the preservation of the existing scientific schools and creating new schools for the newest and most promising directions of science development; organization of a flexible and mobile system of teachers professional development aimed at the continuous improvement of their professional level;

- actualization of the learning process through use of active learning methods, development of playing-technique movements, which contributes to the formation of students' analytical thinking skills and stimulation of their independent work;

- providing the matching of the existing material-technical base of educational institutions with the established norms, with the purpose of providing high-quality and efficient theoretical and practical training of students;

- implementing new informational educational technologies and creating conditions for their software and methodological support;

- taking into account the state and peculiarities of economic, political and cultural situation in the region and in the state when conducting the educational work;

- focusing of teachers on the formation of students' intellectuality, that is their behavior and life culture, their professional, moral, aesthetic, legal, political, and physical culture.

1.2. Intensification of educational process – the creation of an optimal learning mode, ensuring its high efficiency. This direction requires achieving an optimal balance between the number of teachers and students, scheduling of lessons in accordance with the complexity and intensity of the subjects acquisition, and optimization of the set of academic disciplines.

2. Humanization and humanitarization of education, that is, the orientation of educational processes on the harmonious development of personality. The objectives of this direction are:

- improving the educational level of students by filling gaps in their general knowledge;

- forming the moral potential of students, inculcating the aesthetic values as the basis of general and professional culture;

- involving all students in becoming acquainted with the achievements of the world culture and arts with the purpose of forming their cultural and aesthetic potential.

The solution of these problems requires the creation of appropriate conditions for the cultural development of every person, namely, the achievement of the closest connection of all disciplines with the socio-economic, political and global problems of mankind; the orientation of educational processes on the combination of educational and cognitive independent activity of students in mastering the cultural values, encouraging their internal self-improvement.

The basic prerequisite for implementing this direction is the professional suitability and competence of teachers, which would have a constant motivation not only to teach knowledge, abilities and skills, but also to inculcate on students the craving for labor as a highest value and the creative activity as the basis for future innovative activity. In addition, an important factor of humanization is creating in every higher education institution the psychological climate conducive for the formation of humanitarian personality characteristics as a quality component of its educational potential. The creation of such psychological climate is determined by socio-psychological state of the participants of educational process (teachers, pupils and students), by the forms and methods of training.

3. Transition to the personality-oriented paradigm of higher education. The new approach involves strengthening the cooperation between students and teachers. The training should be replaced with active learning; and a teacher should turn from a transmitter of knowledge into a consultant mentor.

Such a transition implies the rethinking of the three elements of education. Firstly, a student should be considered as an active subject of the educational process, as its integral unit. In the process of teaching the following elements should be taken into account: the level of initial training, the individual abilities, aptitudes and interests; and the psycho-physiological features of students. Secondly, a teacher should be a person, combining the professional competence with moral qualities and ideals. Thirdly, the education should be a unity of training and education, which is especially important in the view of the growth of a human's responsibilities in preventing man-made disasters and protecting the environment.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

In the article, the authors used the institutional, analytical, comparative methods and also the systemic approach method etc. to reveal the main aspects of the chosen research topic.

IV. CONCLUSION

The development of educational potential of the society in the new socio-economic environment necessitates the rethinking of the purposes and principles of the state educational policy, and the development of priority directions of the higher education reform.

Today, the main purposes of the state policy in the sphere of higher education are: ensuring the implementation of the constitutional rights of citizens for getting education; bringing the higher education system in line with the individual, social and state needs; creating economic and institutional conditions for the further development of higher education as a system of forming the intellectual elite of the nation. The priority

directions of the state policy in the sphere of higher education should be: strategic directions, that is, aimed at solving large-scale long-term goals; operative directions, aimed at the solution of urgent current issues in the field of higher education that need immediate solutions and qualitative changes; and the search direction, aimed at revising and updating the training content, the introduction of new methods and technologies of learning.

The implementation of these areas of state education policy is a complex task that includes: reviewing the structure and volume of training at higher education institutions in compliance with the current and future needs of the national economy; managing the restructuring of higher education at the micro- and macro-levels; changing the forms and methods of training; introduction of innovative mechanisms of higher education financing; changing the goals and objectives of higher education in the direction of humanization, individualization and recognition of the value of an individual student as a main participant of the educational process.

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