

Ukrainian educational reform: A bridge between past and future

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The article concerns the main features of the Ukrainian reform in high school as the most actual problem in Ukrainian educational system and science. The paper observes basic features of the Soviet educational system, its positive and negative trends. It provides insight to the post-soviet directions of the modernization in Ukrainian high school. The author uses problem and chronological methods in his research. Special attention is given to the internationalization of the Ukrainian educational system, perspectives and obstacles in this way.

Keywords: High school, educational process, Bologna process, Ukraine, educational reform

Introduction

Modern High School in Ukraine has a difficult period of protracted reforms that society and the high school teachers consider in two different attitudes - the revival or the agony of higher education. Understanding of the current processes and prospects of Ukrainian higher education defines the initial object of reform. The problem has vital importance for the Ukrainian society because of the only alternative - to keep and save the effective high school education or to meet serious problems in top educating system.

Soviet educational system

Soviet higher education in its traditional form was created in the early 1930s. After the revolution of 1917 the educational system of the former Russian Empire was subjected to a range of ultra-radical experiments, much like modern Bologna reform. The term of study in higher education had been reduced from 5-6 to 3 - 3.5 years and set graduate students to the level of pre-revolutionary graduate that reminds bachelor and master's degrees. Special courses were organized for those who planned to do academic work after high school graduation.

In the mid 70s of XX century the system acquired a final format. There were established three levels in the educational system: secondary school (10 years), secondary special school (2-3 years) and high school (4-6 years depending on specialty) (Klepko, 2006).

Fundamental differences of the Soviet high school from the Western were:

1. The higher education system in the USSR was the target of a plan of training, which determined the number of schools, number of students, a set of specialties and even a curriculum for each specialty. Of course, the system had only public universities and financed by the state budget, private initiative was excluded. The graduating specialists, in principle, did not remain out of work, although most of them were often not able to assume their job duties

immediately after graduation. Official state distribution provided young professionals with necessary initial experience in enterprises having relevance to the obtained specialties.

2. The higher education system was tailored to achieve a fully developed specialist. The formal reasons for this treatment were declared as a sign of increased social responsibility of the Soviet regime. The more developed people - the more active their position in life, the more likely they would be in demand in many areas of society. High school and secondary education divided the spheres of influence. High education was very prestigious in Ukraine and it was a severe selection of students. Usually they had a serious competition in the entering the high school.
3. The Soviet system of education had been preparing professionals. The level of education at the time was relevant to the needs of society and the educational system really was at the forefront of science. The purpose of higher education in the USSR was the training of qualified personnel. Learning to learn - this is one of the characteristics of well-trained specialists.

Consequently, the high school was focused on a single task - training generalists, with a high level of basic and fundamental training. In addition, the specialist received research skills. The education system was in full compliance with the needs of the totalitarian state: a guide of state ideology, providing a sufficient level of training, effectively controlled by party and state bodies; easy to plan and forecast training (Ibid., p.65).

Let us determine the positive and negative aspects of the system, which served as the starting point of education reform. The characteristic features of the system: free tuition; mandatory programs; a clear education plan; prescribed period of study; mandatory distribution.

Pros: easy access to higher education, the system was aimed at professional, high level of general training, free education, a clear educational plan, guaranteed employment, students learned the skills of scientific work, there was a correspondence of school and university courses.

Cons: The system was not aimed at growing up personality; prohibition for the student in the choice of courses, length of training, specialty and high school; the complexity to enter high schools - no more than 10% of school leavers became students; lack of competition between universities; high school was focused mainly on the technical staff.

Post-soviet reforming process

The systemic crisis of Soviet society, associated with the restructuring and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, led to the beginning of the reform in high education.

Initial stage of reforms was the result of the social situation. Connecting to the start of market reforms, the emergence of private ownership and entrepreneurship, our society had high demand for specialists with higher education. Private business professionals demanded new specialists - economists and lawyers. With the rapid proliferation of small and medium-sized businesses the level of training was not the main criterion for employment. Main goal of the educational process for a short period became just a diploma in economic or/and law education. Ukrainian high schools faced in the market with the significant deficit in production of business professionals. As a result, there was a rise in the number of universities and the appropriate specialties opened in the existing public universities. There was established a system of private high schools, where training was done on a fee

basis and high education became a good business. Rapid changes in educational system led to the fact that Ministry of Education lost ways of control in the educational process. Haste to create new specialties and universities, lack of highly qualified teachers, the lack of a clear and unified system of criteria for the quality of education, simplified registration procedure universities led to a reduction of the overall quality of training (Nikolaenko, 2007).

Ministry of education entered the system of licensing and accreditation for high schools. There were established the levels of education: primary education; secondary and special secondary education; and high school (Yevtuch, 2003). There were appointed new grades for specialists: younger specialist, bachelor, and specialist or magister degree. High schools received new forms - classical universities, academies and high institutes.

Nowadays, higher education in Ukraine has about 800 high schools, which cover about 80% of secondary school graduates. As the number of high school students is reduced, being affected by the demographic crisis of 90s, the Universities are in fierce competition to each other for the entrants. In this struggle main task is to save schools or specialties.

The reform of Soviet higher education has undergone substantial changes: the state planned management of the higher education system was replaced by the market of educational services, free education has to be paid, one-level education has become a multi-level (Bachelor, Specialist and Master), and curricula are flexible and have variable components - the discipline of choice students.

In society there is a need of standardization of education. The large number of high schools with weak administrative control over their educational process inevitably led to a decrease in the level of training. Strategic objective of the reform of higher education in Ukraine is transforming quantitative to qualitative educational services. This process should be based on the principles of a flexible education system that can dynamically respond to changing requirements of the labor market and the needs of society.

International trends in the Ukrainian high school

As a mechanism for internal reform the modern Ukrainian high school sees the internationalization of higher education.

Since 2005, Ukraine has taken steps to implement key provisions of the Bologna Declaration.

Since 2006 all high schools entered the credit transfer system, students are given diplomas European model.

Today Ukraine legally approved a system of standards for each level of educational qualification and training profiles. Standards developed for 80% of the directions (qualifications), contain all the requirements for the competence and qualification characteristics and the system of education quality (The official Bologna Process website July 2007 - June 2010). In 2001, the Ministry of Education developed the Diploma Supplement European model, which was planned to give at the request of the student. But because of the Bologna process have declared issuance of such an application is free to all students who graduate from university after 2005, it is now necessary to solve the main problem - the financial security costs for this purpose. System of continuing higher education in Ukraine does not exist. As in most post-Soviet states, science (especially the fundamental) is traditionally the prerogative of the National Academies of Science. The same can be said for the preparation of highly qualified researchers - candidates and doctors of science. The world, as we know, the most effective recognized continuous system train doctors

in the universities, and not through the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC). Transition to such a system requires also the Bologna Process, which provides software inseparable connection of two stages - the Bachelor (3 years) and Master (2 years). Here, the first step should be to provide full access to the second stage, which in turn gives the right to continue his post-graduate education and obtain the degree of Doctor of Science (PhD), the equivalent of which in Ukraine is a candidate of science.

Thus, we can already see the transition of Ukraine to the European scheme and criteria. Our system of academic degrees is firmly entrenched; it rather inhibits the development of science. Postgraduate students preparation system (with three to five years writing his thesis, then ten years of his doctoral thesis) does not respond to the rapid technology development in the world, is losing its relevance, and does not give an incentive to the development of science in the country. Undergraduate and Master degrees in Ukraine - academic concepts, provide only a step toward further research careers.

The Bologna process is to implement a three-year training program at the Bachelor's stage, which further complicates the task of acquiring a high level of fundamental and specialized education and sufficient qualification for competence. We can assume therefore that most countries will choose a four-year bachelor's program of study, as it did in the UK and Russia. Must be changed also the traditional grading system. Now student's grades are four kinds, from "unsatisfactory" to "excellent". Although formally adopted a five-point system, in fact, there are three positive reviews. In the future, a better system of knowledge assessment may include: "unsatisfactory", "bad", "mediocre", "good", "excellent" and "very good."

We do not forget about the parallel reform of secondary school. First foreign language our students study at school. If necessary, the student chooses another language to study at university, if it is needed for specialization studies. We also need to work to ensure that people come to university from school with two foreign languages, or high school curriculum will be overloaded, and the education of students is limited to domestic sources of information, and then the mobility of students in the European space is inaccessible.

To fully integrate the Bologna process is not enough formal implementation of its principles. One of the main objectives is to provide a transparent and strict monitoring of the quality of education, especially for licensing and accreditation. In Ukraine, such schemes are introduced long ago, but they are not perfect, constantly revised and supplemented. The Bologna process will be a powerful incentive for the revision of the principles and methodology of monitoring the quality of education to international standards, will allow involving foreign experts, and having a positive impact on the quality of student training.

And, of course, the most important question - employment of graduates. Creation of a European Higher Education Area will contribute to the high mobility and the competitiveness of the knowledge and skills of Ukrainian citizens. In terms of socio-economic status, in which Ukraine is now (unemployment, lack of jobs, low wages, lack of social protection), it may be a stalemate: increased migration from Ukraine to Europe in search of decent work, the leakage of intellectual property out of the country. Therefore, the solution of educational problems in Ukraine, according to the Bologna agreements, requires intensive development of production, the creation of a significant number of new jobs for young people, according to Ukrainian legislation, the right of the first job, which is still just a slogan.

Strategy of Ukraine is internationalization of the education system, inclusion of higher education in Ukraine in the international scientific and educational space. It

is assumed that Ukraine will become a full partner in the education and science to the EU. But now Ukrainian high school has faced a number of problems:

1. Sharp disparity curriculum credit-modular system between Ukrainian and European institutions (Kolisnyk and Zybulyak, 2009)
2. Student mobility has been made available thanks to the numerous funds and scholarships, but still one-sided - mainly in the direction of Western Europe but not backwards.
3. Ukrainian universities are actively involved in international projects, but Ukraine feels great shortage in the domestic financing of such projects
4. There is a problem of perception of the Bologna system students: in accordance with the Bologna system time on classroom work reduced to the limit - no more than 30% of the total number of hours to study the subject. It is assumed that the rest of the students will learn the subject themselves. But the lack of incentive for effective studying makes students the passive participants in the learning process and time for self-study student perceives as free time (Zuravska, 1999).

Prospects of development of the Ukrainian educational system

High school is experiencing a systemic crisis, and only the wisdom of school management and understanding the importance of higher education to the community would help to overcome the crisis.

High School has a lot of special problems:

1. *Mismatch of degrees, student skill levels.* To overcome this problem, there was created a specialist Qualifications Framework, developed by specialists of the Ministry.
2. *Differences in the understanding of credit-modular system.* Ukraine sees only the external elements of the system. Differences remain between the number of objects in our own and European universities.
3. *Degradation of science in provincial schools.* The state does not fund research and development, private business usually invests in recognized brands - top rank universities. There is the gap between science and higher education. Challenging tasks are development of innovative technologies, balancing the level of funding in depressed areas, maintenance of libraries in the province, extending access to scientific information.
4. *The problem of graduate employment - even a diploma with honors, does not guarantee effective employment.* Many graduates are not working in the obtained speciality.
5. *The attitude of the workers in higher education to higher education reform.* In this environment, dominated by the view that the Soviet higher education has been quite effective, there is no need to change it, and all the reforms lead to opposite results. The system is out of balance already and requires a targeted and planned action. Possible solutions to the problem: in a demographic hole to remove the requirement on the number of students per teacher, consider the preservation of individual disciplines in the absence of students and refocus teachers to other activities. The state should reconsider the system of financing in higher education. The main issue - society itself should decide the value and importance of higher education. Educational services in the free market are expensive - 10-15 euros per hour of private lessons. Real wages of the university employees is 11-12 euros per day. Low reward does not encourage competition between workers of high school.
6. *The link between science, higher education and industry.* High School completed its mission to the community - to prepare lawyers and economists of different skill levels. So far, out of inertia, these specialties are still in demand and are traditionally preserved some semblance of competition. Society now needs

qualified professionals in other fields: engineering, environment, information technology, psychology, and others. Gradually changing the number of students for more prestigious technical professions, computer science, sociology and psychology. The absence of excessive demand allows high school to use a deliberate approach to the new challenges of society and to develop the technology to improve the quality of education. The demand for professionals in production depends on adequate training of production tasks: we need "tuning" the production requirements and opportunities of higher education. University science should be demanded by industry.

Conclusion

In the conclusion it is important to point out some results of the research.

1. The Soviet high school wasn't the worst system of high education. It had some positive and negative features. It corresponded the needs and demands of the Soviet society and economical system.
2. The existed high school was not adequate for social, political and economic changes in the post-communist period. The modernization was inevitable but wasn't planned or organized. That's why changes produced many serious problems for modern high school that were not solved appropriately.
3. Social reforms and European orientation in modern Ukrainian development requires the internationalization of Ukrainian educational system.
The Ukrainian high school should be recognizable in the European market of education so we must gain a success in changing our place in international ratings of the high schools. The task is complex but is quite solvable concerning the real level of training of our scientists and high school teachers.

Education in Ukraine can and should become a cost-effective, highly efficient and competitive. This is not formal whim of our European colleagues, but the demands of time and the real needs of our society.

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