

# The Place for Philosophy in the Modern-day Higher Economic Education

Irina Ponizovkina

Department of Philosophy  
Plekhanov Russian University of Economics  
Moscow, Russia  
Email: irina-ponizovkin@mail.ru

**Abstract**—The article discusses current issues and prospects of modern higher education in Russia, included in the Bologna process. Special attention is paid to the analysis of the influence of the introduced economic incentives on the nature and quality of training of young specialists in the field of economics and business and their ability to act and make decisions in the conditions of the postindustrial society. The purpose of the article is to show that philosophical-humanitarian education at economic university should be a strategic core of the education process, and cultural competence should be a necessary component of professionalism of the future economists.

**Keywords**—*Bologna process; education reform; higher economic education; socio-humanitarian education*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Modern-day globalization processes, the formation of the informational society, the “knowledge society”, and the socio-economic difficulties in Russia have led to the need of the Russian education reform and the integration of the Russian educational system into a global one.

Everyone has heard of the Bologna process except possibly for the people who are very far from education and its problems. The process obtained its name through the Italian city of Bologna where, in 1999, 29 European ministers who followed the call of globalization, decided to bring together the existing European education systems. The main means of this bonding were the unification of educational standards and therefore values.

The Russian Federation joined the Bologna process in September 2003 at the Berlin conference, submitting to its basic principles. The Russian education officials saw the main advantage of the European standards in its rationality and regulation that could enhance the quality of Russian education. Improving the efficiency of the higher education is connected to the idea of self-sufficiency with customer orientation and comprehensive commercialization of the higher education. The number of introductory, general subjects should be significantly reduced since the emphasis is on professional skills and formation of competencies.

How can we evaluate the results of these changes from the position of humanitarian education? How do the new

principles relate to the Russian traditional higher education? Are we giving up too much in favor of the new trends?

It can be said that integration into the global educational process influenced radically humanitarian and, in particular, philosophical education in Russia. It is impossible to univocally positively assess this phenomenon from the standpoint of philosophy. Perspective “rationality” of the new approaches turns into the unexpected dead ends.

## II. THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE EDUCATION REFORM IN RUSSIA

A lot of effort was spent on the processing of the Western ideas, justification (V.A. Bolotov, T.M. Kovalyova, B.D. Elconin, P.G. Shedrovitsky et al) and implementation in the Russian higher education seemingly rational competency-based education. However, in the period of global crisis of the first decade of the 21st century and post-crisis period, the competence approach, implemented in the West and in the United States, has not fully met the expectations [1]. This approach, aimed at mobilization of knowledge and skills under the specific conditions of professional activity and did not show itself sufficiently flexible in the face of massive social mobility and the need for retraining.

Competency models occasionally showed their complete failure and cumbersome for companies during their passage through a crisis. According to the survey, conducted on Trainingoutsourcing.com in Spring 2011, almost 50% of the companies with the introduced competency model, revised and simplified it. However, this approach continues its unconditional implementation in Russia without taking into account the Western experience and any practical conclusions.

In the framework of the Bologna process, one of the trends of development of the modern education is its focus on the consumers and comprehensive commercialization. Transmitted knowledge becomes a commodity, the education system – educational services with the accompanying workflow. Lecturers-scholars are beginning to perform the expert functions, whose activity is preferable to be subjected to formalization and standardization. The leaders should acquire qualities of managers, which are designed to make the system effective by making it self-sufficient. The main indicator of the quality of education is the mastery of, above

all, professional competencies, controlled by means of various test tasks and fixed using a point rating system. Indeed, this looks very modern and technologically advanced. Due to the changes, Russian education should keep up to the times, contributing to the emergence of various products on the market of educational services for future economists and businessmen.

Yet, the process is extremely controversial in terms of socio-humanitarian, philosophical training and asks more questions than it answers. Moreover, it is at odds with the previously announced processes of humanization and humanitarization of the education sector. It is quite consistent with the traditions of the "broader" Russian higher education, being perceived formally and superficially, like a motto, not supported by the current standards of education. We would like to elaborate on these problems and contradictions.

The humanitarian component is the first one to be affected by the commercialization of education due to it being a "burden" to the professional education program, the unwanted component, increasing the cost of its implementation and unreasonably increasing the cost of a graduate on the market. This is evidenced by a sharp decrease in hours dedicated to classroom philosophy. There was a clear redistribution of the sessions in favor of applied instrumental courses. So, we are left surprised by the 28-30 contact hours allocated in the curriculum to the study of philosophy as opposed to 50 hours for the course called "Execution of Documentation".

But maybe the trend is natural and fully justified in a market economy? Perhaps, this vector in the development of the higher education has confirmed its positive trend in the other countries? Is philosophy essential to a graduate of an economic university?

### III. THE VALUE OF SOCIO-HUMANITARIAN COMPONENT OF THE ECONOMY

We should say that the trend of narrow professional training came to Russia from the West and, at first, contradicted the Russian traditions of a broad humanitarian component in education. However, the tide is turning nowadays. The global crisis has forced the West to pay more attention to moral, ethical and philosophical aspects of the economy. The trend of interest of the Western society to philosophy had emerged before the economic crisis and, perhaps, was its harbinger. Today, we witness a stable trend for corporate social responsibility and economic relations as general. This is reflected in the emergence of practical philosophy institutions, elaborating issues of philosophy and business ethics, creating the value units in companies, formulating main principles of corporate culture and corporate social responsibility, the frequent reference to the philosophers as experts, appointment of the humanitarians to the top "non-core" positions, and the development of social entrepreneurship.

How not to recall the famous automobile magnate Henry Ford, who revealed the secrets of success on his "My Life and Work" [2]. He was confident that his business achievements are due to the spiritual guidance. The

personality, according to Ford, must develop a certain philosophy of the relationship to reality if he sees himself succeeding in the modern society. Ford's call to see the new horizons behind the specific economic activity, to keep in mind and consider in perspective the whole picture of the human community's development, its characteristics, and interests, is as relevant for the modern business and globalized economy as ever.

At the time, the Volkswagen Group Vice-President K. Schneider made an eloquent confession that, during harsh times, the Group's address to the leading economists didn't yield the desired results. "It was apparent, that the rapidly changing conditions of the contemporary market require a more global, unorthodox thinking. Then we appealed to the philosophers and, as it was later confirmed, we were not mistaken"<sup>1</sup>. This shall not be a surprise that Volkswagen Group was the founder of the private university "Auto-Uni" in which most of the major fields of study and research projects for future engineers, marketing specialists and senior executives include a fair number of topics, intellectual skills and courses belonging to the humanities and social sciences. Volkswagen was able to see the future of the humanities and social sciences: it is very useful to discuss complex philosophical problems for any successful professional activity [3].

More and more often there is a demand for economics to seek consultancy in social or humanitarian expertise. The World Congress of Philosophy in Greece (August 2013) for the first time ever saw lots of specialists from the other professional areas, philosophers aside, including many economists who were included into several sections.

The modern society is still underway to realize the significance of the philosophical problems. Perhaps, Russian society will be forced to pay a very high price for failure to understand timely the importance of philosophy. The shared problem of modern specialists is their inability to speak the language of universal culture and universal values to dialectically seize the sophisticated correlations and dominants in the rapidly changing world and to highlight the phenomena of fundamental importance, - led, unfortunately, to the globalization in purely economic sense. When making decisions, the emphasis is set on economic efficiency and profit and not on harmonization of relations in various systems, such as "Human – Nature", "Ethnos – Ethnos", "Human – Tech", "State – State" and so on [4].

The renowned philosopher Erich Fromm in his "To Have or to Be?" set the eponymous question, that every member of society should separately answer [5]. The philosopher himself predicted the pre-calamitous state of the modern civilization, the causes of which lie in the specifics of the consumer society and its focus on the values of consumption, acquiring the maximum profits and the desire to make everyone and everything their property. This is the formation of the modern consumer society and a consumer living under the motto "I am what I consume" and answering all the questions with "If you are so smart show me your money".

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.club-management.org/content/view/250/27/>

The "To have!" mode of existence leads the atomization of society, removal of personal qualities. The utilitarian mood of the society encourages the youth to seize the moment, achieve quick results, and act in the "availability zone" through the appropriately arranged education system. Under such accentuation the youth, having not answered the life-purpose questions, may at once discover the futility of many "projects", joyless possession of the "right" things and people, and, ultimately, the inability to measure own performance and the traversed path of life [6]. The reorganization of an individuals people, involving the education system, makes people faceless, voiceless, incapable of achievements and great deeds exposed. Isn't the Russian citizen-consumer a dream for some of the ruling elites of the global community?

Two thousand years ago, the wise Socrates warned: "You shouldn't live without understanding life" [7, P. 92]. Many people strive for money, fame and pleasures but, upon reaching, don't know what to do with them, do not get satisfaction, self-fulfillment, and believe, their life was in vain.

We should consider the orientation towards "To be!" mode of existence, as E. Fromm insisted: to be creative, proactive, open for the environment, possess an all-round personality, be interested in the world around and its challenges, and be one who has overcome the limits of the isolated "Self" that was considered futile and even silly in capitalist society.

#### IV. THE NEW UNDERSTANDING OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

We are used to understanding the superficiality under amateurism. But almost no one, except for the philosophers, talks about the amateurism of the other kind that's widely spread across Russia in the past few years – an in-depth study of specific issues, isolated from the contextual body of real life facts and the broader humanitarian issues.

Time itself has demanded a change in the very understanding of the professional identity and its professional competence. For the first time in the 20th century, in connection with the computerization, the professionals in the USA encountered the problem of the "false expertise": a person was good at computers and was able to lightning-fast pull out the necessary information but was unable to process it, limited by the narrow outlook and a general lack of maturity. Such "experts" were unable to notice the pressure points of the phenomenon under consideration and to creatively compartmentalize the process and classify the information needed to solve specific problems linking them to the set situation and look widely at the phenomena of the reality.

The world situation of the 21st century with its many economic, social, ecological, cultural and moral global issues urgently requires experts of a new type, endowed with certain social and cognitive characteristics – common culture, moral principles, civic activism, broad outlook, methodological approach, tolerance, and ability to carry on a dialogue in the broad sense of the word. The notable Russian philosopher V.I. Solovyov put ethics in the first place among

all areas of knowledge, which, by themselves, according to him, show no value [8]. A genuine comprehension of V.I. Solovyov's position came only at the end of the 20th century, when the global consequences of "immoral economy", "immoral policy", and "immoral art", guided solely by the short-term interest and profit, became apparent.

Modern economists must not only see the tendencies of the global development and take them into account in his professional activity but be able to predict the situation, anticipating and preventing negative consequences.

The formation of such an expert an overall humanitarian picture of the world is the urgent need, required to implement the process of co-evolution and have dialogue with the world in the course of professional activities. The economic picture of the world shall be an integral part of the humanitarian Weltanschauung, and the economist shall be inscribed in a specific cultural-historical context of the time, its spiritual problems, and human values, being able to comprehend the economic problems (including his own) through the cultural-ethical category. In the words of M. Heidegger, "the world picture does not signify the picture of the world, but the world, understood in the meaning of the picture" [9, P. 201], i.e. it helps to understand that it is in the power of the people to change the world for the better and to find the right means for achieving it.

The human society (and especially the Russian one) is in dire need of the informed and professionally competent personality. Human society must able to make an independent decision and bear social responsibility for the actions, foreseeing not only the immediate but also the remote consequences. Employers increasingly require such employees' qualities as sincerity, honesty, loyalty, open-mindedness, respect for the others, creative approach, teamwork, presence of ideals, common culture and tolerance [10].

However, current Russian higher education reform is insufficiently spiritually supported and culturally grounded. One must not forget that higher education is primarily the development of the higher intellectual and cultural values, being the enrichment of the spiritual background.

The problem of niche specialization, isolated from the cultural component, is closely connected with another problem of the spiritual resources for socio-economic development. Today, while looking for the new resources of economic development, some researchers began to consider misinformed individuals quite seriously. Perestroika has shown us that the various types of resources and capital (natural resources, geography, "technological capital", "intellectual capital", etc.) can stay motionless, collapsing or enriching some other countries if there is no place for yet another resource – the spiritual one, which has, as it turns out, realistic economic value. This resource is the spiritual and moral guidelines for those involved in economic relations.

#### V. SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRAINING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

However, one shall not seek the problems of the modern higher education solely among the subjective volunteers as

there are objective tendencies of social development and current spiritual condition. The postmodern era and features of the ongoing postmodern atmosphere explain many social phenomena, including those in the educational sphere [11].

To some extent, postmodern attitudes are the challenge to modern education. We can even admit that the Bologna process with its unification and standardization is an attempt to control chaos – the desire to overcome the postmodern immediacy and chaotic nature by squeezing them into a certain frame of competencies and standards. Yet, this is not the best way out of the spiritual atmosphere of postmodernity. Let us listen to the established specialist in the field of management, Professor Peter Vaill: "In the wake of rising of the service industry, it is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot approach the service industry with the same criteria as the sphere of production. Service cannot be "packaged" in some standard packaging. Service consists of the interaction with people and takes time... How shall we abandon the usual scheme of the "units of production" [12, P. 27]. We need a completely different way to reduce the cost and to battle postmodern "chaos".

The postmodern society with its eclectic perception of the world as the uncertain idealization of everything that is relative; the mindset on consumerism has a significant influence on the changing attitudes of society. This phenomenon finds its reflection in the recognition of the relativity of all the values (even those that are centuries-old), that are being reviewed in the context of new trends and paradigms of the public consciousness. This challenge to the modern education is being overcome with great difficulty.

These postmodern trends and emergence of the information society are the catalysts of each other in the formation of modern mosaic "split" consciousness, which domination fully manifests itself in the sphere of education [13]. Advanced media technologies (TV, Internet, advertising, etc.) with a kaleidoscope of news, random facts, the imposition of a variety of senses, the blurring of the stories and the fixation on success lead to the abandonment of the quest for system and direction in the development of social processes and their replacement with technological approaches.

This doesn't correspond to the strategy of rationalizing the higher education, as proclaimed by the Bologna process. After all, the rationality must be shown not only in the external forms of organization but in the formation of students' correct rational thinking. However, the curricula and overreliance on "virtual" training do not contribute to the students' cognitive development.

There is a forming mindset of a student, refusing the attempts of a clear systematization of the knowledge about the world, not operating the basic concepts (good – evil, freedom – necessity, consistency, fact, etc.) and erasing the demarcation line between scientific and mundane knowledge. Knowledge doesn't develop within the listeners into a coherent structure to be easily updated and accessed if necessary. Modern students do not consider it important to refer to the exact value of the fundamental concepts, loosely interpreting their meanings and often confusing the

definitions - "matter" with "thing", "manipulation" with "influence", "egoism" with "individualism" - even making this to the rank of the principle "everyone has their own opinion". It is even permissible to avoid the application of the knowledge of logical argumentation, the formation of which is openly dismissed at the universities. The methodological shortsightedness of the administrators of the education leads to a decline in quality.

Special studies conducted by L. Wecker and J. Crabtree of Stanford University show an overall decline of humanity's intelligence. It seems that the Bologna process had its share in the process. A similar trend is also visible in Russia, according to the Director of Social Psychology Lab at St. Petersburg State University, head of the center "Diagnostics and development of abilities" L. Yasukova, and as witnessed by the results of the monitoring of the intellectual development of pupils and students - less than 20% of the modern youth are capable of full-scale conceptual thinking [Cf. <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2013/12/04/1207437.html> Date of access: 29.04.2017]. True power (over circumstances, phenomena, nature, etc.) has the only real profound knowledge, systematically unfolding in the human consciousness. Decisions, based on superficial knowledge, pre-conceptual interpretation of the current events, are dormant. The risk of catastrophic consequences resulting from wrong subjective decisions is too high in this constantly changing world of unstable social systems and cataclysms.

Philosophical disciplines should become the backbone of the coherent system of other disciplines and their content. Future economists shall not be given a "fish" in the form of multiple instrumental disciplines, but the "fishing pole" in the form of a full-fledged philosophical and humanitarian education that can help students to form a correct reasoning system, broad outlook, and methodological approaches.

The higher education system should be responsible for the training of a highly-qualified specialist, as well as for the socialization of the personality which lay in the preparation for the living in an ever-changing diverse world of this eco-information society. Education as an element of culture is not a mere obtaining of specific knowledge on nature, society or self but the formation of the system of relations with nature, society and own place in the world based on knowledge.

More and more attention is paid lately to students' morale building. This largely means out-of-class lecturer's activity while a discipline like philosophy contains a huge educational potential is almost ignored. Humanization is thus a real call of the times. A new educational paradigm must focus on humanities, regardless of the specialization obtained. However, reducing the number of contact hours, allocated for the humanities (particularly philosophy), attempts to introduce technology to the process of transmitting philosophical knowledge and to formalize the control of their assimilation, sometimes winding down all the didactic efforts of a lecturer.

It would seem that persistence required by the curriculum and program interactive forms of education must contribute to this. Nowadays, however, the effect of such forms of lectures on philosophy is pretty low, and it's not the lecturers'

fault. The reason is pedagogical futility and didactic inefficiency of applying the interactivity with a limited number of contact hours. Interactive forms of education are very time-consuming and require a certain knowledge in order to reach the required pedagogical goal. One of the most important stages to reaching the goal is not only pedagogical activity but also the actualization of knowledge. Unfortunately, too little time is given for the lecturer to counsel the students, show all the beauty, diversity and power of human mind based on the historical-philosophical material and to translate philosophical ideas into practice. Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Moscow State University V.V. Mironov is also concerned: "Relying only on common sense, we can surely put banal truth in the guise of philosophic garments, with which the commonplace is covered, however, this is irrelevant to philosophy... Free philosophizing doesn't occur in a vacuum. It is not the result of fixing some thoughts arising in the mind of an individual... He doesn't feel the banality of his own statements, he just thinks that he thinks. There must be a certain immersion in the world of philosophy for the real free thinking... Just the orientation in this space allows us to freely feel from a philosophical perspective, to grasp the essence of philosophical problems, to compare the existing versions of their solutions and try to offer their own..." [14, P. 5].

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Considering the importance of social-philosophical education as a backbone of the higher education, let us agree with the Netherlands researcher G. Salmon: "A new science emerges, based on communication with a living reality. A lot of people feel themselves uncomfortable, living in the world created by modern science because it doesn't give them an ability to communicate with the reality to understand the depth of the natural creatures and other people. This reality dies (and we witness this): empty inside, people die, lacking the social sympathy to each other. This is the reality based on power and "instrumental" rationality... If we want to save humanity, we must reduce the role of science of that type and to create a "spiritual science", in which cognition is a form of love and a way of communication with reality, the science that works using the power of the heart" [15]. It is possible, however, that Russian society will be forced to pay too high of a price for the late understanding of the importance of socio-humanitarian education in the context of increasingly complex information environment and the emergence of "knowledge society", when cultural-value background, ethical principles, amplitude and accuracy of thinking are the same components of professionalism as the ability to calculate profit and develop a business plan.

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