

IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS IN THE PROCESS OF REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION IN RUSSIA (REGIONAL ASPECT)

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to assess the current situation in higher education in Russia concerning the principal risks affecting its quality. The survey, the expert survey and secondary data analysis were carried out to determine the risks. The study was conducted in three universities of Ural Federal District (UFD) with the sample more than 1,500 people. As a result the main risk factor was determined – it's a non-systemic reform of higher education, primarily affects the quality of educational services.

Other systemic risks are financial and economic, juristic, organizational and management, social. As it was admitted, "The Russia isn't integrated into the global educational system - there is no common system of qualifications from other countries, including the European Union"[Bannykh, 2012]. More specific risks, such as the lack of synergies from the integration of universities, reduction of the number of teaching staff, reducing the quality of the educational training of graduates, formalization and bureaucratization of the educational process, the educational monopoly, ignoring national and cultural traditions, also influence on the system.

Key words risk, risk management, higher education, educational risk, the quality of education

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Introduction

Modern society is often called "risk-taking" that is associated with a variety of transformation processes taking place there simultaneously. Nothing is certain anymore [Hartog, 2015]. Normally, the risks are seen as a threat, like something that carries negative consequences, but many scientists point out that the risks may also be opportunities to promote positive change. Joining the Bologna process as the direction of modernization of the education system has begun in the Russian Federation in 2002, in period when anomie had not ended yet, characterized by numerous social changes in various spheres of society. This also caused the

emergence of a number of risks and threats in the system of higher education in Russia at the moment.

1 Background of researching risks in the process of reforming higher education

The population as a whole and many of the socio-professional groups were forced to address the needs of low-level search for survival, security of life for themselves and their families, so the beginning of change in the education system didn't attract attention to themselves at first time.

The government refused to support the information cover of reforming the educational system, so the idea and meaning of the changes that were taking place, as well as the interim results has not been heard by the population. At that time only comments about reforming process could be found, which obviously was not enough. As a result, during the transition to lifelong learning, the formation of a two-tier system of higher education, the majority of the population was not informed and was faced with the fact of change that have already occurred. This led the resistance to the reform process among the part of the population. And it begins to take alarming proportions. This resistance to the reform process could be felt among teachers and lecturers in high school. It appears in refusing to accept bureaucratic and formal statistical approach to the new system of education in the modern university, which is confirmed by the results of public opinion polls.

Decade of transformation processes in the Russian education: its reformation, modernization, "bolonization" - was overlooked various social sciences and humanities. These processes were the subject of extensive analysis and sociological research. Revealed positive ideas of reconstruction of education, some progress in their implementation, but the overall results are very contradictory social consequences do not add optimism in assessing the possibilities to achieve the objectives in determining the prospects for the development of this system. Such problems have already been discussed at other regions [Sellar, 2015].

1.1 Classification of risks in higher education system

In connection with the process of reforming the system of higher education of the Russian Federation there was a lot of systemic risks, the analysis of which has become a popular research topic. For example, the risk as a threat to the higher education system in Russian Federation are analyzed in detail by Kazak A. and Slepukhina Y. [Kazak, 2013]. The

authors highlight the threat in detail for high school, such as the absence of positive synergies from the merger of universities of different profiles at the federal university; a significant reduction of the teaching staff; decline in the quality of bachelor graduates (compared to to specialists) and as a consequence, reduced demand for such graduates by employers; threat of outflow of highly qualified teaching staff of universities; formalization and bureaucratization of the pedagogical process. Some of this factors were investigated in other countries [Perales, 2015].

As part of the work on the Grant from Russian Fund of Fundamental Research "Transformational risks of higher professional education" (project 13-06-00635) the following risks were identified:

1) The risk of non-compliance of the proposed be the universities areas of training to the needs of the economy and the labor market situation.

2) The risk of reducing the quality of education caused by the accessibility of higher education for everybody, the lack of competitiveness in entering the university, by increasing the volume of independent work skills in the absence of independent work of students. Some of these risks were also mentioned in research conducted by the british and american shcolars [Meyer, 2002].

3) Risks of modernization of education, related to the fact that the leaders of universities, teachers and students have different understandings of the meaning and substance of the reforms, not sufficiently aware of the direction of change in higher education.

4) Risks of modernization of education, due to the peculiarities of Russian mentality: disbelief in the results of reforms, the desire to "reinvent the wheel", the lack of individual responsibility for the decisions and the results of labor, the hope of "maybe" and habitual ways of learning activities in universities, and the habit "to pull" students.

5) Risks associated with the mismatch of legal regulation of the educational activities of universities aims and objectives of the modernization of education.

6) The risks arising from the fact that teachers do not have sufficient motivation to carry out the modernization of education and work in the new conditions.

7) The risk of skills shortages of teachers and researchers at the universities.

8) The risk of imitating the forms of activity by teachers and students.

9) The risk of formal and biased use of score-rating system of assessing students and working teachers.

2 Attitudes of university staff towards reforms in education

Certain aspects of risk have been already described in previous publications. In this paper the author's attention is focused on the risks associated with the attitudes of university staff towards reforms in education. An empirical base of the article is a series of studies conducted by the authors in 2014-2015 dedicated to this subject (polled about 2,000 respondents): mass surveys of students and professors teaching staff, as well as an interview with the heads of some semiformalized universities of Yekaterinburg.

The current situation of the Russian higher education system majority of respondents assessed negatively: these estimates were given by 80.7% of respondents.

Assessment experts: second expert: "We moribund education system." The third expert: "It's sad to see the increase in the backlog of our higher education and research by world standards. In China they have realized 22 years ago that nothing interesting and good in our system of education and science is not, and stopped sending their graduates to us for the fellowship".

All three experts spoke about the reforms in education in general. The first expert emphasized that "... focus only on the Bologna process for reform of higher education in Russia is wrong. Bologna process - it is only Europe, but now there are other educational centers. During the modernization of our country we need to focus on all the international experience". The second expert noted that "the reforms have discrete, non-systemic character: the fact they do not affect, many activities are external, random. In the form in which the reforms are carried out today - it's disruption of the education system. We need a longer period for implementation of reforms and the implementation of reforms should be on a voluntary basis: some universities are ahead. "

Experts commented on the individual components of the reform of higher education in Russia, stressed that only a transition to a two-tier education system has been effective for now. The advantage of this transition the first expert called the most individual educational way, greater mobility of the education system in general and university graduates.

Another change in the system of higher education in connection with the reforms - increasing the international contacts, international internships of both students and faculty, joint research by scientists from different countries. Most of the surveyed teachers (76.7%) attended the lectures of foreign scientists, conducted in universities. But the overwhelming majority of them do it only occasionally, about a quarter of respondents had never attended these lectures.

Motivation of teachers for the implementation of higher education reforms vast majority of them - 78.0% - believe insufficient. Satisfactory enough (fully or partially) the

motivation is considered only a fifth of the respondents (21.5%). All three experts highlighted the lack of motivation among employees of universities to participate actively in the implementation of reforms. The first expert noted that some members of administrative staff motivation is still there. The second expert stressed that, in his view, the reforms did not come to the key point - the role of the teacher in the reform process. Many of the difficulties associated with the need to develop incentives and motivation of the teacher work. "Teacher - Student" - is a key link in the implementation of reforms.

This is confirmed by the teachers themselves: earnings satisfaction ranks third in the hierarchy of motives according to respondents, and gives significance interesting and prestigious job.

The future of higher education in connection with the reforms of the teachers evaluated as follows: the most popular answer was the response that "the Russian system of higher education is to preserve the national identity and harmonize with foreign higher education systems," he was elected more than half of the respondents. However, if we consider that both the first and the second variant of the answer, which is selected by the respondents most often mentioned national character, national identity system of higher education in Russia, we can make a conclusion about the importance of this aspect for the vast majority of teachers.

The second expert also chose this answer, but stressed that the future of our education system is unclear.

3 – Risks of educational practices of the modern students

Students are not only objects of the educational process, but also active subjects of this activity. We analyze the actual educational practices of students and the risks arising from them, contrary to the direction of reform of higher education.

To clarify the attitudes of teachers to increasing hours for independent work of students they were asked to answer the question: "Which position is closer to your opinion?":

1. " the same requirements must be made for the students of any form of learning" or
2. "If the students have enough classroom hours, the requirements for them have to be lower."

18% of teachers found it difficult to formulate its position. A minority of respondents, only a third of respondents (30.9%) believe it is necessary to follow the first principle in the implementation of educational programs.

Majority - 54.1% - are inclined to be guided by the second point - to reduce the requirements for students who have fewer classroom hours and more hours on the independent study of the discipline in the curriculum. At the same time about one-fifth (21.5%) of the respondents allow the possibility, in the case of an insufficient number of classroom hours in the study of an academic discipline to give students "minor concessions" for tests and examinations. Another 23.2% believe that such requirements have to be a little bit softer.

One of the educational risk - different requirements for students with different forms of education. As a result, the same reward and the same diplomas may be given for a completely different knowledge, skills, competencies.

According to the study 41.1% of the students claim that they spend on self-training about the same time as in the auditorium. 36.2% spent on independent work less than in the auditorium, and only a fifth of the respondents - 21.8% - spending on independent work more time than the auditorium.

According to a study conducted by the Department of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, Ural State Pedagogical University in 2011-2012 [Pryamikova, 2012], 1st year students of the Ural State Medical Academy spent on classes at the Academy 6.75 hours and at home - 4.24 hours. Students of Pedagogical University spend 5.5 hours on inclass work at the University, and 2.5 hours at home, and the students of the Ariel Institute (Israel) - 7.65 hours for classes at the Academy and 3.0 hours at home.

The third year students study at home less hours than they did at 1st year of education: the Medical Academy students began to study at home less than an hour, but the lessons at the Academy remains the same. Pedagogical University students began to spend a little less time in the classroom, both at home and at the university. Students of Ariel University began to study one hour less in the classroom at the University, but the preparation of the house takes the same time.

Thus, the amount of time all students spend to classes in schools is much more than self-study.

Meanwhile, in the curricula the time provided for independent work, much more than classroom work. It can be concluded that the vast majority of students do not study properly, spending on the study of academic disciplines considerably less time than it was stipulated by the curriculum.

Students tend to simulate independent work - they use the various forms of plagiarism. It is a manifestation of the late modern society trends was mentioned in the works of

researchers [Botcheva, 2009]. Independent work of students makes sense if it applies appropriate forms of control, allowing both to assess the level of work and increase student's motivation to learn. Similar conclusions also was made by teams of scientists in other countries [Eisemon, 1995].

In studies of student's independent work, carried out in May 2014 (Institute of Continuing Education at University of Economics) and October 2014 (Full-time students at University of Economics), were mentioned the attitude of students to copyright and use the intellectual property, which has recently been given a lot of attention, including and higher professional education.

64.6% of respondents think that plagiarism is acceptable as a part in student's work, 21.5% of respondents (that is actually a fifth of the students) chose the option that plagiarism is a norm in modern society. Only 12.2% of the students indicated that plagiarism is absolutely unacceptable, as the appropriation of another's property.

Most of the students of the Institute of Continuing Education - 60.5% of respondents - consider plagiarism is acceptable, respondents confirm it's prevalence and tolerance for plagiarism among students. 13.8% considered plagiarism is accepted norm for everybody. Only 22.8% of respondents mentioned their intolerance to plagiarism.

If you add these answers with the answer on the admissibility of plagiarism in some cases, it turns out that 86.1% of full-time students and 74.3% of part-time students consider plagiarism is not a form of deviant behavior. Therefore, it may be noted that «bona fides» has not yet received proper distribution among the students.

This clearly indicates the need to take certain measures in respect of plagiarism among students. The survey also revealed an unexpected aspect: the intolerance of plagiarism among part-time students was higher compared to the opinions of full-time students. This can be explained by the fact that the part-time students belong to the older age groups, who do not own "magic buttons» («ctrl + c» and «ctrl + v») or basically do not consider it possible to use other people's material.

Conclusion

The study summarizes that inadequate remuneration system, the growth of the teaching load, increasing formalization and bureaucratization of the educational process, as well as reducing the quality of training of students, which also makes it difficult to teach, lead to the domination of negative evaluations of reforms to the low motivation of the teaching staff on innovation in the learning process.

Independent work of students in high schools organized inefficiently and is definitely is a risk- taking factor of transformation of higher education in Russia. Risk- taking is manifested in the increasing prevalence of deviant behavior of students, inadequate educational practices (simulated activity, tolerance for plagiarism, lack of motivation to learn).

All this increases the risk- taking, pose a threat to the future development of higher education. In this connection it is necessary to fundamentally review the process of higher education reform, actively connected to the reform of teachers and students as decision makers - this will reduce the resistance to change. It is also necessary to use address administrative influence and establish a system of responsibility and accountability for current actions.

And the main risk factor in the educational process of regional high school is a non-systemic reform of higher education, primarily affects the quality of educational services. Some authors in early 90-s made an attempt of guiding the reform process in higher education – Eisemon T.O. and Holm-Nielsen L. They were sure in effectiveness of combining different kind of public policies together with educational one [Eisemon T.O., 1995].

Management decisions, including in education system are often made without the knowledge of the real situation, which reduces their effectiveness. Identification of the transformation of institutional risks of the national system of higher education enables the development of more effective management decisions to minimize these risks.

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