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NEOLIBERAL TENDENCIES IN MODERN EDUCATION

The article deals with neoliberalism as the ideology of the modern education reforms. The movement to privatization of education is considered central in the context of neoliberal reforming strategy. Globalizational influence causes the situation when international organizations govern national education policy more than states. Contradiction between education policy and education theory is established as one of the most important challenges causing insufficient effectiveness of neoliberal reforms.

Keywords: neoliberalism, privatization of education, education reforms, public good, private good.

The end of 20th – the beginning of 21st centuries is a period of considerable education reforms caused by the processes of globalization in the world. The complicated and many-dimensional influence of these processes on education is complemented by such an important factor as development of knowledge economy that turns education into a productive sector of economics and makes completely new requirements to knowledge management in the system of education. Neoliberalism has become the ideology of the modern education reforms. It has become the basis for forming global political and educational consensus.

Thus **the aim of the article** is to reveal the modern social, economic and political trends affecting the views of education in today's globalized world.

We understand neoliberalism as a complex of education and political principles followed by the ruling parties in most countries of the world.

The analysis of the researches on the subject reveals main points of neoliberal education and political consensus:

- Economical determinism is a dominant criterion for defining purpose priorities of reforms and ways for their efficiency assessment. Primary attention is given to the reforming of those aspects of education system that have the greatest impact on the development of human capital and national economic growth.

- Sphere of education is no more a state monopoly; processes of educational services privatization have become liven up.

- Main principles of education policy management are the principles of social choice theory. They are:

1. logic of choice of education is determined by methodological individualism when education is treated as a private good rather than public good;

2. a person is regarded as "homo economicus" i.e. independent, rational, autonomous, narrowly self-interested individual who equates education to any other market commodity;

3. sphere of education is analogous with market where all the actors are involved into profitable exchange.

- Administrative mechanisms of regulation in education are replaced by market mechanisms.

- Development of state and private sector partnership in education is encouraged.

Market-oriented reforms are the attempt of reconstruction of education system aimed at its privatization. Ukrainian educators consider the term 'privatization of education' as central in the context of neoliberal reforming strategy. It is used to identify a wide range of reform programs and even wider variety of means of carrying them out [1, c.309]. According to foreign researches in the most general sense it means the devolution of ownership of educational institutions, provision of services and responsibility for their results from state authorities to private institutions [4, c. 19].

Characteristic of education and political dimension of market-oriented reforms includes the analysis of such an aspect of modern discussions as interpretation of education as a public or private good.

Modern understanding of the concept of a public good originates from its interpretation by English philosopher John Locke. He stated that when a human enters the society he rejects certain freedoms for the sake of gaining more important rights guaranteed by society to its members. Society united by the idea of common good guarantees rights that did not exist

in fore-society communities. According to this understanding of a public good education means not only private goods such as higher incomes, social status, better understanding of own needs and possibilities etc. but also public benefits such as consolidation citizens into a single whole by compulsory teaching a common language, norms of public behaviour, means of settling conflicts, skills of participating in economic and political life of society and state. Guided by these considerations H. Levin comes to the conclusion that creation of public school aimed at the development of public good more than private because school focuses on molding behaviour values and norms that are goods for whole society [6, c. 30].

In the discussions on market-orientated reforms there is another understanding of public good. In the context of economic theory it means absence of competition in consuming a good, its general accessibility that does not causes its decrease; situation when consuming a good becomes an exceptional right of one person or limited group of people is impossible [2, c. 56]. A private good in this context is interpreted as a good that gives exceptionally individual benefits; it is limited and when it is being consumed by one person it cannot be consumed by anyone else [5, c. 293].

Taking into consideration different approaches to the interpretation of a public and private good we can combine the viewpoints of supporters of market-oriented reforms into three groups:

1. education is both a public good and a private good. Its impact into society good is totally distinct from all other spheres of material and spiritual production because it serves as the most important society institution that unites

country population into nation. Being generally accessible education provides the realization of the idea of social equality and justice, formation of values for the next generations of citizens which is the guarantee for the development of democratic society. State's interference in education of citizens is necessary however it must be limited and concern financing, setting of standards and results assessment. But state must not administrate educational process, limit citizens' choice of educational institution as these matters are private affairs of citizens;

2. education is not a public good in the full meaning of this notion i.e. accessible to everyone to the full extent. It is an intermediate type of a good that depends both on state as far as it is provided on the basis of state legislation and on talents and activeness of a pupil and his family. Profits from education are gained more by individuals than by state. Thus education can be interpreted as a private good provided by state;

3. contribution of education into a public good is not inherently different from that of other services and products therefore financing and organizing of education should be performed according to general rules determined by market economy principles. State education system is harmful for democratic state.

The first of above-mentioned approaches has several variations but it is generally typical both for moderate liberals and for conservatives who are the main adherents of market-oriented reforms. Thus this viewpoint is dominant among the ruling circles of conservatively and liberally oriented political parties and also among some representatives of academic community (M.Barber, P.Hill, D.Hirsch, H. Levin). This approach is characterized by active proving of compatibility and inter-completing of public and personal interests in the process of development of new alternative forms of education management – merging of state and private forms of property.

The representatives of this approach prove that caring for their children's interest (looking-for best educational institutions) parents do not betray public interests and do not damage a public good, on the contrary they contribute to

its development as far as better education of every certain pupil/student means better education of society in general, besides educational institutions both get stimulus for better comprehending and improving their work and get more attention from governing institutions. As a result everyone has profited but with the assumption the system is able for self-perfection.

The representatives of the second variant of understanding of correlation between a public and private good in modern education believe that private interests in education are dominant. Key position in this argumentation is occupied by the problem of social externalities of education. Among the spheres where these results are especially apparent neoliberal educational economists denominate formation of civil society, decrease in the crime rate, birth and child-rearing control, national economic progress. The principled stand is the following: social externalities of education are significant and state interference into education is justified but only to the minimum extend and this minimum for the developed countries is already achieved. Thus further expansion of state in education is inexpedient. As a proof this group of researches advances an argument that there are no valid evidences of direct dependence of economic growth and educational level of population.

The third point of view on the essence of education in the context of 'public good vs. private good' contradistinction is typical for the radical wing representatives of market reforms in education (A.Coulson, D.Dewey, D.Freidman, J.Tooley). Its adherents affirm that public funds should not be channeled to education as it causes underfunding of other spheres of society. Radical neoliberals are more concerned by the problems of denying families their natural right for independent choice of education for their children, compulsory character of education, its politicization and bureaucratization. To my thinking the obvious shortcomings of this standpoint are its pronounced populism, direct analogy between education and production spheres, denying internal laws of education development.

With different extent of radicalism

each of the three above-given viewpoints supports market-oriented reforms of education on the ground that education can be considered as a public good only partly. Thus they stand for inexpediency of maintenance of state status quo in education.

Ukrainian researcher A.Sbruyeva offers a multilevel system of measurement of results of neoliberal reforms (individual level, organizational level, and social level). Social level of assessment of reforms is of special interest for our investigation. It includes two main aspects – securing of social justice in education and social unity in society.

As for securing of social justice in education, it can be measured both by accessibility of resources (financial, material, intellectual, informational and technological etc) for providing education needs of all categories of pupils/students and by achievement of results (competences) necessary for successful life activity.

Among the proofs witnessing about increase of injustice in providing education resources for all social categories of citizens one can adduce the following. Families with high level of incomes get extra-benefits in choice of education (additionally to their primary privileges) because of state subsidies for private education. In actual fact voucher programs for private education do not improve matters for poorest category because if such programs do not fully cover expenses for pupil's study it hits where it hurts poorer families but not richer ones. As a rule the most educated and best informed families take part in subsidy programs thus such families (the richest among poor) get benefits of education choice enlargement.

The most obvious general conclusion based on these considerations is the following: even under the condition of stubborn aiming of education choice programs at securing of social justice richer people get more benefits of them.

Possibilities of securing of social justice by achieved results depend on ways of grouping pupils/students during their studies. If they are grouped by levels of capabilities (this way of grouping has become prevalent in the context of education choice programs)

it causes higher dissociation of pupils/students according to their social and race background. As far as different education tracks give education of different quality, deprived and national minorities are in losing position because they are not well prepared for entering the system of education and as a result find themselves at tracks of low-quality education.

There are evidences of rise of social and race inequality in getting high-quality education in every country where market-oriented neoliberal reforms have been carried out. Besides general tendencies there are some specific ones. For example, in England and Wales increase of homogenization of social structure of educational institution in the context of education choice programs is connected with parents' tendency to choose schools where most children are from families with similar social status, financial and ethnic background.

Considering the problem of social justice in the context of development of education choice programs it should be stressed that support of those socially deprived can be determined legislatively by the very design of programs. Education choice can serve those who really need it. It is possible under the condition authorities and society evince political will for it.

As for securing of social unity in society, education as a public good must contribute to development of social unity in process of providing future citizens with common study experience.

As a result of market-oriented neoliberal reforms possibilities for achieving common social experience by representatives of different social, race, ethnic groups exhibit a tendency to reduction since decrease of quantity of

pupils/students in state education system due to increase of their quantity in private sector, social and ethnic segregation in the frames of education choice programs rises.

As a whole the influence of market-oriented neoliberal reforms on securing of social justice is assessed very differently because different opinions as a rule have different ideological background. Experts consider polarization of society as a real risk rather than inevitable consequence of education choice. It is impossible to avoid this risk by market methods; political regulation of the process is needed. Thus strategical prospect of neoliberals to minimize in the process of market reforms influence of political factors on development of education and replace them with market mechanisms is hard to reconcile with the ideas of securing of social justice in education and social unity in society.

Forming of the global political and education consensus is the consequence of implantation of neoliberal ideas of the Washington consensus and inclusion of education into the demesne of international financial, economical and political organizations that covenanted the consensus (OECD, EU, International Monetary Fund, World Bank). Globalizational influence causes the situation when international organizations govern education policy more than states. The mechanisms of impact on national education policies have both economical character (giving financial, material, technical, information and communication support for development of education) and political character (making demands for neoliberal ideological orientation as conditions for giving economic support).

Political education community and scientific education community of developed countries agree in the opinion on insufficient effectiveness of most reforms in education. One of the most important contradictions having caused this insufficient effectiveness is the contradiction between education policy and education theory. As the research has revealed, the reasons for it are the following features of neoliberal education policy: giving preference to economic mechanisms for carrying out reforms in education instead of pedagogic mechanisms, neglecting of their intrinsic properties; insufficient accounting of inner motivation of educators, regarding them as "homo economicus" (as persons inclined to minimizing of working efforts and maximizing a private good).

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