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The Development of Higher Education in Russia: an Assessment Methodology

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Abstract

The paper presents a methodology for assessing the status of the higher education (HE) system, together with the results of its application. A monitoring system for HE in Russia is proposed using the indicative figures grouped in two units (the Conditions of Operation and Status of Infrastructure and state Educational and Research Activities of the HE System at the level of the Russian Federal Subject).

The analysis conducted over a time period of 12 years has shown that, unfortunately, a direct correlation between the growth of investments and an increase in quality is not observed. It is clear that the leaders in terms of financing and the leaders in terms of improving the quality of education are two different things. This demonstrates the need to reform regulation of HE, particularly with regard to prioritising its development and improving the financial and economic mechanisms required to achieve this.

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Keywords: system of Higher Education; indicative analysis; UFD; operating conditions and the status of the infrastructure of HE; status educational and research activities in HE

1. Introduction

Abbreviations

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| HE | Higher Education |
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| | |
|-------|-----------------------------------|
| NE | Normalised Estimates |
| UFD | Urals Federal District |
| RF | Russian Federation |
| KhMAD | Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Districts |
| YaNAD | Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Districts |

The intensification of globalisation processes and the formation of an international labour market are having a significant impact on the patterns of development of national systems of vocational education. The result of this influence in Russia has been a wide-ranging reform of the entire education system, the final stage of which was the adoption of the new Federal Law “On Education in the RF” (№ 273-FZ of December 29, 2012). Entering into force on 1 September 2013, the law significantly changed the structure of HE in Russia, securing the legislative implementation of the basic principles of the Bologna Declaration.

In terms of the goals of Russia's accession in 2003 to the Bologna process and the consequent adoption of this law, can be mentioned, firstly, support for the formation of and adherence to a common European educational space, and secondly, the creation of the necessary conditions to change the country's role in the international division of labour and the emergence of possibilities for integration into the global labour market. The task of creating a single European educational system that is competitive in relation to other global education systems (American and Asian) is forcing changes in approaches to the functioning of the national system of vocational education, directing it towards the creation of a unified, tiered, transparent system of training of qualified specialists.

At present, economists are facing acute questions concerning the economic feasibility of the structure of the educational process, in terms of supply and demand of the labour market and educational services and an optimisation of the activities of HE institutions in terms of attracting school leavers towards careers prioritised by the requirements of economic development. Ongoing problems remain: an imbalance in the structure of the producing specialisms by education level (higher-middle-vocational) and a poor orientation of educational institutions towards the actual needs of the national economy, leading to a decrease in the effectiveness of the vocational education system. Every year, the proportion of HE graduates grows at the same time as the proportion of mid-career professionals declines: in 1990, the number of graduates from secondary and primary vocational education was 4.8 times greater than HE graduates, whereas in 2013 those graduating with HE degrees were 1.5 times more numerous than secondary and primary vocational education graduates.

Likewise, one of the problems facing Russian professional education consists in a contradiction between individual preferences and the needs of the real economy in terms of the choice of educational paths. By 2012, the number of HE graduates majoring in social sciences and humanities accounted for 73% of the total output, with 33% having opted for Economics and Management (Regions of Russia, 2004; Regions of Russia, 2008; Regions of Russia, 2010; Regions of Russia, 2013).

Currently, there are quite a number of different Russian and international rankings providing a diverse assessment of HE institutions. Analysis of the status of HE in foreign and Russian practice consists of directly assigned ratings, typically carried out by the universities themselves. Among foreign ratings services, the following are notable: the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU rating, or Shanghai Ranking, Shanghai Jiao Tong University); Times Higher Education (THE, a British journal specialising in HE); QS University Rankings by the British educational consulting company Quacquarelli Symonds. The following are prominent among Russian ratings services: National Ranking of Universities (IA Interfax), (National Ranking of Universities, 2012); the “Expert RA” rating agency university ranking (Expert RA, 2013); the ranking of universities compiled by the Ministry of Education and Science of the RF (Russian Ministry of Education) in the monitoring of the effectiveness of educational institutions of HE, (The Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, 2014), (Koksharov, Sandler, Kadochnikov, Tolmachev, 2012). In the international rankings, the positions of education establishments are weighted as follows: ARWU – quality of research (40%) and quality of teaching staff (40%), (Florian, 2007), (ARWU, 2013); THE – quality of teaching (30%), quality of research (30%) and scientific impact of universities

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