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**EDUCATION AS A SPACE OF OPPORTUNITIES: FROM HUMAN  
CAPITAL TO HUMAN POTENTIAL**

A. Asmolov (a), M. Guseltseva (b)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Lomonosov Moscow State University, 125009 Mokhovaya, 11, Moscow, Russia; agas@mail.ru, (495) 629-59-13

(b) Psychological Institute RAE, 125009 Mokhovaya 9, Moscow, Russia; mguseltseva@mail.ru, (495) 695-88-76

*Abstract*

The article discusses the problems of socio-cultural modernization of Russian education in the situation of transitivity, diversity and complexity. It is proved that success of cultural modernization of society and the education system is due to the change of methodological optics: the transition from pursuing models of human capital (“people are the new oil”) to a pre-adaptive model of human potential which is based on the principles of humanism, the priority of human dignity as well as the special significance in the strategic analysis and diagnostics of cultural and psychological factors. The article criticizes the development strategies of society based solely on the concept of human capital. In these strategies education is seen primarily as a service industry and not as a social institution of personal development; the principle of educational redundancy, which overcomes the temporal market demands, remains in shadow; federal and regional programs for the development of education are designed primarily adapted to the budget deficit; social policy of development of education is reduced to the economic policy. Only if market mechanisms will be rethought in the terms of anthropological optics, it will be able to create an effective management model that promotes the quality of human life and the principle of redundancy of education allows a softer transit from an outdated and stagnant system to a human-friendly and innovative one. It is argued that the modernization of the consciousness of managerial elites lags behind the already existing grassroots modernization of society.

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## 1. Introduction

The change of analytical optics from political and economic determinism to the priority of cultural and psychological factors reveals that the values of human self-realization and self-development play a leading role in the socio-cultural modernization of education in the modern world. From this perspective human capital as a resource of innovation is compared with human potential. The relationship between the quality of everyday human life and the growth of a country's welfare is revealed (Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Inglehart, 2018).

The concepts of human capital have largely determined the promising directions for the development of a modern post-industrial society. Education in this paradigm is considered as an active source of accumulation of cultural, social, civil and human capital. Based on the concepts of human capital (intellectual, social, symbolic) an economy arises, in which people have priority and education is seen as an important resource for the modernization of society.

However, when developing strategies rely solely on the human capital, certain risks arise. In these strategies education is seen primarily as a service industry and not as a social institution for the development of an individual and society; the principle of educational redundancy, which overcomes the temporal market demands; federal and regional programs for the development of education are designed primarily adapted to the budget deficit; social policy of education development is reduced to the economic policy of industrial development and labor resources (Asmolov & Guseltseva, 2016).

## 2. Problem Statement

We assume that the human potential paradigm differs from the human capital paradigm by the priority of humanistic attitudes over utilitarian pragmatic attitudes and heightened sensitivity to cultural and historical, socio-cultural and psychological factors in the development of programs and strategies for the modernization of education. Following the change of terminology from human capital to human potential, there is a change in the picture of the world, suggesting a different attitude to human and his development.

### **2.1. Anthropological optics: from human capital (human as a means) to human potential (human as a purpose)**

In the light of anthropological optics culture and psychology are key factors for the success of modern modernization of education and society. Concepts of prioritizing human potential are developed in this paradigm (Asmolov, 2012). However, the progressive methodology of human potential requires first of all mental re-equipment of the management elite.

The success of modernization is determined not as much by the desire for a scientific and technological breakthrough as by cultural and psychological factors. An example of successful modernization is Japan which turned in the beginning of the twentieth century from the feudal country to the modern state (Harrison & Huntington, 2000). The secret of this modernization is the responsibility of the elites; a sober analysis of current situation and a willingness to learn, a combination the European experience with local customs. Another example of successful modernization is Singapore. There a

mental reboot of elites took place: openness to modernization, readiness to learn from others. In the Russian context one of the specific mechanisms for implementing the cultural modernization of society and its education system is the introduction of pedagogy of dignity into everyday school practices.

## **2.2. Pedagogy of dignity**

This direction of pedagogical thought and practice refers to the second half of the twentieth century. However, pedagogy of dignity did not arise exclusively in the modern era but represented the latent evolutionary line of humanistic development of mankind. Its origins can be found even in the ancient world. The wisdom of the ancient people is the basis of the unity of modern civilization and the planetary consciousness of modern people.

We can also find the origins of the pedagogy of dignity in the legal rationality inherited by mankind from the institutions of Roman law. They are also contained in the Renaissance concept of the individuality of the person, the pathos of humanism, the creative nature and dignity of human. Important aspects of the pedagogy of dignity were formulated in the educational program of the restructuring of society and education of Humboldt (2003). Later they were represented in the cultural and educational values of the Modern Era representing the first historically successful model of genuine socio-cultural modernization of society and not only its technological layer mainly borrowed in the reforms of the Russian state beginning from the era of Peter I to the present.

During the Enlightenment, Kant (1966) formulated one of the most important principles of anthropological ethics, his categorical imperative: one should act in such a way that one never treats humanity both in one's person and in the face of any other only as a means but always as a goal. Human is the highest and absolute value and no state interests should turn people into a means to achieve any goals. This is the civilizational norm: it is impossible to regard a human exclusively in respect of his instrumental functions, each person is a goal in itself.

In Russia the important ideas of pedagogy of dignity were formulated by the teacher and humanist Soloveichik. In 1994 he published the manifesto "Free Man" in which he outlined the main ideas of educating a free person, defined the concepts of inner freedom, conscience, free child, free school and shared ideas about ways of educating free people. He argued that the basis of cooperation in the educational process is primarily respect for an individual's dignity. He argued that the instrumental development of the pedagogy of cooperation needed a humanistic complement, the quintessence of which was the manifesto "Free Man" (as cited in Asmolov, 2012).

## **2.3. Problems of humanization of the Russian education system**

The problems of the post-totalitarian heritage of modern Russian society lie in the fact that it deals with outdated institutions, everyday practices of the relationship of the individual and the state and traces of cultural injuries as well as in the fact that the modernization of the consciousness of managerial elites lags behind the latent modernization of society.

More important than the obsolescence of knowledge and the emergence of new technologies is a question of nurturing critical thinking, able to independently comprehend the world and select information, and personal stamina. These are the psychological qualities that Kant (1966) regarded as the maturity of man and humanity: the ability to be a subject (gaining personal autonomy and responsibility),

the ability to act jointly (forming legal rationality and civic identity) and the ability to use one's own mind without relying on someone else's opinion and authority (critical thinking). Nowadays these psychological qualities of a personally mature individual are relevant not only for students but also for teachers; not only for the younger generations but also for officials who make important government decisions.

With reference to the subject above it is crucial to revise the psychological and pedagogical concepts in respect of whether they still carry the latent attitudes of authoritarian pedagogy and understanding of a person as an object for pedagogical (or political-economic) manipulations. In other words today for a successful socio-cultural modernization of the Russian education system a fundamental paradigm shift is needed: from the "person for state" model to the "state for person" model; from the practice of pedagogy of training to the practices of pedagogy of dignity; from values of safety and survival to values of development and self-expression; from ideas about the norms of life in a stable world to a new world view full of initiative and creativity, diversity and change.

### **3. Research Questions**

It is necessary to understand the factors and determinants of dynamics of the socio-cultural modernization of society and education in Russia. Research tasks included:

- understanding the evolutionary and socio-cultural essence of education as a process, contributing to the modernization of society and the transformation of the values of the younger generations;
- socio-cultural analysis of the Russian education system in the context of modern society;
- identify the value differences of the human capital paradigm from the human potential paradigm.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this study are:

- affirmation of a new view on education as a resource of socio-cultural modernization of education in the situation of transformation from an authoritarian model of life to a humanistic and human-friendly model of life;
- justification through philosophical and socio-cultural analysis of the evolutionary advantages of humanistic education reform in comparison with the authoritarian and technocratic process of its modernization;
- demonstrating the advantages of the human potential paradigm over the human capital paradigm;
- developing a transition program from an instrumental education model (based on the human capital paradigm) to a humanistic model (based on the human potential paradigm).

### **5. Research Methods**

In this methodological study the following methods were used:

- philosophical and cultural-historical analysis;

- socio-cultural analysis of the state of modern Russian education and society, based on the original authors' models (Asmolov, 2012; Asmolov & Guseltseva, 2016; Guseltseva, 2015);
- interdisciplinary and comparative analysis

## 6. Findings

We offer a program of transition from the technocratic model of Russian education to a humanistic one. The main provisions of this program are developed by us in a series of publications (Asmolov, 2012; Asmolov & Guseltseva, 2016; Guseltseva, 2015) and they are as follows.

### 6.1. From instrumental development to cultural and psychological development of a person

Recognizing the importance of technology and hard skills, we emphasize that the basis of the modern model of education is not so much technological armament as cultural and psychological development of a person. The abilities of critical analysis, independent work with information, the habit of self-education and self-construction come to the fore here. At the same time, it is also important for designers of new education models to reconfigure their optics, making it more flexible, sensitive and human-friendly. With such a mental reversal the era of transitivity, complexity and diversity will appear as an era of emerging opportunities.

### 6.2. From Authoritarian Mobilization to Humanist Modernization Movement

Philosophical and cultural-historical analysis showed that in every developing socio-cultural system there are multidirectional flows including innovative and conservative layers. Progressive innovative social strata stimulate the promotion of change. Conservative social groups ensure the continuity of old and new cultural everyday practices. The movement of society along the path of humanistic modernization protects it from authoritarian mobilization. To this end it is important to carry out wide participation of people in the reform process, the interactivity of this process, the existence of a feedback system between the state and society, between society and an individual. On the basis of the interdisciplinary analysis of the works of Russian sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists we emphasize that today Russian society is more mature and enlightened than its management. Russian society and the education system deserve a much better style of government.

Both – in the 17th century and at the beginning of the 21st century – Russian education officials focused not on the values of humanism and development, but pragmatism and security. They do not support critical thinking and focus on the "center" ("vertical of power"). However, the orientation of the education system to the challenges of yesterday is tied to the outgoing industrial era, while the challenges of the information society need a person capable of freedom and responsibility. Everyday practices of the culture of dignity are built here from self-consciousness to self-determination, from self-determination to self-discipline; from self-discipline to independence and from independence to self-development of a person.

### **6.3. From resource models of human capital to a pre-adaptive model of human potential**

The world of possibilities has expanded enormously and the school's monopoly on child development has ended. Modern pedagogy rejects the principle of training. The problem of the Russian education system is that it needs more autonomy from the state. For this it is not enough to develop and adopt new standards in the education system. In order to achieve a positive change, it is necessary to re-educate teachers, to promote the transformation of their values from utilitarianism to humanism, from the paradigm of human capital (resource) to the paradigm of human potential (development and self-development of the individual). We argue that it is necessary to overcome the discrepancy between the stated standards and implemented everyday school practices. This problem is not solved outside the analysis of the sociocultural context, cultural and psychological factors, the study of motivation and values. It should be noted that its solution is not the development of state programs but the creation of cultural and everyday practices, the development of pre-adaptive models in the education system.

## **7. Conclusion**

In the modern world that is striving for innovation and a digital breakthrough along with the technological equipment, the humanitarian, cultural and psychological components become very popular: from the ability of critical thinking to the courage to be yourself. In application to the transformation of Russian society it is especially important to note the spontaneously and latently modernizing trend (discussed today in terms of grassroots modernization) where the society itself, consisting of autonomous individuals and the leading state, in its development becomes the engine of change. In order for all these processes to serve the public good and harmonize the relationship between an individual and society, society and the state, the reformers of the Russian education system should be more actively involved in global and transnational movements; move from a technocratic paradigm to a humanitarian and humanistic one; from solving utilitarian tasks and from state-centred optics to a human-oriented anthropological approach in the education system.

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