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HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Abstract: Based on the study and analysis of international legal documents, the article examines the place of higher education in the system of human and civil rights and freedoms. The author emphasizes that the issue of equality and social justice is becoming one of the most important political aspects of the further development of higher education systems both at the global and national levels. The author comes to the conclusion that such characteristics of a university graduate as competitiveness in the labor market, international orientation, i.e. readiness for international mobility and the ability to work in multicultural teams, focus on education throughout life, the ability to apply an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to solving problems.

Key words: higher education, human and civil rights and freedoms, the World Declaration, elite and mass higher education, technocratic approach, the status of teachers and students.

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Introduction

Second half of the 20th century marked by dramatic changes in the field of higher education. It was during this period that the right to receive it was recognized at the world level as one of the inalienable rights of man and citizen. Clause 1 of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to education” and that “higher education should be equally accessible to all based on the abilities of everyone” [1]. In 1960, the Convention against Discrimination in Education was adopted, which in Article 4 obliges states “to make higher education accessible to all on the basis of full equality and depending on the abilities of everyone” [2]. However, higher education is understood to mean “all types of study courses, training or preparation for research at the latest level, provided by universities or other educational institutions that are recognized as higher education institutions by the competent public authorities”. This definition was approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1993 in the Recommendation “On the recognition of studies and certificates in higher education” [3].

On the eve of the new century, the political debate about higher education has reached a new level. This is evidenced by a simple listing of those international forums where the further development of this sphere of human activity was reflected: the International Commission on Education for the 21st century, the World Commission on Culture and Development, the 44th and 45th sessions of the International Conference on Education (Geneva, 1994 and 1996), decisions of the 27th and 29th sessions of the General Conference of UNESCO concerning, inter alia, the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990.), UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), Conference on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy (Sinaia, 1992), World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), Int. International Congress on Education and Informatics (Moscow, 1996), World Congress on

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Higher Education and Human Resource Development for the 21st Century. (Manila, 1997), Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg, 1997). However, especially in this regard, it is necessary to highlight the World Conference on Higher Education, held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 5 to 9 October 1998, at which the most important document was adopted - "The World Declaration on Higher Education for the XXI Century: Approaches and practical measures "(hereinafter - the Declaration) [4].

Recognizing the fact of the unprecedented development of this sphere (from 1960 to 1995, the number of students in all countries of the world increased from 13 to 82 million, i.e. more than 6 times), which marks the transformation of higher education from an elite into a mass one, the Declaration nevertheless less emphasizes: "At the same time, the already huge gap between industrialized and developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in terms of access to higher education and research, as well as in terms of resources allocated to them. This period was also characterized by even greater socio-economic stratification and growing disparities in terms of educational opportunities within the countries themselves, including some of the most developed and wealthy".

In this regard, the Declaration formulates the main directions for the formation of a new approach to higher education, which includes such fundamental points as:

- fairness of access;
- increasing participation and increasing the role of women;
- promoting knowledge by conducting scientific research in the fields of natural sciences and humanities and the arts and disseminating their results;
- long-term focus on adequacy;
- strengthening cooperation with the world of work and analysis and forecasting of social needs;
- diversification to ensure equality of opportunity;
- innovative approaches in education: critical thinking and creativity;
- employees and students of higher education institutions as the main actors.

Let us dwell in more detail on the essence of the declared principles that should be guided by states in defining, implementing and evaluating their policies in relation to higher education in the 21st century.

First of all, it should be noted that one of the most important political aspects of the further development of higher education systems, both at the global and national levels, is becoming the issue of equality and social justice.

The transition from elite to mass higher education is accompanied by political rhetoric about

expanding access to universities, achievements that are becoming available to all, equality based on a meritocratic approach. However, as follows from numerous studies [5-8], with all the successes actually achieved in this area, the overall picture does not look so cloudless. Modern higher education continues to deepen the social stratification of society, generating new types of inequality. If gender inequality is gradually disappearing [9], then social and class inequality persists. Moreover, it is increasingly in multiracial societies becomes tied not only to class, but also to race.

Thus, we are talking about the inadmissibility of "any discrimination in relation to access to higher education on the basis of race, sex, language and religion, as well as due to any economic, cultural and social differences." In addition to this, there is a requirement to eliminate any age barriers, as well as to change attitudes towards people with disabilities. In other words, the principle of inclusive education today is becoming one of the fundamental not only for schools, but also for universities, which entails not only the improvement of teaching technologies, but also the restructuring of the physical environment of higher education.

The debate over "equal opportunity" to pursue higher education is not limited to a disproportionately small percentage of students from certain social groups (poor families, working class and racial minorities), but also raises the problem of higher dropout rates among them, as well as their sharply differing representation in universities of various categories. Of course, this inequality does not apply exclusively to higher education, but is a symptom of more serious imbalances in the life of modern societies. Nevertheless, it is education, which P. Sorokin attributed to one of the most effective "social lifts" [10], can play an important role in solving these social problems, providing access to the elite for the most talented and active representatives of the social bottom, thereby increasing the overall the level of life aspirations among those who, by their origin, are at the very bottom of the social ladder.

One of the most politically controversial ideas related to ensuring "equal opportunities" is the idea (and the corresponding government policy) of so-called "positive discrimination", which provides for certain preferences, and in some cases even quotas, in relation to groups subjected to historical discrimination. In this regard, a contradiction arises: on the one hand, one can speak of a violation in this case of the "principle of merit", on the other hand, the "merits" themselves (a higher level of knowledge, culture, richness of language, etc.) can be the result upbringing in a family with a more prosperous socio-economic position in society [11-13]. In any case, "positive discrimination", in our opinion, is a rather controversial option for solving the problem of equality of access to higher education, because can

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lead (and already leads) to a decrease in its quality and devaluation of it as a social value.

A much more rational way to ensure equal access to higher education is the diversification of higher education models, the presence of public, private (commercial and non-commercial) higher educational institutions, characterized by various forms of education. It is no coincidence that in recent years, along with classical universities and narrowly professionally oriented universities (institutes, colleges, academies), new institutions have become increasingly widespread. First of all, in this regard, it is worth mentioning "open universities", admission to which is not due to the presence of any certificate of previous education and training in which does not end with the conferment of professional qualifications according to the standards existing in the given country. In other words, in open universities, everyone can learn what interests him. At the same time, the curriculum usually does not include systemic knowledge in other disciplines.

The most famous of the open universities in the world is the Open University of London, founded in 1969, which has trained more than 3 million people over the years. Today open universities operate in different countries of the world, including Russia. Despite the fact that the principle of universal accessibility and freedom of choice of an educational trajectory is characteristic of all such institutions, there are certain differences between them. So, for example, the Open University of Israel (OUI), conceived by analogy with the British and began its studies in 1976, in the 1980s. has already been officially recognized by a higher education institution and received the right to award graduates with a bachelor's degree. In 1982, 41 graduates received bachelor's degrees for the first time. Today, OUI also offers master's programs, for admission to which a bachelor's degree is already needed [14]. The specificity of this university initially consisted in adherence to the principle of distance learning, which, until the advent of the Internet era, was implemented through a system of television lectures and educational and methodological complexes sent by mail.

With the development of information and communication technologies, along with distance learning, which can be carried out both within existing universities and in specially created distance universities for this purpose, a system of massive open online courses (MOOCS - Massive Open On-line Courses), dramatically expanding access to knowledge. In recent years, we are already talking not just about the "massization" of higher education, but about its "customization" (from the English customer - "buyer"), i.e. focus on a specific buyer of educational services with his specific needs and requests. All this should contribute to the expansion of opportunities to realize the right to higher education. However, there

is a real danger that quality can be sacrificed for mass, which will inevitably be followed by a devaluation of the value of the university diploma received.

Another problem is the role of higher education institutions in the growth of scientific knowledge. Today, the inextricable link between education and science is becoming more and more obvious. At the same time, the Declaration emphasizes the need to intensify research "in all disciplines, including social and human sciences, education (including higher education), engineering and natural sciences, mathematics, computer science and the arts, within the framework of national, regional and international policy in the field of scientific research and development" [4]. At the same time, in the reality of the modern world, it is hardly possible to speak about the harmonious development of research in different fields of knowledge.

Those who specialize in the field of technical sciences, medicine and a number of other highly specialized professions feel most confident in universities, while their colleagues in the humanities and social sciences, as well as in some cases of fundamental natural science, are seriously concerned about their future. ... As a result, their perception of the university reality is also different. For example, a professor of finance in Singapore or a professor of metallurgy at Wuhan University in China would justifiably believe that universities have never been as popular and well-funded as they are today. However, a professor specializing in medieval history in Oslo or Germanic literature in Sheffield may feel anxious about his future at a time when his scientific studies are no longer appreciated by society. As a result, there is a clear stratification within the university community itself, which only adds tension, including political tension, to the sphere of higher education.

The main danger, in our opinion, lies in the dominant technocratic approach among political elites to solving problems of public life, which cannot be solved only through the use of new technologies without a deeper penetration into the nature of human society, social relations and an understanding of the motives of human behavior and awareness. possible ways of influencing him. It was about this dangerous tendency that he spoke in his speech at the conference of the scientists of the Russian Academy of Sciences "The present and future of science in Russia. Place and role of the Russian Academy of Sciences" Academician V.A. Tishkov: "Humanitarian knowledge is of particular value in modern technocratic civilization, and the importance of supporting the humanities as a necessary condition for the country's development, supporting the intellectual potential of our society, forming the national consciousness of the Russian people is a rather trivial statement when discussing the state of science and education. However, in the last couple of years this

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thesis has been questioned by some politicians and managers in the field of science and education” [15].

The most important principle of higher education at this stage in the development of human civilization is its adequacy to the expectations of society. In this regard, however, the question arises as to whose expectations, needs and interests should be guided by when determining state policy in the field of higher education, since society is not something holistic, but splits into various social strata and groups. In this regard, the Declaration emphasizes that “higher education must strengthen its functions of service to society, in particular its work to combat poverty, intolerance, violence, illiteracy, hunger, environmental degradation and disease ... education should be the creation of a new society that does not know violence and exploitation, whose members are highly and comprehensively developed, full of enthusiasm, guided by love for humanity and wisdom” [4]. Thus, in our opinion, we are talking not so much about the correspondence of higher education to some specific social order, but rather about adherence to its universal values.

At the same time, this principle may come into a certain contradiction with another - the principle of strengthening cooperation with the world of work, which shifts the conversation about the purpose of higher education from the sociocultural to the economic plane. The formation of entrepreneurial skills and the encouragement of initiatives necessary to ensure further economic growth can be simultaneously directed not at serving the public good, but at satisfying one's own narrowly selfish, selfish interests. In this regard, in parallel, the task is to form students' sense of social responsibility, readiness to become full members of a democratic society and promote such changes that will favor equality and justice.

The need for a new ideological saturation of the teaching process largely justifies the importance of innovative approaches in the field of education. The task is to educate "motivated citizens capable of critical thinking, analyzing social issues, finding and using solutions to problems facing society, as well as taking on social responsibility" [4]. This emphasizes the need to reflect human rights and gender equality perspectives in curricula.

All of these principles can only be put into practice if public policy focuses on the status of teachers and students as key actors in higher education. With regard to teachers, we are talking not only about creating favorable conditions for constant improvement of qualifications, but also about systematic, systematic actions to ensure a professional and financial situation adequate to the tasks facing them, the main parameters of which were defined in the Recommendation on the Status of Teaching Personnel in Higher Education Institutions. adopted

by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 1997 [16].

As for the students, the main thing is to form the attitude of the political and managerial decision-makers towards them as the main partners and responsible participants in the process of renewal of higher education. Hence the need for the development of student self-government, support, including state support, of student organizations, involving them in solving issues related to higher education, in assessing, updating teaching methods and programs, as well as, within the framework of existing institutions, in developing policies for educational institutions and managing them.

Among the practical measures that should contribute to the implementation of the above principles in higher education, the Declaration emphasizes the importance of the following aspects.

First of all, we are talking about the need for a constant assessment of the quality of education received in universities. There are two key points. First, the assessment itself is a multidimensional concept within which all functions and activities should be analyzed, namely: curricula, level of scientific research, human resources, student population, material and technical base, activities for the benefit of society, etc. NS. Secondly, the assessment of the quality of higher education should combine three dimensions: intra-organizational (self-assessment), national and international. At the same time, the need to take into account specific institutional, national and regional conditions “in order to take into account diversity and avoid unification” is noted [4].

At the beginning of the XXI century. the need to adapt universities to the new technological reality, to the ever-expanding use of information and communication technologies (hereinafter - ICT) became obvious. However, it is important, in our opinion, not to forget about the warning contained in the Declaration: “... given the new opportunities that are opening up in connection with the use of ICTs, it is important to realize that we are talking, first of all, about the use of ICTs by higher education institutions to modernize their work, and not about ICTs transforming real higher education institutions into virtual ones” [4]. Thus, we cannot talk about reducing the importance of teachers, “although it modifies their role in relation to the educational process”; however, it should be remembered that “it is fundamental that ongoing dialogue transforms information into knowledge and understanding is fundamental” [4].

The new challenges facing higher education require a corresponding improvement in the management and financing of this area. And in the position on this issue, it seems important from a political point of view to pay attention to the following points. First, the assertion of the right of universities to autonomy is accompanied by the recognition of the

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need for their accountability to government bodies, their students, and society as a whole. Second, it emphasizes the importance of building partnerships with all stakeholders (organizations and individuals). Third, it recognizes not only the legitimacy, but also the expediency of attracting other financial sources to the sphere of higher education, along with state funds (which continue to play a leading role in financing universities). In other words, in modern conditions, the diversification of financial flows entering the sphere of higher education becomes a necessity.

Further development of higher education in a globalizing world requires strengthening cooperation between universities of different countries on the principles of partnership and solidarity, regardless of state borders. At the same time, developing countries should benefit primarily from such interaction, since humanity as a whole is interested in the uniformity of the development of higher education in all regions of the globe.

The presence of common principles and approaches to higher education in the modern world, the recognition of the right of every person to access higher education on the basis of personal abilities and dignity are the most important prerequisites for the effective functioning of this sphere of society. However, in conditions of pronounced uneven development, increasing disparities between the "rich North" and "poor South", there are obvious differences in the ability of citizens of individual countries to exercise this right in practice. In order for higher education to really become affordable and of high quality, countries that are not members of the "club of the rich and developed" face a difficult task of secondary modernization of their higher education systems, which in the current situation on the global market of educational services will practically be "Westernization".

Accordingly, when assessing new trends and predicting the future of higher education, we must first of all rely on an analysis of what is happening in the most developed countries of the world, where the process of transformation of industrial societies into

knowledge societies is being observed. Socio-economic processes here are increasingly characterized by:

- an increase in the share of highly qualified labor, a change in the structure of employment, an increase in demand for higher education, which is becoming the most important channel for the growth of "human" and "social" capital. At the same time, as V.V. Nasonkin, "if the acquisition of specific practice-oriented competencies (mainly in the field of informatics, engineering, technology, etc.) is of fundamental importance for "human capital", i.e. "Learning", then for "social capital" the formation of personality, value orientations and humanistic orientation is more important - a process that can be defined as "education" [17];

- differentiation of social requirements for curricula, in which, along with general scientific and professional training, it is necessary to provide disciplines and practices that contribute to the formation of students' social responsibility, adherence to the norms of a democratic society, social communication skills, etc.;

- greater flexibility in the organization of the educational process, its focus on the individual needs of the student, ready to demonstrate the skills of self-organization and independent planning of their educational activities. Thus, the young person will be prepared for entering the modern labor market, which requires the employee to be constantly ready for change;

- focus on the quality of higher education, which would satisfy the state, employers and at the same time would meet the needs and expectations of the students themselves.

Accordingly, such characteristics of a university graduate as competitiveness in the labor market, international orientation, i.e. readiness for international mobility and the ability to work in multicultural teams, focus on education throughout life, the ability to apply an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to solving problems.

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