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The Bologna Process: Exacerbation of Social Competences among Civil Engineering Students

Evgeny Shnyrenkov*, Igor Pryadko

Moscow State University of Civil Engineering, 26 Yaroslavskoye shosse, 129337, Moscow, Russia

Abstract

The Russian education reform follows the Bologna process pattern and seeks to get construction engineering students develop social and professional competencies. The co-authors of the paper believe that the social competencies of the students of the civil engineering university must be fo-cused on their future professional activities. The social competencies, developed by the students in the course of their studies, must help them to solve the most relevant problems of the urban envi-ronment and its development.

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1. Introduction

Recent reforms in the higher education, particularly, in the civil engineering education, enjoy ex-tensive coverage in mass media, including printed media and Internet forums. However the most valuable conclusions, derived as a result of numerous discussions, are those made by the top execu-tives of construction companies, who have a clear vision of their subordinates' personal and profes-sional strengths and weaknesses. The most illustrative examples were analyzed by the participants of the round-table discussion, entitled Innovations in the Construction Industry [1]; its excerpts were published by the Expert magazine and entitled The Enemies of Construction Innovations [2],

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-903-710-25-52; fax: +7 (499) 183-44-38
E-mail address: each@yandex.ru

and in the collection of recommendations compiled as the proceedings of the round-table discussion of advanced construction technologies and construction project scheduling. Although the objectives of the Russian higher school reform are not analyzed in the recommendations, each suggestion, made by the construction practitioners, must be implemented to solve the problems of the Russian higher education [3].

2. The Principles for the Improvement of Social Competencies of Civil Engineering Students

According to the basic provisions of the Bologna process documents, the educational reform pursues the following goals and objectives:

- The implementation of a system essentially based on the two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate; access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of the first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries;
- The implementation of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system;
- The establishment of a system of credits as a proper means of promoting the most wide-spread student mobility;
- The Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement of students in respect of their access to study and training opportunities and to related services, and free movement of teachers, researchers and administrative staff in respect of recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights;
- The promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to the development of comparable criteria and methodologies;
- The introduction of the right to study the choice-based disciplines along with the obligatory ones to assure the required number of the accumulated credits;
- The promotion of the lifelong learning concept;
- Other supplementary means aimed at the compilation of the curricula motivating students to develop academic research projects [4-7].

Development of cultural and professional competencies by bachelor and master students is an essential innovation of the higher education. Cultural competencies help the future specialists to understand the social significance of their profession both within the framework of a professional organization, and in the course of their interaction with the society [8-10]. It is noteworthy that, in the market environment, any work is performed by a highly skilled specialist for the benefit of his/her employer. The market share of the employer's products or services is the corporate success criterion [11].

Any economic activity makes sense if it serves the needs of individual persons and the society as a whole. No electric energy is generated for its own benefit; no machines are designed and produced for their own benefit, and no buildings are built for their own benefit. Whenever specific industries and the national economy forget about the mission of their operation, that is, the satisfaction of versatile human needs, they lose their development benchmarks. The development pattern of the Russian national economy has proven the competitive strength of the industries and enterprises that are focused on the most profound satisfaction of professional and personal human needs. A set of social competencies to be developed by students of engineering universities can be compiled with account for the understanding of the role of human needs in the present-day economy, as a whole, and in its specific industries, in particular [12, 13].

Whenever we try to answer the question what factors influence the development of social competencies by students of a civil engineering university, we need to realize that the present-day Russian society is in the process of radical transformations driven by the global development trends, on the one hand, and by the logic of the transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society, on the other hand. Any changes in the Russian political system, coupled with the transformations of its economy and industrial production, have changed the social structure of the Russian society. Market relations, followed by the emergence of the new types of corporate activities and new social groups, have produced a substantial impact on the urban space. Market laws shape up Russian cities and towns, their housing construction policies and economic activities. Today the structure of built up urban areas serves as a sensitive indicator of socioeconomic changes. Industrial enterprises lose in the competitive struggle, move outside of

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