

Reformers of science lack the necessary qualifications to cope with the task*



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— I have spent many years working on various reforms of different countries as an object of the study and, therefore, I can not agree with the paragraph in the draft conference resolution, which begins as such: “The dominance of the narrowly utilitarian approach to science is the main source of the problem...”

I believe that any, even narrowly utilitarian approach can not explain what is happening in science. The answer to the question “Where is the source?” is quite different. I propose to change the paragraph as follows: **“The insufficient qualification of those responsible for the science reform is the main source of the problem”** (*hereinafter underlined by the Editorial Board*). The

conference demands the resignation of Minister of Education and Science D.V. Livanov. The conference appeals to the President and the RF Government to initiate the development of the project aimed at changing the scientific field, based on the professional analysis of evolution of the systems to manage science both in Russia and abroad to ensure thorough evaluation of the necessary institutional experiments with subsequent adjustment of reform plans”.

I will explain. In general, the major reform of institutional systems is a very difficult and fine task and there are no unified measures to solve it and be sure about effectiveness of the results. Undoubtedly, the

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experience of other countries, particularly more advanced, is one of the key sources of our knowledge about reforming. The matter is not about comparing what we have and what the USA have. Most often these comparisons are fruitless. If you want to learn from the experience of developed countries, consider what was going on 50 or 100 years ago. There can be found answers to many key questions. And, of course, one should not rely only on the experience of developed countries – the knowledge of the countries that have a similar development level should be taken into account.

In my opinion, the fact is that **our officials do not have the basic technique to conduct institutional reforms. There is one of the main mistakes that they make during reform elaboration and implementation, such as the so-called method of shock therapy.**

Shock therapy is a direct transition from one institutional system to another without introducing intermediate institutions. Why are these stages required? Such reforms include borrowing or transplantation of institutional systems of more developed countries. However, during the direct transfer of the institutional system from a developed country to a less developed one all sorts of constraints appear: resource, technological, cultural, institutional, political... All of this should be taken into consideration. To do it, it is necessary to build a whole sequence of institutional changes. Only then we can hope for success.

If we do not do that, the reform efforts prove fruitless. We get the results completely different from the forecasted by the reformers and incur huge costs.

I want to remind you that the method of shock therapy was used in the 1990s to conduct reforms, such as liberalization of prices and foreign trade, privatization, monetization of benefits and then the pension reform. The introduced uniform state exam has similar disadvantages. Now, it is estimated that in Russia in the 1990s the loss of gross domestic product was greater than in 1937–1945...

In fact, those mistakes, which I mention about, are repeated in different countries and periods of time... But the Russian experience of the 1990s has led to the development of the corresponding theory; nowadays such methods are unacceptable. **The method shock therapy has flaws, but it has served as the basis for reform of science in Russia.**

I will give an example of a well-conducted reform. You remember that price liberalization in Russia was held overnight January 2, 1992. Most prices in Russia were liberalized. In China this process took 15 years. They started in 1978 with six large enterprises in Sichuan. The Chinese did not change the planned system unchanged, but let these enterprises sell excessively manufactured products at market prices. For 15 years the number of enterprises involved in this experiment had been increased, on the one hand. On the other hand, the careful management of planned performance had continued, so that the share of products manufactured to fulfill the plan had been gradually reduced... In 1979 there were 100 companies. In 1993 the planned system was reduced to 5%, the process of price liberalization was

completed. Market infrastructure appeared and the experience was accumulated. China managed to avoid inflation, payments crisis and barter dominance. The growth exceeded 10% per year.

Actually, **any reform requires elaboration.** There are typical steps to calculate the project: formulation of the objectives; analysis of the evolution of institutions in developed countries; analysis of similar reforms in developing countries; division of the reform in stages and its presence as a sequence of intermediate institutions; comparison of the integral benefits of the reform with the integrated costs; justification of the viability of planned trajectories; selection of the effective technologies for the reform implementation, including establishment of the necessary support institutions and experimentation; method to analyze the results of implemented institutional changes. It is impossible to consider a project without these calculations!

Now get a bird's-eye view of the RAS reform. Stage I (2008–2013). What were the arguments to carry out the reform? I quote “Kommersant” (2006): “...The Academy has been called a “quasi-agency” and “isolated from social problems by the politicized distribution corporation that cares not about research, but about comfortable existence”. Approximately since 2008 the funds have been transferred from the Russian Academy of Sciences to national research universities. The bet was made on establishment of the science management system, similar to that existing

in the United States. And there was no justification for it...

And there was another argument. I quote “Kommersant-Vlast” (2007): “... Minister of Education Andrey Fursenko has complained about... the rigid system in his Department, stubbornly trying to bring up a creator. Now, according to the Minister, the main thing is to nurture a consumer who will be able to use achievements and technologies developed by others”.

I have to say here that the task of borrowing is also misunderstood, as you should know a frontline to borrow wisely. But in order to know it, you need to conduct your own research. So, in 2013–2014 it was actually stated that fundamental science is not needed.

Now, **the draft law of June 28, 2013 (on the reform of state academies) is typical shock therapy. The purpose of this law had nothing to do with the purpose of enhancing the level of science in Russia. We all know what we got. The compromise that we have now is achieved in the desperate struggle, but not in the elaboration process. This leads to enormous costs.**

The radical shift has been recently made in the direction of reform. Now Germany, but not the USA is the pattern to follow! The statement of A. Fursenko is very interesting here: **“Integration of Russian science into the global scientific community, contrary to expectations, has not made it more effective”** (Fursenko, Letter to Putin of June 11, 2014). **It is the recognition that all the conducted reforms have been fruitless.** Now the plan to structure scientific

organizations has arisen... This document has been written by economists, who are not enough literate and hide their names!

What is the plan? It presupposes the imitation of the German system without any consideration of how it fits or how it is consistent with other documents, etc. It proposes to establish 4 societies, while structuring Russian scientific organizations: “Planck society”, “named after

Helmholtz”, “named after Fraunhofer” and “named after Leibniz”. There are no comparisons and justifications again. It is absolutely illiterate. There is no word about the need for experimental confirmation of the structuring plans. So, I conclude with the statement I have started with: “The insufficient qualification of those responsible for the science reform is the main source of the problem”.

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