

# **ORIENTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS TOWARDS THE INNOVATIVE COMPONENT**

**N.V. Susha**

The formation and development of innovation economy increase requirements to the national education system and above all to the higher education system, which provides training of personnel, capable of creating and implementing innovations in all spheres and sectors of social reproduction. As innovation component in the socio-economic development of the country increases, its relations with the innovativeness of education and professionalism of all workers will intensify, and the role of knowledge in this case will rapidly grow. Growing innovative changes in science, engineering, technology, production of goods and services, social practices require from specialists not only strong qualifications, but also orientation to continuing education.

The market processes taking place in the domestic economy, over the past two decades have led to radical changes in the higher education system of the Republic of Belarus:

a) tuition fees were introduced in state higher education institutions (HEI) due to an acute shortage of state budget funds;

b) private HEIs were opened, which served as a tool to meet the increased consumer demand for higher education and as a source of additional financing of human resources of higher education;

c) the number of extramural students increased due to the paying capacity factor and, as a result, young people's desire for more rapid integration into the labor process in order to earn money, etc.

Higher education in modern conditions can not be regarded as a socially significant benefit, financed by the state budget. Over the last century the system of higher education, in pursuit of its primary objective to improve the quality of training on the basis of constantly updated technologies, has turned into the capital-intensive monster who couldn't be maintained by state budgetary money. One can try to do it, but, in any case, the guarantee for success is too small. It has long been understood in developed countries, where universities are only supported by the state in the form of benefits in taxation, as well as by allocation of funds for research, parcelling out of land for the construction of educational, laboratory buildings, dormitories, etc.

Such an approach is highly relevant to the Belarusian system of higher education.

Transition of higher education institutions from a consumer strategy to a self-sufficiency strategy is very important. In other words, HEIs should operate on their own funds. Experience of the leading universities in the developed countries clearly demonstrates this. Universities that are constantly experiencing shortage of funds for educational and research activities, can not provide their graduates with competitive, let alone leading education.

In this connection fundamental organizational changes are required. Firstly, when introducing changes to the Code of the Republic of Belarus "On Education" the complete demonopolization in the spheres of higher and specialized secondary education should be taken into account. Secondly, all restrictions on academic freedoms should be lifted. Thirdly, the initiative to establish a broader network of private institutions of secondary vocational education should be developed. Unclaimed public colleges should be subjected to privatization. The process of privatization of the pre-school, general secondary and vocational technical education institutions should be actively started. Under the proposed variant of financial improvement of the education system, the state budget will raise huge amounts of money for backing the training of specialists with higher education, necessary for sectors of the economy, providing economic and political security of the country.

It is important to make an emphasis on the partial, and in some cases, on the complete stifling of competition between HEIs. Competition is one of the main unused instruments in the domestic educational services market.

Is it possible to prepare a competitive specialist in HEI? Undoubtedly, it is possible, but if training of students with the same special subject is conducted in several universities and institutes. But, according to the existing requirements, in order to start training in a specialized field, it is necessary to apply to the teaching union, which is established on the basis of the leading institution of higher education, i.e. the monopolist, who, taking advantage of the given right, refuses to give permission to start training because of inexpediency, cynically not giving reasons for the refusal. This problem remains unsolved for many years. Those who zealously stand up for competition even don't try to break the monopoly in the field of higher education.

In the very near future, it is necessary to understand that decisions, concerning the appropriateness of training in a particular field, in the

state HEIs should be made by the superior body of public administration and in private HEIs – by the founder of the institution. The demand for one or another specialist, or more exactly the order of the employer, should be the only reasonable motive for the opening of a new training field in the private HEI. The final decision must be fixed by the order of the Minister of Education.

Despite the high intellectual potential of personnel in the system of higher education, and highly developed material and technical basis, yet there are some factors constraining the development of its innovation components. Among these factors are:

- lack of scientific and pedagogical staff with academic degrees and titles;
- ageing of teaching staff;
- increase in the intensity of labor due to the high teaching load doesn't allow to effectively engage in research work, which should serve as a basis for innovative educational process;
- inefficiency of the existing system of further training of the teaching staff;
- reduction in the number of PhD students and Grand PhD students defending their dissertations (theses) after finishing PhD and Grand PhD courses.

The current situation indicates that the major problem in formation of innovative higher education is the problem of highly qualified personnel. One way to address that problem would be to change in the law attitude to the academic mobility of teachers.

Academic mobility of teachers means unimpeded, easy and quick movement of a teacher from university of one country to university of other countries to transmit their knowledge to students and at the same time to acquire advanced professional experience, that helps to enhance their own professional development, as well as to borrow novelties for the university where he or she works on a permanent basis. At the same time, participation of the visiting professors in the learning process is the achievement of the university, which positively affects the quality of training.

Academic mobility in the system of higher education in our country so far looks like an academic emigration or like a one-way trip. Higher education institutions are placed by public authorities in the rigid framework of the employment relationship, which does not allow teachers to leave their main job for a long period (say, a semester) in order to travel to a foreign university to give lectures. To do so,

they need to quit their job. HEI leadership is interested neither in such trips nor in the dismissal of professors, as it will spoil the statistics in terms of the number of degree-holders employed on a permanent basis. On the other hand, foreign professors invited to participate in the educational process of our HEIs are not counted as working on a permanent basis.

Imperfection of the legislative and regulatory framework, which regulates the functioning of the higher education system and its participants, is one of the constraining factors in the development of the education system of the Republic of Belarus. There is an urgent need to review values (criteria) which reflect compliance of HEI with current challenges of the economy, as well as compliance with the world trends.

In determining the type of HEI it is unfair to claim as merit such factors as research sponsored from state budget, teachers with academic degrees and titles are mainly on the staff, the presence of sports and recreation bases, outpatient clinics (health units), dormitories and a number of other criteria that have no direct relation to the quality of the rendered educational services. All these criteria burden HEI, distract intellectual potential and enormous sums of money from their main mission: to support the learning process.

In light of the above-stated it is proposed to include in the Code of the Republic of Belarus “On Education” individual and quite detailed articles on the requirements for higher educational institutions supporting modern values of innovative education.

*Translated from Russian by M.N. Nepachatykh*