

Resource potential of the community of faculty members in the modernization of the russian higher education

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Abstract

In work the theoretical bases and dynamics of processes of modernization of the Russian higher education are studied, conditions and specifics of its last cycle reveal (the end of XX – the beginning of the 21st centuries). The attention to global character, interaction with the international educational space is paid. The professional community of teachers (scientific and pedagogical workers) of the higher education (HE) acts as an object. Research objective – identification of a state, opportunities and conditions of realization of resource potential of teachers of higher education institutions for ensuring modernization of higher education. Studying of problems of resource ensuring modernization was carried out from positions of system, constructivist, resource, activity and structurally functional approaches. The empirical base was made by materials of the all-Russian sociological researches: questionnaire, expert interviews. The new scientific idea that the speed of modernization changes of system of the higher education depends on a state and conditions of updating of resource potential of community of teachers of higher education institutions is developed; their resource potential develops unevenly and depends on inclusiveness degree in an educational vertical and the status of higher education institution. Concepts of resources and resource potential of modernization of education are entered, their substantial characteristics are opened. Recommendations about optimization of this process are submitted.

Keywords: *higher education, modernization, resource potential, community of faculty members, social changes, knowledge society.*

1. Introduction

The change of the social development model of the late XX-early XXI, related to the formation of the knowledge society, the society of the global communication and innovations, has had a significant influence on the educational systems during the last twenty years. The concepts of the social modernization are still relevant for the modern researchers. Studying the role of the educational system in the modernization of national societies is important, because these are the educational systems that, in our point of view, define the characteristics of the global social structure. At the same time, the knowledge and information society, converting knowledge into the main capital and the principal resource, imposes new requirements towards professional education, and, thereby, determines the changes in the latter.

In this context, for the Russian society it is very important to monitor and adjust the changes in the system of higher professional education, as it predetermines future development of the country, the condition of the society and its professional resources. Finally, higher education serves as one of the main indicators of personal success. It is a basic premise for entering upper social layers, one of the forms of capital, guaranteeing a person's well-being through socially beneficial activities.

The relevance of the problem of modernization of higher professional education and the role of the basic community – the professional community of faculty members in this process - is contingent on a number of contradictions related to both the process of development of the institution of higher education by itself, and the processes linked with its reformation. The central contradiction is the desynchronization of the increased social demand for quality education and the possibility to guarantee in full the increase in the quality of educational services offered by universities on the part of the state due to the scarcity and the irrational use of the existing resources. One of such resources is the professional community of faculty members, studied by us. It is necessary to point out the inconsistent character of the processes taking place in the system of higher education, different start conditions, significant territorial and resource differences that lead to the educational inequality.

Implementation of the unified requirements towards modernization, set legislatively [*On Education, 2012 etc.*], in the given context led to ambivalent results both in terms of the quality of training, and the development of educational communities.

At the first stages, our studies were carried out under the supervision of Professor G. Korableva and were aimed at defining the condition, possibilities and requirements to the implementation of the resource potential of the university faculty members in order to ensure the modernization of higher professional education, and the search of mechanisms

for the optimization of its negative consequences and the development of the basic professional community – the university faculty members.

2. Methodology

The theoretical background of this work is formed by a significant number of works by the leading Russian and foreign sociologists (all in all we have analyzed more than 300 articles and monographs, collections of materials of the congresses and conferences including [Huntington S. (2004), Wissema J.G. (2009), Yadov V.A. (2009), He Chuanqi (2011), Sheregi F.E. & Savinkov V.I. (2011), Zborovsky G.E. [etc.] (2016), OECD (2017), HEAd'17 ect.)), that formulate the concepts of the modernization of society, the knowledge society, the development of the institution of education, the transformation of capitals, the resources provision of the social processes, the social changes and the social and professional communities. The problems of the resources provision of the modernization of higher professional education and the resource potential of the communities of faculty members were studied from the perspective of the systemic, constructionist, resource, pragmatist and structural-functional approaches.

The empirical basis of the study includes the materials of qualitative and quantitative sociological studies carried out by the author: “University faculty member in the context of the modernization of higher professional education” (2012-2013, questionnaire survey, N=1115, faculty members of 51 universities in 32 Russian cities, quota sample by reference to the status of the university); “Professional community of faculty members in the modernization of higher professional education” (2010, 2014, 2017, 12 expert interviews). The list of experts included the representatives of regional public authorities, management of universities, deans, heads of departments and faculty members from Moscow, Ekaterinburg, Perm, Irkutsk, Arkhangelsk and Saint Petersburg. Regional complex sociological survey of the students of the Sverdlovsk region (2016), two-stage quota and cluster representatives sampling, the basis for quota allocation - the number of students and the location of the university; area of study.

3. Results of the study

The study is based on the understanding of the Russian version of the modernization of higher professional education as a multiple-vector and a continuous process of progressive transformational changes of the educational system in close unity and interaction of structural, institutional and conceptual directions, aimed at increasing the quality and competitiveness of its sub-systems. One of such sub-systems is the professional community

of faculty members, which plays a special role in the process of modernization, as it stands in as a resource potential.

It consists in the maintenance of the unity of its structural (by means of simultaneous pursuit of educational activities in various elements of the changing system of higher education), institutional (through the formation and dissemination of the system of values, regulations and rules allowing to ensure the optimum interaction of subjects and communities within the sphere of education and with other social institutions) and conceptual (by means of creation and dissemination of knowledge) directions, and thus – in the preservation and harmonious development of the common educational space.

The study process only employs this potential, and it is not directly aimed at developing it. Such development would rather present a “side effect” of the professional activity. Modernization, on the contrary, is aimed at increasing the potential of the community to the level, allowing to ensure competitiveness in the knowledge society both on the level of the system of education, and on the level of the society as a whole. That is why to comprehend the successfulness of the modernization processes we studied the changes taking place in the capital and in the resources of the faculty members community.

The model of resource potential of modernization of higher education is based on the theories of Bourdieu, related to the forms of capital [Bourdieu P. (2012)], J. Coleman, related to the social capital, A. Giddens, related to the properties of social systems and others. In the Russian sociology, they gained traction in the works of T.I. Zaslavskaya (2004), G.E. Zborovsky (2009), N.E. Tikhonova (2006) and others. In the model we make a distinction between the notion of capital, understood, following Bourdieu, as relations towards resources included in the social relations of different spheres of the social life, and the notion of resource. We consider the resource for the modernization as a measure of the possibility of actualization of various forms of capital of the professional community of faculty members, that can be used by the subjects of modernization (the state, governing bodies in the sector of higher education, faculty members and students) in the course of this process. Resources can be classified under two groups a) actual (active) – those used directly in the process of modernization that can be capitalized b) potential (passive) - those that can be attracted, but have not yet been employed. As a result of the actualization of the capitals, being at disposal of the social group, the resources can be spent (reduced), like it happens to material resources in economics or social resources – in case of exceeding the scope of the set rules and regulations, stay level, or increase, forming new resources and developing a base for the respective forms of capital. Basic resources of the faculty members’ community, securing the success of the modernization of higher education, are the political, economic, cultural and social resources.

The theoretical methodological and empirical analysis of the modernization processes and the changes taking place in the resource potential of the faculty members' community held by us allowed formulating a number of theoretical conclusions.

Modernization of the Russian society and its sub-systems, including higher education, has been traditionally related to the deep and fundamental cycles, significant in terms of time and space.

The main contradiction of its present-day stage is related to the orientation at the application part of this process, the aim to obtain quick results due to the technification under the conditions of "accelerating the time", the lack of availability of the resource of time, and the remarkable social persistence of education as a system and an institution. The character of the changes that take place speaks for their fundamental nature, though there are no grounds for predicting equally significant results and the completion of the process in the short-term perspective. It might be possible in 25-30 years after the start of the cycle, providing that it receives a sustainable resources' provision. Today we observe some positive changes determined by this process, yet taking place against the background of a substantial reduction of the number of universities and faculty members in the country (from 381.1 thousand in 2007 to 260.4 thousand in 2016). Staff members of private universities became mostly affected by this trend (from 37.7 thousand to 17.7 thousand during the same period). The wave of general universitization and massification of higher education was followed by the strategy for enhancing the quality of higher education by means of shutting down inefficient universities.

The principal result of the modernization should be the increased capacity of the cumulative human potential of academic communities – in the first turn, the community of faculty members. Empirical studies have shown that the dynamics of the development of its resource potential during the period under study changed the trajectory from a negative to a positive one; the appearance of new professional groups and the gradual youthification of the community serve as evidence of this fact. Russian faculty members are actively involved in the process of transition to the knowledge society through generating and transferring the scientific and academic knowledge, which has had a positive impact on the development of their resources.

In relation to the political resource, it appears in the form of new opportunities for the participation in the state administration using the elements of the civil society, electronic democracy and independent network communities.

In relation to the actual economic resource, the main evidence of the positive dynamics is not so much the general increase in the income of faculty members, as the significant extension of the range of professional activities bringing this income. Development of the

strategic component of this type of resource manifested itself in the quality of training and increased graduate employability in a number of sectors.

Information society has influenced cultural resources, forming the basis of the professional expertise of the community; it resulted in the increase in the level of importance of applied knowledge, the increased proficiency in information and communication in education and science, including the language proficiency. There appeared new forms of recognition of scientific results, the process of faculty members' involvement in international research activities became more active.

Social resources of the community, that can be deemed as the most damaged because of the social transformations of the end of the last century, are characterized by the poorest positive dynamics of all. The evidence of their development are the slow strengthening of the status of the profession, the extension of the social roles of faculty members both within the university and beyond it, the increase in the number of faculty members involved in professional communities. Thus, we can see the phenomenon of status disparity in the resource potential of the community.

The studies conducted by us have identified a number of new problems that need to be studied further in relation to the resources' provision of the modernization of higher professional education and its basic community. Among them we can name: the problems of developing corporate culture of the higher education in general; the civil culture of faculty members; the factors influencing the social well-being of the community and the behavioral strategy of faculty members; the problems related to studying other communities in the frames of the educational environment – prospective students, administrative staff, employers – and their relations with the community of faculty members; the problems of particular institutions of higher education, e.g. postgraduate and doctoral schools and some others.

Drawing on the results obtained, we have to regard the condition of the community's resources as insufficient for the completion of the current stage of the modernization of the higher education system, and the society as a whole. This fact can be proved by the inconsistent development of the community in terms of the aspects of time, location and sector - in accordance with the existing "vertical of education" and the implemented projects for the modernization of economics. Different paces of development of resources create conditions for one more educational inequality that is based on the resource potential - the inequality between different groups existing within the community of faculty members.

The policy for increasing the quality of higher education by means of the mechanical reduction of the number of inefficient universities, branches and representations, and, as a result, the number of faculty members, has contributed to the development of the

community's resources. Still, in the short run, if this policy extends, it may lead to a perverse effect; the regional social structure will degrade due to the increased migration of young people to the major academic centers. Therefore, further modernization of higher professional education should be carried out "horizontally", by means of strengthening its influence in the regions and maintaining the optimum numbers of faculty members. The leading role in this process should be played by the state, and the principal method should involve the increase of the share of expenditures on education in the budget of the country, so that it reaches the level characterizing the leading countries.

The problems of increasing the occupational prestige in the society and increasing the public confidence in the education authorities are still in the spotlight. They are based on the low level of development of economic resources in the community; it aggravates controversy between the communities and groups involved in the process of education, and presents the faculty members with a choice between their profession and the acceptable level of material prosperity. The lack of availability of economic resources retards the development of other types thereof.

Thus, the successful completion of the current cycle of modernization requires that the exerted efforts should be focused more on the community of faculty members, than on the administrative and management community as it used to be. It means the necessity to develop further the measures aimed at stimulating teaching activities, releasing more time for faculty members, reducing the intensification of labor, bringing them in compliance with European standards, creating conditions for self-development and personal fulfilment.

Computerization and technification of research and teaching activities are of crucial importance for the success of modernization. The community of faculty members should have access to the most up-to-date instruments, devices and communication facilities for their professional activities and professional development. The strategy of the state support for the leading universities implemented in this regard produces tangible results, and seems reasonable. As far as such academic centers develop, it is necessary to amend the list of the leading universities in accordance with the demands of the regions. At the same time, the development of the private-public partnership in the sphere of higher education will allow avoiding the dilution of the resource potential of the faculty members' community.

Significant efforts should be focused on the development of international collaboration in the fields of professional education and science. It is necessary to expand all forms of academic mobility, including those based on electronic communication means, making them available for the maximum number of faculty members.

Finally, it is necessary to expand the capacity of the faculty members' community to influence the social processes. This includes the development of the corporate culture of faculty members, the active employment of the expert potential of faculty members in the

generation of the strategy of the development of the country and particular sectors, strengthening the self-government through professional organizations, associations and unions, the development of network collaboration between faculty members.

It appears that solving the above-stated problems is a necessary condition for ensuring growth and mainstreaming the resource potential of the community of university faculty members. Thus, it will be possible to create conditions for the successful completion of the current stage of modernization of higher professional education and the transition to the information and knowledge model of development of the Russian society.

Further correction of the main directions of modernization of the Russian higher education is connected with understanding of heterogeneity of her educational space. Concepts of multivector modernization, nonlinear model of transformation of the higher education, assessment by the main educational communities of the preferred orientation of the universities – theoretical and applied in the scientific plan, with prevalence of master programs or programs of bachelors in the curriculum can be the basis.

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