

INNOVATIONS IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Abstract. Modern globalized education influenced Russian national education and triggered its reorganization, which in turn influenced other public institutions such as Orthodox Church. Religious background has been influencing Russian humanitarian education despite of Soviet anti-Church campaign. At the turn of 20th-21st centuries, Russian theological education demonstrates even higher quality after Soviet and Imperial periods. Soon after the Socialist Revolution in 1917, the state became secular. As result, Soviet government seized to recognize the education mechanisms of Russian Orthodox Church as a whole. Student of academy or seminary of the Church would graduate with diploma, but such a diploma would be recognized in the Church environment only. The Church raised the problem of accreditation of its religious education institutions in early 90s.

We believe it is important to analyze the way Orthodox education incorporates into modern Russian education. As a big picture, two approaches apply: A). newly established theological institutions comply with Federal regulations, while applying custom features in order to align with Church ways, as long as the two regulatory frameworks remain consistent, B). Federal accreditation of theological institutions effective since 2008. Recently, authorization process brought a visible outcome: in 2016, Moscow Theological Seminary accredited after 5 years of preparations.

One of the most important questions facing the Institute of professional religious education in the 21st century is whether a modern higher spiritual school is capable of forming a person with a bright and creative theological attitude to society and to the life of the Church. When discussing the importance of state accreditation of higher religious institutions of professional religious education, it should be emphasized that as a result of many historical events of the 20th century, there is a big gap between the Church and society. If spiritual schools don't receive accreditation, the existing discrepancy will only increase. At the same time, we are talking not only about the level of education, but also about the process of incorporating

religious education into the single educational space of modern Russian society, as well as about the constant joint dialogue with society.

We cannot go to ghettos, we cannot isolate ourselves from society. The Church exists for people, so it must sanctify society. It should call people to salvation, to keep the commandments of Christ, this is its mission. The Church is not obliged to agree with society in everything, but it should not lose touch with it. We are in favour of dialogue. This is especially important for the social Institute of professional religious education, which operates in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious regions of our country, where dialogue with society and other religious denominations is of particular importance for all social groups, the state and the Church as a whole.

The reform of spiritual education has been the Central theme of the annual International Christmas educational readings for many years. Historically, the circumstances of the life of the Church in the 20th century clearly show that the scientific quality of theology is directly related to theological, namely - religious education and spiritual enlightenment. Religious education has become an integral and essential part of the Church's mission in the modern world community.

Theological education in Russia has always been set on a mission of moral development of the nation. Nowadays, key topic for research is positive influence of Russian theological education on one's morality through theological perception of national society and its everyday life. In this regard, special attention required to maintain a balance of innovations and traditions of the theological institutions. Either approach to the incorporation proved to have its advantages and drawbacks. Recently, both approaches efficiently apply on the national scale.

Keywords: education, religious education, innovations in education, prospects of education, orthodox education

Introduction

At the turn of 21st century, renovation of religious education institutions has become a key priority for Russian Orthodox Church. While secular education was aligning with Bologna standard since 2003, Russian Orthodox Church launched a project of renovation of the traditional religious education. Reformation of religious education institutions has been a key topic during annual international Christmas readings since then.

Social influence of the modern religious education institutions, their functioning and their perspective heavily depend on the history of Russian Orthodox Church in 20th century (Bignova M.R. 2004). Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union led to the implementation of the new social and government principles, Russian people experienced spiritual

revitalization as well. Russian Orthodox Church received extended rights and opportunities to expand its influence in a positive way, particularly, in the education institutions.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

The aim of the study is to identify innovations in the social Institute of professional religious education in modern Russian society.

Achieving this goal is carried out through the formulation and solution of the following research tasks: 1. to summarize and analyze theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of secular and religious education. 2. to identify the distinctive features of professional religious education. 3. to analyze the Russian legislative framework governing the interaction of secular and religious educational institutions. 4. to reveal the specifics of the social Institute of religious education in modern Russian society in historical retrospect. 5. to substantiate possible ways and strategies of interaction between educational institutions of the Church and the state in modern Russia. 6. to identify the main innovations in the social Institute of professional religious education and their relationship with the traditions of higher spiritual school in Russian society.

Methodology

The methodological basis is the institutional approach (K. Manheim, F. R. Filippov), which allowed us to analyze the features of institutions of secular and religious education and identify possible strategies for their cooperation. The structural and functional approach (E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, D. Dewey) was used by the author to reveal the structure and functions of the social Institute of religious education. We used the methods developed and applied sociology in the study of social institutions: a comparative analysis, statistical analysis, method of interview, analysis of written sources: historical, legal documents, biographical method (F. Znaniecki, W. Thomas).

Results / Findings

Throughout two decades following the breakdown of the USSR, Russian Orthodox Church founded a number of religious education institutions. Holy Synod's Education Task Force announced a roadmap for reformation of the religious education in Russia. In 1991, newly organized Department of the Religious Education & Catechism set on a mission of the religious education for the masses. "In the early 90s, religious education in Russia changed dramatically. The whole country was running through the turning point in its history. Gradually, Russian Orthodox Church started getting more freedom. Cooperation of the Church with Federal Government significantly reformatted as well. The Church gained an opportunity to restore religious education previously ruined in the Soviet era, to re-launch

education process in the seminaries and religious schools. The Church allocated its most experienced human resources for the restoration of the religious education” (Education Task Force of Russian Orthodox Church) (Kostikova, M.N., 1999). As result, Federal Ministry of education officially included theology in the list of education programs at the national scale in 1993. Additionally, in 1996, theology as a Federal education program was assigned its quality standards. The process continued with foundation of several religious education institutions, all of them aligned with regulation of the Federal Ministry of education, extended with regulations set by Russian Orthodox Church. The list of the new institutions included schools, gymnasiums, and institutes. One of the bright examples is Saint Tikhon’s Orthodox University, initially founded as Institute of Theology in 1992 (Fedotov, A.A., 2009). Recently, the problem showed significant progress to its final resolution. Thus, Moscow Theological Academy and Saint Petersburg Theological Academy both were accredited by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2016 (Kolodin, A.V., 2007).

Religious education was subject of several researches in 1990s as well as the beginning of 21st century. PhD theses by M.R. Bignova, A.Yu. Lavrentieva, A.G. Nesterova, A.V. (Bignova M.R. 2004, Lavrentyeva A.Y. 2007, Nesterova A.G. 2007).

Kolodin analyze approaches for cooperation between secular and religious education including their program and operating features (Kolodin A.V., 2007). In 1990s, Saint Petersburg Theology Academy magazine issues a series of articles by its professors, where they analyzed religious education institutions during Soviet era, including obstacles they experienced.

Modern sociology is still missing precise and comprehensive definition of the term “religious education”. Thus, the terms “religious education”, “spiritual education”, “Orthodox education” are commonly interchanged. In the context of Russian legislation, “spiritual education in Russian Orthodox Church” defined in the law “On freedom of conscience and religious institutions” dated 1997 as “institutions for professional religious education”. Their legal form is religious organization. This includes theology academy, seminary, college, pastoral courses.

At the moment, Russian Orthodox Church runs two entities responsible for the management of religious education and catechism, namely

- Education Task Force.
- Department of Religious Education and Catechism.

The former is responsible for education of the cadres for Church itself. The latter focused on several wider social circles such as parish Sunday schools, catechism courses. Russian Orthodox Church applies two different

approaches for the incorporation of religious education into the general framework of national education.

First approach is launching new education institutions in accordance with Federal standards additionally restricted by the requirements of the Church. Throughout the last decades, this approach resulted in the foundation of Orthodox Humanitarian University of Saint Tikhon, post-graduate courses of Russian Orthodox Church, doctorate of Russian Orthodox Church, faculty of theology in several universities, as well as Orthodox schools.

The educational environment integrity in the Russian Federation in this case is ensured by the state accreditation of educational institutions, established by Church organizations, which becomes possible only when the teaching process is conducted in compliance with the state educational standards. It should be noted that Orthodox institutes, gymnasiums and schools are liable to include training courses, disciplines and subjects, providing Orthodox education into the pedagogical process.

The second integration strategy of religious education into the state educational environment is the accreditation of religious educational institutions. Historically, after the revolution in October 1917, the Church and the state were separated, thus the system of religious education was recognized as private (Sorokin V. 1992). The graduates of the theological educational institutions - Academies and Seminaries - received diplomas valid and recognized only within the internal Church environment. The licensing and accreditation of the universities was identified in the 90-ies of XX century. Theological organizations could obtain a license, which gave them the right for educational activities, though it did not allow preparing for the accreditation. As a result, the diplomas of the Theological Academy graduates on higher professional religious education were valid only within the framework of the ROC, but the state certification system did not acknowledge them. This process has achieved significant results in recent years. Thus, in late 2016, the Moscow Theological Academy received accreditation certificate, while its development took more than five years: "The state education system has strict rules for the documents registration - curricula, orders, regulations etc. We had our own internal rules, so we had to learn new ways of processing all these numerous documents in accordance with the state standards," – Metropolitan of Tallinn and all Estonia Eugene (Reshetnikov), rector of the Moscow Theological Academy (1998 - 2018) says. Besides in 2016, the state accreditation decree of the educational activities of St. Petersburg Theological Academy of Russian Orthodox Church was signed.

Thus, every integration strategy of religious education into a modern state education system has its own strengths and has been successfully implemented lately.

To analyze the fundamental traditions of the social Institute of professional religious education, it is necessary to recall the clergy memories about studying at higher theological institutions of those times.

However, exactly the 90-ies became the period of great spiritual growth, when the Church received new rights, the canonization of new martyrs and Confessors began. The students of Moscow Theological Schools witnessed and participated in these events. His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II used to say that the main component of theological education is spirituality itself, that is, not the ability to talk about Christ, about the Church, but to live in Christ and in Church. This skill is acquired by personal experience and achievement of the theological school student who is learning to refer to the study as to the obedience, and to the obedience - as to the study thus coaching the skill of cutting off his self-will and helping to acquire humility. One of the key problems that religious education faced at the turn of 21st century is the following. Is modern religious education effectively implementing adequate and comprehensive perception of the Church and of the society in an individual? “New times call for higher standard bar for the men in holy orders, in a similar way as a military threat raises standard bar for the soldiers” (Evgeniy, Archbishop of Vereya, 2017).

This is exactly the message that the Primate of Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill communicates on the national scale: “We are spiritual soldiers on a mission of the guard of our spiritual borders. As such, let us remember that our weapons are our thought, our word, and our religious feeling. No lukewarm person is a capable spiritual soldier. In our times, uneducated individual is unable to influence people. Similarly, an individual never experienced religious feeling is unable to translate the religious feeling to the others” (Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, 2009)

Religious education in Russia has always been on a mission to develop spiritual potential in the people, as well as to maintain fundamental values among clergymen (Amvrosiy, bishop of Gatchina. 2010). Increasing interest for the religious education, particularly the one driven by Russian Orthodox Church, is due to the importance of spiritual values, the latter being a foundation for the steady progress of the national society in Russia.

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