

## EVALUATION BY STUDENTS OF PUBLIC POLICY REFORMS IN THE SPHERE OF EDUCATION OF RUSSIA

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**Abstract.** The policy of reforming the domestic educational system, which began in the mid-2000s in Russia, was conditioned not only by the need to overcome the consequences of the economic and social crisis of the 1990s. The educational reform was seen as a key element in the modernization of the entire social system, the decisive condition for the country's transition to an innovative development model for restoring the socio-economic and military potential, survival and security of the country, and preserving its positions in the world [Morozova, G.V., T.I. Nikitina and A.A. Nikitin. 2013]. For reference: during the 20th century, the share of Russia in the land area decreased by 23%, in the world population - almost 4 times, in the world GDP - by 83% [Radzikhovskii L., 2014.]. The paper describes the results of the study of the students' opinion on the results of the educational reform in the Russian Federation. Comparison of the students' assessments with other objective indicators of reform, as well as with other expert assessments, in our opinion, has allowed expanding the idea of the effectiveness of the relevant transformations.

**Keywords.** Modernization, education system, Bologna model, higher education.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of modernization in the late 1990s, the education system represented a complex socioeconomic and scientific and technical complex of the national economy [Takala, T., N. Piattoeva, 2012.], which operation was provided by 69,613 educational institutions with a total of 21,369,000 students. In accordance with the Law of the Russian Federation "On Education" No. 12 - FZ of 13.01.1996, the education system included the following stages: preschool education; general education (primary general, basic general, secondary (complete) general education); primary vocational education; secondary vocational education; higher professional education; additional adult education; education for orphans and children without parental care (legal representatives); and special (correctional) education for students with deviant development) [Federal Law No. 12-FZ of January 13, 1996 on Education].

The education system was represented by state (federal, regional and municipal) and non-state (private, public and religious) educational institutions. The education system included institutions that conduct primary, secondary, higher and postgraduate professional training. Among them are:

1. general education - 65,300 institutions,
2. primary vocational (colleges) - 3,911,
3. secondary vocational (technical schools, colleges) - 2,576,
4. higher educational institutions - 939, of which: state - 590, non-state - 349 institutions. The teaching staff numbered 2,226 thousand people (data as of the beginning of 1998/1999 school year) [Russia in figures 2005 ].

The basic principles of Russia's educational policy aimed at solving the tasks of the transition of the country to a market economy, the formation of a socially responsible state, were defined in the National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation until 2025, enshrined in the Law of the Russian Federation "On education", the Federal Law "On higher and post-graduate professional education". The goal of education modernization was to create a mechanism for sustainable

development of the national education that would ensure the participation of Russia in the development of the common educational space of European countries, improve the quality of Russian higher education, mobility of students, teachers and management personnel of universities, mutual recognition of the qualifications of relevant documents in the field of higher education, and preservation of Russia's place among the leading countries of the world [Gülsün, A. B., Y. Erduran, 2009. ].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data of the Federal State Statistics Service, secondary data of sociological research, information from periodicals, as well as the results of a sociological survey on revealing the social well-being of 17-23 year-old student youth of the Republic of Tatarstan in March-May 2015, served as an empirical basis for the study. To determine the sample size, the size of the said group was taken as the general population, which, according to the Rosstat data and official information of the universities, was 20,483 people. The sampled population was 450 people, and represented different categories of young people, depending on their age, professional and territorial features. The methodological basis of the study was the methods of analysis and synthesis, a comparative method, a survey method, and a descriptive method.

## 3. RESULTS

Implementation of the educational reforming policy has led to a number of changes in it. They are confirmed by the survey data. According to the study of student youth in Tatarstan in 2015 the question "How do you assess the state of the Russian education system in recent years?" only 3.4% of respondents answered that nothing has changed. At the same time, the modernization of the Russian education system is largely controversial and ambiguous. Along with the positive changes in the current policy of reforms, serious miscalculations are also evident. Undoubtedly, a positive change should be considered a significant increase in the investments to the education industry. For example, education was the largest expenditure item in the budget for 2001, leaving the defense sector financing behind. Among the positive results of modernization, we should note the transformations within the rural

schools, including the strengthening and development of teaching and methodological and material-technical school bases, especially considering that there are 68,000 schools in the country, two-thirds of which are rural schools. The positive result was the development of the variability of teaching, the expansion of the choice of training programs, when along with the budgetary system of education a significant sector of private educational services was formed. In this regard, while maintaining a free secondary general education school for higher education institutions, a tuition payment mechanism has been developed. Since 2005, according to the Federal State Statistics Service, the proportion of students studying on a fee basis in the total number of students of state and non-state universities has exceeded 60%. An increase in the population's expenditures for education was observed throughout the 2000s, and today it is almost 800% [Russia in figures 2013 ]. At the same time, according to some estimates, more than 50% of paid services in the educational sphere are in the "shadow" [Zubarevich N.B., Ibragimova D.Kh. et al., 2007. ]. But even if these data are overstated, nevertheless, this means that the share of private expenditures for education in GDP is significantly underestimated.

In the course of reforming the national education system, a new network of educational and training centers has been established, including traditional universities with the status of "research centers" and established federal universities. The institutions of the domestic system of higher education began forming education in a new fashion. In accordance with the Federal Law "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in Connection with the Establishment of the Obligation of General Education" [9] and the Law "On Amending Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation (Regarding Setting Levels of Higher Professional Education )" [Federal Law ,2007 ] the education system was designed to provide, in addition to the traditional educational program for the training of graduates in relevant specialties (training period 5 and 5,5 years), the implementation and educational programs of higher professional education with the conferral of a Bachelor (4 years) or Master (1-2 years) degree. The reform of the higher education system was completed by Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012, "On Education in the Russian Federation," which defined postgraduate studies as a stage of higher education [Federal Law , 2007,]. The formed system of education is inherent in the

market model of social development. Within its framework, education is one of the riches accessible to only a small percentage of the population representing the economic and public-management elite. One cannot ignore the fact that the modernization of the national education system is carried out in a new demographic situation that generates problems in the educational sector, and especially in higher education. According to A.V. Belotserkovskii, state-funded places in universities are provided at the rate of 170 students per 10 thousand people. But, over the last five years, the number of the youth applicants has halved [Federal Law No. 232-FZ of October 24, 2007 ]. Therefore, universities accept not the best graduates of schools, which, as a rule, do not exceed 15%, but the majority of those who finished secondary school - 70%, and moreover, professionally not oriented. Getting higher degrees has become a social norm for the Russian population [Belotserkovskii A.V., 2012. ]. The mass appeal of those wishing to get higher educational degrees has become a reaction of the population to the economic crisis of the 1990s, which led to a devaluation of human capital, but increased the adaptive capacity of the individual to new social and economic conditions. At the same time, the extensive development of higher education without adequate investment support inevitably leads to a decrease in its level. (For reference: Russia occupies the 110th place in the world in terms of the share of expenditures for education in relation to GDP - 4.1% ).

The transition to the Bologna model of education is accompanied by a bureaucratization of the management system of the educational sector, diverting resources and attention from the learning process, mastering both modern methods and technologies of training that reduces its effectiveness. An attempt of overcoming a significant differentiation in the level and quality of education, especially in the capital and peripheral universities has failed and resulted in a large number of pseudo universities remaining. In turn, the labor market also has neither accepted innovations in the domestic education system nor determined the professional requirements in the national economy for the status of master, graduate student, which does not form the motivational mechanism of these forms of education. According to the results of the study of the social well-being of student youth in Kazan, almost every second respondent (45.1%) noted their dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between education and demand in

the labor market [Bondarenko N.V., Bocharova O.A., Grazhdankin A.I., Krasilnikova M.D., Levinson A.G., Petushkova L.V., Stuchevskaia O.A., 2005; Social well-being of students in Kazan: based on the results of a sociological survey, 2012]. As a result, there is still an existing gap between the labor market, its staff requirements and system of their preparation.

Ambiguity, inconsistency of the results of the national education reform is confirmed by the data of the survey of students of Tatarstan universities. Thus, the share of positive assessments of the changes in the educational sector (in total 19.3% of respondents noted that during the reforms "the youth had increased opportunities for the choice of education" and 3.6% of respondents stressed that "the quality of education has improved") is 1.4 times less than of negative: 27.2% of the surveyed are convinced that "it has got worse, the national education is collapsing". The conclusion is confirmed by answers to the monitoring question: "How do you assess the quality of training at the university?". The number of students who rate the quality as high is 2.3 times less than those considering the quality of the provided education as "below average" (12.4% vs. 28.5%). The data obtained largely explain the low level of satisfaction with the conditions of study at the selected faculty/institute, which was emphasized by almost every second respondent (46.6%). The significance of the data obtained is actualized by the high rating of the value of education in the youth consciousness, which determines the student's orientation toward professional development, which forms the motivational mechanism of labor activity. Thus, during the research, the link between the provided education and the future work was clearly identified: half of the respondents (52.5%) after graduating the university suppose to work in their profession.

The complexity and uncertainty of the situation that has arisen in the educational sector is evidenced by the fact that every tenth respondent found it difficult to assess the state of the education system in Russia. At the same time, a sixth of the respondents (15.8%) noted that "no one is responsible for education". At the same time, the largest number of those participating in the survey - almost 40% (37.8%) - noted an increase in the share of fee-based education. Apparently, this circumstance explains the obtained data that half of those participating in the study (46.9%) have to combine work and study (26.9% of respondents to

the question "Have you ever combined work and study?" answered "yes, I work now", and 20.0% - "I work part time occasionally").

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The changes that have occurred in the domestic educational sector cannot be unambiguously assessed. Accepting the positive changes associated with innovative educational technologies, material and technical base, alternative forms of education, the expansion of the range of educational services, one cannot deny that the modernization of the Russian education system did not give the expected results and, above all, the quality and sustainable development mechanism of the educational system. According to the assessment of the course of reforms by the students, who have an idea of the substantive aspect of the measures taken, in contrast to official opinions; the share of dissatisfied with the reforms is much larger, and it shows a mostly pessimistic view. Low level of student satisfaction with the quality of education at the university can destroy the positive orientation of the students to their professional self-realization in the chosen profession.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Thus, the implementation of the education reforming policy in Russia is a rather contradictory process. The technological gap between Russia and the economically developed countries still remains and the competitiveness of the national higher education declines. The complex situation of the education system, in our opinion, is largely due to miscalculations in educational policy. Beginning in the mid-1980s, it was subject to constant experiments without preliminary careful analysis of the educational sphere, existing problems, the dynamics of society's needs, without a detailed scientific justification for the strategy for the development of domestic education and the calculation of the necessary resources. At the same time, it is obvious that the Russian ruling elite and the public are aware of the importance of the new role of education in the 21st century.

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