

GLOBALIZATION, NEO-LIBERALISM, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE NEOLIBERAL REFORMATION STRATEGY AS THE REASON FOR CRISIS OF THE HIGH EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract. The work is devoted to identifying causes of crisis in modern system of high education. The functional analysis and Zygmunt Bauman's concepts of "post-industrial society" and "liquid (or late) modernity" are selected as methodological framework of the research. The social order analysis of the main actors in education (the state, students, parents, employers) shows the hypertrophy of economic functions of education and the loss of value of the social and cultural functions, which indicates the transformation of the institute of education in appliance with the neoliberal scenario. According to the authors' opinion the reason for that is that during the conversion from Modern to Post-Modern periods the ideological paradigm was not changed. The ideology of consumerism is preserved and spreading by the efforts of elites. Therefore, for all actors the knowledge is seemed not as the goal of education but as the mean of making a profit.

The authors of Post-industrial society theory believed that the value and role of knowledge, information, intellectual capital, as well as universities (place of their creation and concentration) increased sharply. In reality, we observe that only "useful and technological" knowledge is valued, which can be quickly turned into the popular product or service. Knowledge is not the purpose, but the mean of making money. However, the importance of universities is determined not by the content of new knowledge, and the amount of money earned, and prestige expressed in the rankings.

Since the middle of the last century, activities related to science, education and high technologies began bringing the higher and higher incomes, causing an increase in the importance and prestige of higher education. Awareness of the profitability of higher education has generated the massive demand for it. At the same time the business indicated the high efficiency of investment in education and the merging of education and business had been started. The paradigm of "educational services" was formed. The steady growth of demand for higher education in accordance with the laws of the market has generated consistent decline in its quality.

Massification and consumerism as a social request changed the essence of education, the ratio of its functions and, as a result, devalued its results. If we proceed from the logic of the market, any product, becoming a mass one, must inevitably lose quality. Otherwise the right amount with limited resources is simply impossible to produce. The surrogate called "Human capital" has become the result of knowledge and education instead of the personal development and growth of knowledge. The problem is that the "Human capital" is mainly expressed in the form of formal indexes which is hardly convertible on the saturated market.

In many countries including in Russia, the Education reform is carried out in accordance with the Neoliberal model. The market logic of this model requires either forced demand reduction or additional resources. In the first variant, it is difficult to implement, because it contradicts the interests of a huge part of the population and is fraught with social explosions. The second variant it is too expensive, if quality resources are used. In this dilemma the information technologies presented to society as a sense of the future and a means of solving all problems come to the scene as the aid to the reformers. From technical means that help teaching and learning people in the joint learning process, they become the goal of education, its content and the main channel of its dissemination. The teaching person becomes redundant in the educational process (because it brings the significant reduction in costs), and information replication increases exponentially (and profits also increase, respectively). From an economic point of view, the model is very effective, but from the standpoint of the general needs of social development, it is dangerous.

In accordance with the concept of Z. Bauman in a fragmented, episodic, rapidly and unpredictably changing world the main role in education is played not knowledge itself but by various human interactions with the social environment, which is developing adaptability, intuition and emotional intelligence, which cannot be made by computer technology. Exactly the multiplicity of universities with a huge variety of "communities that have dedicated themselves to achieving education" can teach people to

cope with uncertainty, a variety of points of view and lack of authority; “to change the framework” and resist the temptation to escape from freedom. But the ongoing neoliberal education reforms are aimed to unify activities and to standardize of content, the formalize the assessment, to restrict the learning by «communication with a computer», to eliminate many universities and to reduce the number of teachers in the rest of universities massively. As the result this aims lead the education system in the opposite direction. The contradiction of this model with the basic needs of society, science and large social groups gives rise to crisis phenomenons and it is not possible to overcome them within the neoliberal model.

Keywords: education, reforms, social order, neoliberalism, consumerism

Introduction

In the last decades of the twentieth century, society and its institutions have become increasingly aware of the onset of the new era and the need to change the existing educational systems as obsolete and not corresponding to new realities. Since that time, we have seen in various countries and regions permanent processes of educational reform and the same permanent failures of these reforms almost everywhere. What is the cause of the crisis of education? In this paper, we tried to systematize the attempts of researchers to answer this question, to compare them with the available empirical data (including our long-term studies) and to identify the main, in our opinion, causes of the crisis of education at the beginning of the new millennium.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

The key research question was formulated as follows: “Why in the era of rapid scientific and technological development, the fourth industrial revolution, education is experiencing a severe crisis, and the acceptable ways out of it is not hounded yet?”

Methodology

The methodological framework of the study selected the concepts of “post-industrial society”, “liquid (or late) modernity” by Z. Bauman and structural-functional analysis.

The education system, like any social institution, performs functions oriented to social needs. Needs, refracted through the interests of social subjects, take the form of social order, changing due to social and cultural dynamics. Obviously, the orders of the ear of Renaissance, Modernity and Postmodern society cannot be identical, both due to civilizational differences, and due to changes in the status, interests and positions of the subjects forming these orders in the field of education. This implies the dynamism of the functions of education in the course of social development.

The set of these functions and the effectiveness of their implementation determine the state of education and its compliance with the needs of society in a particular historical period. However, it is the functions of modern education that, in our opinion, are not given enough attention in scientific research and management.

Results / Findings

The most common classification of educational functions is as follows:

- socio-economic, associated with the development of human capital, the needs of the labor market in professional personnel;
- socio-political, the implementation of which allows to ensure the safety of society in its widest sense, social control, social mobility, sustainable development, internationalization and inclusion in general civilizational processes;
- cultural and creative, aimed at the development of the spiritual life of society, as education not only directly affects the formation of personality, but also lays a sense of social responsibility, allows to preserve, develop and transmit spiritual heritage (Modern problems... 2015).

The dependence of educational functions on the structure and content of a social order requires an analysis of the interests, positions, strategies of the main actors, or actors in the field of education.

The first subject is the state. It includes officials of all levels, representatives of state or affiliated research structures, as well as heads of educational institutions of the "new formation" - "modern managers", who came to the leadership as a result of the direct appointment "from above". The degree of consolidation within this subject is very high.

Here are the typical statements of representatives of this subject:

"Of course, improving the quality of educational programs is an absolute priority for the vocational education system. It is necessary to bring training programs to the demands of the labor market. University graduates must obtain a level of competence that will allow them to be competitive. That is what is crucial" (Interview... 2019).

"Universities are no longer the abodes of "masters" who pass on knowledge to their students, but educational supermarkets ... This makes education as consumer-oriented and marketed as possible", (Chernyshov, S. 2015). "The key areas are the university known in the world and domestic educational space, modern infrastructure, creative teachers, students who receive the necessary knowledge and the opportunity to make a career", (Ibid).

The social order of the state places the main emphasis on the economic and political functions of education, such as competitiveness, economic growth, economic efficiency. The request for cultural functions is formal and reduced to quantitative indicators. The second key subject is the students -

mainly young people. In almost all studies of the worldview and values of young people the same hierarchy of goals and means can be observed (Konstantinovsky, D.L. 2016; Khagurov, T.A. 2011; Filatova, M.N., Vershinina, I.A., Volkova, L.V., Huseynova, F.D., Simon, M.E. 2015). Respondents report that they want to have a strong family, a well-paying job, to provide for themselves and their loved ones financially. Answering the question about the qualities needed by a modern person, the most popular answers are: "self-confidence", "enterprise, initiative", "strength", "luckiness". "Honesty" and "kindness" are chosen by no more than 4–6%. This is not surprising, notes T. Khagurov - because they are called to be competitive and efficient. Meanwhile, R. Merton pointed out that these values are equally suitable for a successful businessman and for a successful criminal - both of them strive for competitiveness and efficiency (Khagurov, T.A. 2011; Merton, R.K. 1992).

V. Radaev writes: "Modern students <...> believe that they must be successful, immediately earn money, and a lot of money. <...> They are literally shaking, starting almost from the initial courses: are they teaching me that? Why do we need this mathematics or philosophy? Will I be demanded in the job market? And what is will be my occupation? etc. They demand more applied things that are in demand right now. <...> It takes the form of sustained pragmatic psychosis" (Radaev, V.V. 2005: 63).

The third group of customers is parents. Most parents are afraid that they will be considered as "bad" if they do not provide their children with admission to university. At the same time, almost 70% of parents are willing to pay for the education of children at the university, regardless of the region of residence and even the level of family income (excluding the poorest). (Klyachko, T. L., Mau, V. A. 2015) The essence of their social order is purely economical, and not depending on the real possibilities of its further conversion, the structure of the economy and the needs of the labor market.

The desire of parents to give children higher education by all means is largely due to their own work experience and the desire for children to have a "better life", and getting higher education is seen as a pass to this good life with clean «work». It objectively relies on the fact that the premium for higher education in Russia (the ratio of the wages of workers with higher education to the wages of workers with secondary vocational and general education) stably remains high (Klyachko, T. L., Mau, V. A. 2015).

The fourth subject is employers (both in business and in government agencies), whose requests objectively reduce education to the economic component. The need to receive and increase profits requires minimization of costs, and, consequently, the employer seeks to obtain a prepared but

cheap labor force in the amount that provides him with the opportunity to choose the right workers. Competition and fragmentation does not allow businesses to formulate clear, meaningful inquiries to an educational institution. Employers are looking for employees who have not fundamental knowledge and intellectual and analytical skills, but above all communicability, flexibility, ability to quickly adapt to changes, that is, personal qualities that have a very indirect relationship to education. The analysis of the structure of the social order reveals a number of its essential properties: turnover due to economic and political dynamics, “shifting goals” during bureaucratic management, a one-sided approach to personal development. Excessive determination of the social order by economic efficiency leads to an underestimation or hypertrophy of certain functions of education. We see that modern social order to education is reduced, almost exclusively, to economic functions. Political and cultural functions are articulated only by the state, but mainly in the form of declarations, weakly supported by effective management actions and financial resources. As a result, in recent decades, education has been transformed from a social good, aimed at the development of the individual and society, into a commercial service, increasing, at least formally, human capital.

Discussion

The reason for this, very clearly formulated by T. Khagurov, is that modern society, through the efforts of elites, who sought to maintain their status at any cost, inherited from the previous era the main thing - the ideology of consumption. The instruments for its maintenance are the emancipation of the irrational in man (desire, uncontrolled consumerism) and financial totalitarianism.

Money from an element of the economic system has become a key factor. As a result, the financial sphere absorbed and forced to function according to its laws the other spheres of social life that had previously retained relative autonomy: culture, law, education, and so on. The formula “education as a service” is a reflection of the culture of the consumer society with its financial totalitarianism. The authors of the theory of post-industrial society believed that the value and role of knowledge, information, intellectual capital, as well as universities as a place of their production and concentration increased sharply (Touraine, A. 1969; Bell, D. 1973; Masuda, Y. 1981). In reality, we observe that only “useful and technological” knowledge has value, which can be quickly turned into a popular product or service. Knowledge is not a goal, but a means of making a profit. And the significance of universities is not determined by the content of new knowledge, but by the amount of money earned and the prestige expressed in ratings. As Z. Bauman writes: “Everything that universities have done in

the last nine hundred years made sense either with an orientation toward eternity, or within the framework of the doctrine of progress; Modernity also saved the first, while postmodernity devalued the second. In practice, this means obeying the harsh demands of the market and measuring the “public utility” of a product created by universities by the presence of stable demand, considering universities creating “know-how” as suppliers of a certain product that has to fight for a place on overcrowded supermarkets among others, the quality of which is verified by sales volumes" (Bauman, Z. 2001: 167).

Since the 60s of the last century, activities related to science, education and high technologies began bringing the higher and higher incomes, causing an increase in the importance and prestige of higher education. Awareness of the profitability of higher education has generated the massive demand for it. At the same time the business indicated the high efficiency of investment in education and the merging of education and business had been started. The paradigm of "educational services" was formed. The steady growth of demand for higher education in accordance with the laws of the market has generated consistent decline in its quality.

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model is very effective, but from the standpoint of the general needs of social development, it is dangerous. "In a world where no one can ... predict what special knowledge may be needed tomorrow, ... having many different ways to achieve higher education and its various canons is a necessary and sufficient condition". Following G. Bateson and M. Mead, Bauman insists on the most important role in the process of teaching and learning "secondary education" - the social environment and the ways in which the material is delivered, and not the content of studies. But even more significant, in his opinion, is "tertiary education", which gives knowledge of how ... how to get rid of habits and prevent addiction, how to transform the fragmentary elements of experience into hitherto unknown patterns" (Bauman, Z. 2001: 160). In essence, Bauman speaks of the key role of intuition and emotional intelligence, which is possible only in the context of numerous and varied contacts with people. "The most important thing is, after all, not in individual educational activities, but in their diversity and indeed in the absence of their coordination. ... The chance to adapt to the new postmodernity situation, to the paradoxical situation that turns perfect fitness into a disadvantage, lies precisely in the pluralism and many-sidedness of the current mass of "communities dedicated to achieving education" (Bauman, Z. 2001: 173). Neoliberal education reforms aimed at unifying activities and standardization of content, the formality of assessment, the restriction of learning by communication with a computer, the elimination of many universities, the massive reduction of teachers in the rest lead the education system in the opposite direction (Dobrinskaya, D., Kurbanov, A., Vershinina, I. 2017; Smirnova, O.M., Yudina, M.E., Balycheva, M.B. 2018). The state acts in the interests of big business and the political and educational elites affiliated with it, contrary to the logic of social development. Hypertrophied consumer approach to education makes a person one-dimensional and standardized, depriving him of adaptability, ability to act in situations of uncertainty. The scientific and educational community consciously resists such changes, students and parents intuitively resist. And while education is being reformed within the neoliberal model, the education crisis will continue and deepen.

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