

## BIOPOLITICS AND THE PROBLEMS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

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On behalf of the International Academy of Entrepreneurship I would like to thank the organisers of this conference for the opportunity to present Russia's participation in international programmes concerned with the realisation of Biopolitics. It is well-known that a whole complex of reforms, in various fields, is taking place in Russia today. The reforms are aimed at changing the biopolitical climate in Russia. The problem of labour resources in Russia must be outlined, because this aspect of the bio-environment is one of the leading factors which will determine most of the results of these reforms.

As a rule, the quality of labour resources is characterised by four main factors: educational potential, qualification, personal attitude to work and the existing opportunities for maximising the abilities of a worker. To make the work process more successful, it is necessary to change each of these four factors and develop them in relation to types of labour force and education. The educational level of industrial workers in Russia is high and can compete with that of European countries, though in most cases, it corresponds to the educational level that existed in Europe, the USA and Japan in the middle of the 1960's (Table 1).

Today, the most difficult situation lies in the area of school education - the number of young people leaving school after a complete course of education is rapidly decreasing: in 1987 it was 80%; in 1993, less than 70%; and in 1995 it is expected that only 62-65% of young people will get a complete 11-class education. It is clear that in the near future each new generation will be less educated, and therefore, the quality of labour resources will be lower, from an educational point of view. In Russia there are more than 4,100 colleges, 2,600 technical schools and more than 500 institutes and universities. During the years 1991 to 1993, the number of postgraduates leaving college fell by 10%, while the number from institutes increased by 4%. It is worth mentioning that no essential changes have taken place in the content of educational programmes. Too much attention is still paid to the acquisition of formal knowledge and too little to practical skills. The educational system is, in practice, not connected to the labour market: more than 50% of the institute and university postgraduates, and about 60-70% of the college postgraduates have failed to find jobs.

**Table 1.** Educational level of industrial workers (years of education)

| Skill Level                        | Russia | USA  | Japan |
|------------------------------------|--------|------|-------|
| Foremen and highly skilled workers | 1.5    | 12.8 | 12.9  |
| Skilled workers                    | 10.2   | 12.3 | 12.3  |
| Low skilled workers                | 9.7    | 12.0 | 12.1  |

*Source: Research Council for Social and Labour Politics, Ministry of Labour, Russia*

In most countries with market economies, professional qualifications are determined as a complex of individual abilities, practical skills and an education sufficient to carry out the practical tasks. The professional and qualificational structure of workers now employed in the Russian economy is deformed and contradictory. On one hand, more than 21 million specialists (34% of the total number employed) have passed through higher education, while on the other, 17 million are non-qualified workers. While Russian industries suffer from the lack of auxiliary workers, mainly for white collar work, there is an obvious surplus of workers with middle range and low qualifications, using obsolete equipment in industry. The most complicated situation lies in the area of the qualifications of management staff, because of lack of competence, psychological stability and the skills necessary for working in crisis situations.

The structure, which is producing specialists with higher and secondary specialist education is very much deformed: more than 46% of specialists with higher education, and more than 48% with secondary specialist education, have an engineering speciality, while the proportion of white collar workers in Russia is 35% as against 45-55% in Europe. Most of those employed in the Russian economy are employed in the manufacturing industry and only 23% are engaged in the area of services (Table 2).

The prognosis for change in the professional structure of the working population, up to the year 2015, shows that the change which will take place will not be radical. It is assumed that by 2015, 42% of the working population will be engaged in the industrial sphere, 34% in industry, white collar workers will make up 42%, the proportion of manual labourers will be reduced to only 18%, and that of traditional labour, to

30%.

The attitude to work is one main feature which characterises the quality of both work-force and management. Motives for working should pass through different stages: from a necessary and sometimes unpleasant duty, to perceiving work as a source of receiving money, in combination with other values of life. Unfortunately, in recent years the attitude to work has not changed, and to an extent has become even worse. This is confirmed by the growth in the number of industrial injuries, the increasing number of strikes, latent unemployment (from 10% to 20%), alcoholism, absence of the desire to work intensively and other negative effects of similar nature.

**Table 2.** A breakdown of the structure of employment (percent employment) in Russia in 1992 and the forecast for 1995, 2000, 2015

|                     | 1992  | 1995  | 2000  | 2015  |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Agricultural labour | 8.7%  | 8.6%  | 8.0%  | 7.0%  |
| Industrial labour   | 56.6% | 54.0% | 50.0% | 42.0% |
| Clerical labour     | 11.7% | 12.1% | 12.5% | 17.0% |
| Service Industry    | 23.0% | 25.3% | 29.5% | 34.0% |

*Source: Research Council for Social and Labour Politics, Ministry of Labour, Russia*

An analysis of the present work potential of Russian enterprises shows that, to some extent, it is a serious obstacle to economic reforms. Serious efforts to change the parameters of its quality and quantity are required, mainly to create a new strategy of co-ordination and forms of education. To make these reforms effective, it will be necessary to create "a critical mass" of about 30-40% of workers, out of a total of 70 million people with strict market characteristics. If we engage the present system of polytechnic secondary schools and colleges, it will take about 10 to 15 years to get positive results. The main arena for reforming the work force will, therefore, be concentrated on the enterprises themselves.

In 1993, the number of those educated in firms was five times higher than the number of postgraduates leaving polytechnic colleges. Measures, aimed at achieving additional and postgraduate education and retraining, have been greatly reduced since 1991 (by 60.5% among workers and 63.6% in management). The system of achieving economic education and communicating advanced experience is simply being destroyed. The period for retraining workers in industry now takes 13-15 years, as against 3-6 years in Europe, the USA and Japan, and 7-8 years for management, as against 3-5 years in Europe and Japan. The new forms of education that have recently appeared are often based on Western programmes not adapted to specific Russian situations, and thus cannot have any serious influence on increasing the level of qualification of the workers. The main defect in the existing system of retraining lies in its lack of connection with changing economic conditions. Most workers are still not interested in education and retraining.

The main conclusion is as follows: fundamental and immediate reform of the whole system of retraining is required. One non-State organisation engaged in training specialists, at the request of companies operating in the new economic conditions, is the International Academy of Entrepreneurship. The main methods of the Academy are an evaluation of the economic and social situations which exist in a company, the offer of consultative services to change these situations and the subsequent formation of decisions aimed at structural reconstruction and personnel training. The Academy consists of a limited circle of organisers and a wide range of independent departments, centres and firms. It provides services in business psychology, securities markets, environmental management, personnel management and other similar areas, and is one of the few training centres that can offer comprehensive services in many different fields, since it is equipped with all the necessary facilities.