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Provision of Social and Resource Support to the Policy of Socio-Cultural Modernization of Regions by the Population with Higher Education



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Abstract. The paper reflects an experience of empirical research on the institutional and regulatory component in the modernization of Russian regions that are historically at different levels of civilizational development. The information basis of the study includes findings of a mass representative survey (“civil examination”) conducted by the Center for the Sociology of Management and Social Technology at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences; the survey was carried out in four constituent entities of the Russian Federation: the Moscow Oblast, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Belgorod Oblast and the Republic of Kalmykia; the assessment of their development include criteria of the level of socio-cultural modernization (grant # 15-18-30077). We believe that higher education is an underestimated resource of the state strategy for socio-cultural modernization of regions. People with higher education are considered as an avant-garde social group able to exert an increasing influence on the harmonious development of the country. This group is characterized as a “soft” force in the support of constructive actions of the power vertical and in the future – as a centripetal factor capable of providing a high level of solidarity in the Russian society in solving multidisciplinary problems of modernization. We elaborate the research tools outlined in the article “The Role of Institute of Higher Education in Solving the Issues of Socio-Cultural Modernization of Regions” (*Economic and Social Changes: Facts, Trends, Forecast*, 2017, vol. 10, no. 5). We clarify the empirically tested hypotheses: first, socio-cultural modernization of Russian regions is associated with the degree of development of their government systems that depend, in turn, on social organization and self-organization, the hierarchy of groups, including the population

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with higher education, and their interest in the process of modernization; second, the social group of the population with higher education is an electorate with average estimates of social and political activity, which can play an important role in the development of problem situations in regions with different levels of modernization and in the creation of new models of organizational development and management. The goal of our study is to identify the degree of social support that the population with higher education provides to the policy of the power vertical and its individual links. We provide the results of analysis of socio-economic indicators of regional development, taking into account the place and role of the population with higher education. The tools of the survey are designed to conduct further comparative studies on larger samples.

Key words: social resource, higher education, management problems, regions, “civil examination”, socio-cultural modernization.

Introduction. At present, the problem of choosing the trajectory of socio-cultural modernization not only for individual countries, but also for entire civilizations has become more acute. It is being addressed by every politician and official, businessman and researcher, as well as every citizen: everyone makes choices thus determining their attitude to the problems of modernization and participation in their solution [1; 2]. Nowadays, we cannot ignore the significantly increased diversity of interests and the complex social structure of the Russian society that has occurred over the years of post-Soviet development. At the same time, the two opposing value systems still coexist: one focused on personal success and development, the other – on the interests of the society and the state. Just like in the mid-90s of the 20th century, it has to be stated that the complexity of social modernization depends not only on the developed social projects, or on the spontaneously implemented reforms, or intentions of the ruling elite, but also on whether these intentions can be perceived by the complex system of groups of interest in the society. And it is not only about investment in the economy, but also about real improvement of the standard of living and the quality of life in the social sphere, as stated in the President's 2018 May decree, which determines the national goals and strategic objectives of the

country up to 2024. It should be taken into account that in Russia, as in any country, there is an opposition that cooperates the authorities on a confrontational basis, which has repeatedly led to the aggravation of the country's “*socio-cultural split*” (*the term of A.S. Akhiezer*) [3]. In this context, the issues of improving the quality of civic participation, the level of social responsibility and the importance of civic action and interaction are acute. A number of researchers reasonably believe that informed civic participation is a key factor in development and social well-being. It largely depends on the contribution each citizen makes to the solution of social problems. Their level of education plays an important role [4].

The Center for Management Sociology and Social Technology at Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (work on the Russian Science Foundation grant in 2015–2017 with the author's participation at the final stage) obtained interesting results of empirical measurement of the performance of regional authorities and management bodies, being historically at different levels of civilizational, in particular socio-cultural development. They are reflected in the collective research work “*Russia: reforming the vertical of power amid regions' socio-cultural modernization*”[5]. The work clarifies the previously stated elements of the overall program of the study. Thus, a *social problem* is defined as a split between the society

and the state manifested in the gap between population's estimates of the performance of the chain of the vertical of power and management bodies and their ability to simultaneously solve external and internal problems of the socio-economic development in regions with different levels of modernization. *Modernization* is referred to as a complex, civilizational process carried out by broad population masses in order to meet their needs to improve working conditions and the quality of life. *A research problem* is defined as lack of theoretical, methodological and empirical data in the subject area of management sociology in terms of the ability of the specified vertical of power to address the problems of harmony in the divided society, successfully respond to external and internal challenges, and ensure comprehensive, civilizational modernization. *The object* is the process of socio-cultural development in regions in a specific historical and socio-economic situation according to the modernization level criterion. *The subject* is the clarification of the type and nature of social laws in the framework of the theory of "civil contract", reflecting the degree of the population's social support of the work of certain chains of the vertical of power and management bodies in the regions and, ultimately, the degree of control over the modernization process. Moreover, the measurement of social subjectivity of various population groups, including people with higher education, their role in the feedback relations with the authorities and management bodies, the manifestation of solidarity with small, including protest groups, with the regional community and with Russia as a whole [5; 6]. The contribution of the author consists in *interpreting* the results of the mass survey ("civil examination") through *the method of secondary analysis* and the empirically tested hypotheses taking into account higher education as a social resource for the state strategy of socio-cultural modernization in the regions.

Stating the research problem

According to experts, the root causes of inefficiency and slowdown in the country's modernization are lack of demand for human potential of the working population in Russian regions, narrowly focused or low demand of private and public business for new domestic knowledge and technology. The institutional-regulatory (social) variable of modernization, which characterizes changes in the chain of regulatory institutions [7], lags far behind and is spontaneously and fragmented. Its aspects remain poorly elaborated in the complex of scientific research describing, explaining and predicting the social processes taking place in the country. In particular, it is not provided that the course of modernization depends not only on spontaneous, but also on organized, and therefore, managing factors in vertical ("center-periphery") and horizontal ("self-organization of subjects of socio-economic action in regions and between regions") modernization. Moreover, education remains one of the regulatory institutions in socio-cultural modernization, which, along with the system of power and management, acts as an independent factor in the regions' civilizational development [8]. A number of researchers believe that with the development of the post-industrial society both in Russia and developed Western countries, and the manifestations of its social outline and fundamental characteristics, the concept of *smart proletariat* (*the term of V.K. Levashov*) will reflect the features of inevitable reality [9]. The new, "revolutionary class of the digital age" includes highly skilled and professional employees, many of whom are initially structured and arranged through information networks. It primarily includes the employees in the sphere of socio-cultural reproduction – science and higher education.

We believe that higher education is a latent and still largely undervalued resource in the

state strategy of socio-cultural modernization in regions. The social group of people with higher education is leading, able to have an increasing impact on the country's harmonious development. The specified group should be considered today as a "soft" force for supporting constructive actions of the vertical of power and a future centripetal factor capable of providing a high level of solidarity in Russia to solve multi-disciplinary problems of modernization. The recent structural changes in Russia's constituent entities such as the unification of a number of autonomous oblasts and okrugs, the annexation of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, and the division of the Ministry of Education and Science into the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education complicates the comprehensive analysis of higher education management, preventing the formation of a single vertical of executive power. In this sense, the modern stage of higher education management from our point of view is of particular interest for the academic environment.

An external weighty argument is the inclusion of our country in the ranking of countries with high shares of people with higher education. According to the *OECD report "Education at a Glance 2017"*, 56% of Russians aged 25–64 have higher education. This value is the second largest after Canada among all OECD and partner countries, exceeding the average value by 19% [10]. According to the Higher School of Economics, the share of people aged 17-25 engaged in programs of higher education in the country as a whole comprises 32.9 %.

It is important to understand that if the objective to modernize higher education for its transition to mass education at the level of bachelor's degree available to more than 50% of young people of the relevant age group is successfully accomplished, the functions of education change – from the reproduction of the elite to the adaptation of the entire

population to social and technological changes [11]. However, consistent civilizational development of the society is ensured by active interaction of an individual with the surrounding social environment, their direct participation in collective action, rather than by direct imposition of certain ideals, identities, emotions and knowledge [12].

It is noteworthy that, according to *Federal Law no. 273-FZ "On education in the Russian Federation", dated 29.12.2012*, the system of higher education is a set of interacting, successive educational programs of different levels and focus, federal state educational standards and requirements, a network of educational institutions and scientific organizations implementing them; authorities managing education, institutions and organizations subordinated to them, associations of legal entities, public and state-public associations carrying out activities in education. Its purpose is to train highly qualified personnel in main areas of socially useful activities according to the needs and demands of the state and the civil society; to meet the needs of an individual in intellectual, cultural, and moral development; to provide skills development in science and teaching for personnel by conventionally determining the content of educational standards and qualification requirements to the level of graduates' training. At the individual level, higher education retains its impact on the person's life trajectory in the form of recognition of diploma. At the same time, the content of the education itself is only generally considered and is not associated with further development of both scientific knowledge in general and competencies acquired by the graduate in further professional activity. The functional specific nature of this system is that vocational training is usually aimed at activities outside the educational institution, which determines the autonomy of higher education as a social system.

Of particular research interest is achieving the theoretical and applied objectives on the formation of *a socio-forecast approach to managing* higher education as a condition for conceptual development of the educational system and the institution of education as a whole. It is also necessary to develop a forecast paradigm of higher education management with further diagnosis and justification of the target mechanism of its implementation at the present stage of civilizational development in Russia Federation and its regions.

Elements of the general research program

The purpose is defined as the identification of degree of social support from people with higher education of the policy of the vertical and its separate links. *The search objective* is to analyze socio-economic indicators of regional development, taking into account the parameter of working population with higher education.

The main hypothesis is as follows: higher education is a social resource to address multidisciplinary problems of socio-cultural modernization. The activation of potential of people with higher education, “*actors-professionals*” (*the term of O.V. Aksenova*) [13] in the state strategy of socio-cultural modernization of regions can “gently” affect the level of support for constructive actions of the vertical of power and further ensure a high level of solidarity within the Russian society. *Two concluding hypotheses* are identified: *first*, regional socio-cultural modernization is associated with the development degree of their systems of power and management, which, in turn, depend on social organization and self-organization, the hierarchy of groups including people with higher education, and their interest in the modernization process; *second*, the social group of people with higher education represent an electorate with average socio-political activity, which can play an important role in the development of problem situations

in regions with different modernization levels and in creation of new models of organizational development and management.

Methods of primary data collection and analysis

The mass representative survey covered four Russian regions: the Moscow Oblast, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Belgorod Oblast, and the Republic of Kalmykia. The distribution by type of modernization, balance of these regions: the Moscow Oblast – 6 – above average, the Republic of Bashkortostan – 3 – average, the Belgorod Oblast – 2 – below average, the Republic of Kalmykia – 1 – below average (*according to the classification of levels of socio-cultural modernization by N.I. Lapin*). The indices of modernization balance in regions: 0.440/0.389/0.231/0.281 respectively. The Moscow and Belgorod oblasts are located in the Central Federal District, the Republic of Bashkortostan – in the Volga Federal District, the Republic of Kalmykia – in the Southern Federal District [1].

The model of quota sample realization ($N=500$ for each region) is formed at the intersection of “gender*generation*education” features by weight of the corresponding groups in the 2010 census in Russia (model) and by region (implementation) per 100 people. Each quota corresponds to the weight of the group in the population per 1.000 people with the electoral qualification. According to the research methodology, the respondents’ education is characterized as incomplete secondary and lower, general secondary, vocational secondary, incomplete higher, and higher. The distribution of average data as a percentage of the total number of respondents is as follows: 13, 17, 38, 6, 27 [14]¹.

¹ Here and further in the text without additional references we use data of sociological research of the Center for Management Sociology and Social Technology at Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted in 2015–2017.

Table 1. Ranked list of regional higher education systems by modernization level of regions and coverage of young people with programs of higher education, 2014 (for Russia as a whole and for four regions of empirical study)

Regions' modernization level	Russia, regions	Coverage of people aged 17–25 with programs of higher education (deviation from mean), %	Availability of places at universities/ highly selective institutions, ranks	Affordability, rank	Geographical accessibility, rank
High	Russia	32.9 (0)	—	—	—
	Moscow and the Moscow Oblast	49.2 (+16.3)	2 / 4	29–30	1
Average	Republic of Bashkortostan	27.4 (-5.5)	49 / 20–21	8–9	37
Below average	Belgorod Oblast	36.3 (+3.4)	14 / 52–80	47–48	32–34
Low	Republic of Kalmykia	28.1 (-4.8)	42–43 / 52–80	72	64

Compiled from: Lapin N.I. (Ed.). Belyaeva L.I. et al. *Atlas of modernization in Russia and its regions: socio-economic and socio-cultural trends and problems*. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2016. 360 p.; Gromov A.D., Platonova D.P., Semenov D.P., Pyrova T.L. *Access to higher education in Russian regions*. Moscow: NIU VShE, 2016. 32 p.

This ratio of values shows a regional increase in the share of respondents with incomplete secondary and lower education (from 10% in the Moscow Oblast to 14% in the Republic of Kalmykia) and a decrease in the share of respondents with higher education (from 33% in the Moscow Oblast to 25% in the Republic of Kalmykia). In the Republic of Bashkortostan there is a relatively large share of respondents with secondary vocational education (44 %) and a smaller share – with secondary general education (13 %).

The situation with the share of young people engaged in higher education programs in the studied regions differs (*Tab. 1*).

Thus, the Moscow Oblast and Belgorod oblasts demonstrate the coverage of young people with places at universities (49.2 and 36.3%, respectively). High coverage of higher education in the Belgorod Oblast, where about 1% of all students study, is explained by a relatively large network of higher education institutions, taking into account the population in the region. In the Belgorod Oblast there are 15 universities and university branches with 53,100 students. In the republics of Kalmykia and Bashkortostan the coverage of higher education is 28.1 and 27.4%, respectively [15].

The results of data validity assessment show that the general structure of the population ($N=2002$) is characterized by a shift towards more educated people, a decreasing number of people with incomplete secondary or lower education, as well as with general secondary and vocational secondary education. There are insignificant deviations from the sample weight of groups of younger, middle, and older generations taken within group boundaries by sex. The correlation between their specific weights in the general population and in the resulting array is very high: 0.982 for Pearson, 0.980 for Spearman and 0.902 for Kendall at $Q=99\%$.

Results of empirical research

Assessment of the degree of support for the policy of management authorities and their individual links by people with higher education

At the level of support for governance levels we observe the following hierarchy: Office of the President of the Russian Federation ranks first (35% "for" – 30 "abstained" – 35 "against"); 2nd – administrations of enterprises and organizations (30–35–35); 3rd – the Government of the Russian Federation (27–37–36); 4th – Federation Council of the Russian Federation (24–39–37); 5th – sectoral ministries (23–

39–38); 6-th – State Duma (22–38–39); 7th – regional administrations (22–34–43); and, finally, 8th – administrations of cities and villages (21–32–47). It should be noted that protests among the population grow from place to place, the share of “supporters”, “mediators” and “opponents” of authorities is changing. Two circumstances are of particular interest: the significant prevalence of “opponents” of the administration system over its “supporters”, as well as a significant weight (up to 39% in some cases) of “undecided” people. This seems to be a significant sign of people’s *“mediation behavior”* (the term of A.P. Davydov) [16].

There is empirical evidence that there is a noticeable gap between the level of people’s support for the foreign policy of the country’s authorities and for solutions to internal socio-economic problems, first of all – raising the standard of living and the living conditions in regions with different modernization types and balance levels. The opinions of respondents from different regions vary in assessing the need to change the system of administration: one third were “for”, one third – “against” and more than a third (about 40 %) – abstained or did not make a certain decision.

At the level of efficiency assessments of the highest level of administration we can observe the distribution shifted towards the reformist group of votes, which requires changes in the work of the country’s administration. The greatest shift is observed in terms of the work of the President’s Office (66% of reformist opinions) and the Russian Government (52%). As for the work of the State Duma and the Federation Council, the extreme positions are balanced by medium orientation comparable to them, which implies the presence of different points of view on the effectiveness of their work.

At the level assessing the efficiency of sectoral ministries and the office of the Governor of the republic, krai, or region, there are shifted distributions towards only

conservative or only reformist orientations. Moderate orientation prevails.

There is no shift not have a sloping character in one direction or another to assess The assessments of efficiency of city or village administration do not shift towards any direction, along with the efficiency of local government or administration of an enterprise (institutions, organizations). It is not necessary to change the operation of the mentioned administration levels in the estimates.

At the level of assessing the shortcomings of the management system, there is a significant number of respondents medium and highly concerned about significant aspects of the national system of management in terms of “focus on reporting to a superior, rather than addressing the problem” (55%), “the transformation of managers into a clan” (50%), “the use of organization’s resources for personal purposes” (51%), “poor feedback, lack of control over decision implementation” (48%), and “inappropriate enthusiasm for Western management” (42%).

At the level of operation of links of administration bodies, there are distribution shifts towards satisfaction in terms of “work of culture institutions” (57%), “work of preschool institutions” (55%), “organization and support for school education” (50%), “professional education, professional development” (49%). There is mainly average and positive satisfaction with the signs of “availability of electronic information on the work of authorities” (39–40%), “strategic development of a city (settlement)” (38-38%). However, there are interregional differences in respondents’ estimates of the last two indicators. Thus, in the Moscow and Belgorod oblasts there are higher estimates of availability of electronic information on the work of authorities (51 and 46%, respectively). In the Belgorod Oblast, the assessments of strategic regional development is higher (56%).

Table 2. Ranked list of regional labor markets by modernization level and employment of people with higher education in regions' structures, 2015 (for Russia as a whole and for four regions of empirical research)

Regions' modernization level	Russia, regions	Working population with higher education in region's structures (deviation from mean), %	Russia's rank by number of students per 10,000 people, rank
High	Russia	33.0 (0)	—
	Moscow the Moscow Oblast	47.8 (+14.8) 43.6 (+10.6)	1 81
Average	Republic of Bashkortostan	26.8 (-6.2)	39
Below average	Belgorod Oblast	30.4 (-2.6)	18
Low	Republic of Kalmykia	35.6 (+2.6)	30

Compiled from: Lapin N.I. (Ed.), Belyaeva L.I. et al. *Atlas of modernization in Russia and its regions: socio-economic and socio-cultural trends and problems*. Moscow: Ves' Mir, 2016. 360 p.; *Russian regions. Socio-economic indicators. 2016: statistical book*. Moscow: Rosstat, 2016. 1326 p.

Experience in empirical research indicates that people with higher education strongly understand the alienation of a significant number of leaders from executive bodies, frequent substitution of management with control or collusion, signs of corruption in the actions of authorities, etc. There is a clear prevalence in public opinion of respondents of this group of power component in the vertical of power, and the administrative-command nature of the management system, which does not contribute to the socio-cultural modernization of Russia and its regions.

Analysis of socio-economic indicators of regional development taking into account the parameter of the working population with higher education

Rosstat data (*Table 2*) state that there is a significant share of the working population with higher education in the regional economic structures: from 26.8% in the Republic of Bashkortostan to 43.6% in the Moscow Oblast (with 33.0% in Russia as a whole). In absolute terms, this is 471.6 and 1339.0 thousand people, respectively. However, in the whole country there is a severe shortage of specialists in science and technology (54 thousand people). Analysts of *Korn Ferry Hay Group*, the largest international consulting management company, estimate the loss of the Russian economy from lack of highly educated professionals worth 300 billion dollars for the next 12 years [17].

We believe that in regions under review do not fully reveal their potential of people with higher education in addressing the modernization issues. First of all, we are talking about the Republic of Kalmykia which achieved the first type of modernization with a balance level below average at 35.6% of the working population with higher education. Also, the Belgorod Oblast which ranks 18th (relatively high) in Russia in terms of the number of students per 10,000 people and with coverage of young people with programs of higher education above average, has a similar indicator of 30.4%, which demonstrates low rates of civilizational development (2 – below average).

Conclusion. The scientific novelty and practical use of the research project consists in the fact that it substantiates the relevance of a new stage of institutional regulation of relations between society and the state on the basis of taking into account the emerging trends of socio-cultural modernization in the regions. We place special emphasis on the willingness of the authorities and of all segments of society to participate in this process; at that the major role should be played by the social group that is well-trained from the scientific and educational perspective. We believe that today's dominant model of social development based on economic growth and centralized management should be replaced by a model of "socialization" of power and management

from the standpoint of a full-fledged use of the institutional and regulatory component. In the model, the ability of citizens to analyze critically the surrounding reality becomes particularly important; it allows them to develop effective solutions to problems in key areas of their lives on their own [18; 19; 20].

This vision fits into the “*scenario for scientific and technological leadership of Russia*” (*the term by N.I. Lapin*), the implementation of which requires the concentration of resources on obtaining new scientific results. At present, it is necessary to ensure the mutual influence of science and society by involving the latter in the formation of requests for research findings, development of network forms of organization of scientific, scientific, technological and innovative practices. As we can see, the new Strategy for scientific and technological development of the Russian Federation aims to form an integral national innovation system with the involvement of local socio-cultural communities. It is necessary to provide the “soft” and comprehensive state regulation of modernization processes. Taking into consideration Russia’s long experience, we should emphasize that regulation carried out only top down cannot be effective. But the twofold regulation that is carried out “top down” on the part of federal authorities, and “bottom up” on the part of regional authorities

can become quite effective. Constructive cooperation of the initiatives “top down and bottom up” will produce a synergistic effect of the transition of the majority of regions in the second stage of modernization – the information stage [9].

The hypotheses formulated were generally confirmed in the course of the empirical study we conducted. The results show that the social group with higher education is able to influence the growth of social and civic subjectivity and the level of people’s support for the actions of the vertical of power. The problem of the influence of education on the mechanisms that provide a high level of solidarity of the Russian society in solving the problems of socio-cultural modernization of the regions is not inferior to the more general problems of interaction between the government and civil society. It is necessary to point out the significant share of this group, which allows us to classify its members as the “undecided” (“mediators”). It is clear that a relatively small part of these “mediators” (according to experts, about 10%) is enough to support one or the other of the opposing sides in order to change the situation in the country radically.

An important result of the study is the adjustment of the mass survey tools, as well as the planning of a similar study on a more representative sample of regions.

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