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“Corruption and its Impact on Education: A Case in Omsk.”

The fight against corruption is one of the most important undertakings in our new-world. The shift from command economies to free market economies has created massive opportunities for the appropriation of rents and has often been accompanied by a change from a well-organized system of corruption to a more chaotic and deleterious one. (<http://www.worldbank.org/fandd/english/0398/articles/010398.htm>). Education systems have also been offered by corruption.

I believe that new reform of education system proposed by the “Center of strategic reforms” won’t change anything positively. Its measures won’t decrease corruption in Omsk schools, at universities. So our regional economy will continue to receive unskilled or low skilled uneducated but willing to take part in corruption graduates.

In my paper I analyzed this phenomenon in the Omsk education system and the impact of reform on regional education. Because I have studied in school for 10 years and now I am studying at the university. I have had a first hand view as well as a personal interest to support my thesis I use interviews with people who deal with corruption questions in their lives every day; newspapers articles for understanding the official attitude toward corruption and the common opinion. Also I used Internet sources and TV programs.

Corruption plays a vital role in reducing the affectivity of Russian economy because it increases transactions and declines investments. Regression analysis made by Paolo Mauro shows that a country that improves its standing on the corruption index from 6 to 8 will typically raise its spending on education by $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1 percent of GDP, a considerable impact. This result is a matter for concern, because there is increasing evidence that educational attainment fosters economic growth (<http://www.worldbank.org/fandd/english/0398/articles/010398.htm>). The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) hesitates between 0 to 10 score. “0” corresponds to the most corrupt countries, “10” – to countries where corruption is absent. Russia occupies 82th place among 99 countries that shows we are very corrupted. CPI equals 2.4 in 1999, 2.1 in 2000 and the Finland – 9.8. (<http://allnews.ru/world/2000/09/13/rating/>) The situation is deteriorating.

The Russian education reform involves some major items: 1) Establishing the Common State Exam; 2) Changing to 12 year average education as in Europe (now it is 10-11); 3) Decreasing the number of provincial school and Providing each school with computer and Internet; 4) Creating online forum for discussing and developing new education programs 5) Change how the government distributes educational funds (Russian officials announce that we won’t implement voucher system of paying for education services as in the USA).

Chart 1. Number of graduated people in Omsk.

1990 – 11281
1995 – 8685
1996 – 9337
1997 – 10712
1998 – 10291
1999 – 10228
Source: Omsk regional statistical year-book

This theme is very important for our society because earlier Russia was proud of its well-known scientists, by its famous artists and writers. Yes, now Russian human resources are highly qualified but the average level of educated people has decreased for the last 10 years. 210 doctors and 2100 candidates of science work in Omsk universities nowadays. But the most of them graduated universities 20 years ago. The role of universities is very important because they are the centers of new technologies and researches. Without universities and young specialists Russia will be in the technological gap. Corruption effects graduated students and then the economy, because sometimes students have only money and no knowledge. So Russian market is run by bad specialists. TV news announced that in Moscow underground you can buy diploma of any Russian university at the price of 200 dollars. The number of this diploma will be real but the student’s name will change.

The broadest definition of corruption, which is used by the World Bank. "Corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain." My research reveals at least three kinds of corruption in our education system. The first one is, of course, money; the second one involves different gifts for teachers and equipment for classes; the third one is creating relations: if you served somebody he/she will help you in return. For example, there is almost official system in Omsk universities how much one entering exam costs (5 grade = 15000, 4 grade = 10000, 3 grade = 5000 rubles).

1. Establishing the Common State Exam (CSE).

The existing project of education reform is designed for 10 years and concerns people from kindergarten until university. The main goal of this reform is making education qualitative and accessible for everybody. Like any other reforms educational reform costs a lot. Experts say that it will take 16.7 billion rubles in next 5 years (http://www.hse.ru/prensa/upr_sck/200105161.htm). The first pilot project of the CSE in 5 subjects of the Russian Federation: republic Mary-El, republic Chuvashia, republic Sacha and Rostovskai and Samarskai region were taking place this summer.

The common exam will consist of 3 obligatory exams (Russian language, foreign language and mathematics) and 3 free subjects. The total score equals 100 units. The CSE, which will be provided through an independent institution like Ministry of education (neither school nor university), is the method of independent controlling the quality of education. According to the order of the government of Russian Federation №119 (16.02.2001), after passing this exam pupils will receive the certificate, which is called "the state individual financial obligation" (SIFO). The SIFO will determine how much the state should pay for each individual student. The certificate will be of five grades: A+ (=5+ student won Russian and international science olympiads), A (=5), B (=4), C (=3), D (<3). The grade "A+" guarantees 100 % of the state payment, others - certain percentages annually. I am against this method because there are not so many talented students in Russia; most of us receive A, B, C and they will be paid partly: A-17500, B-12500, C-7000 rubles (*Tarnaeva I. 2001*). If a pupil has not received even "D" grade, the state will not give him/her any money to continuing education. This is the main idea this money is enough to study only in regional universities and Moscow's and St-Petersberg's universities will stay unachievable because, for instance, an academic year in the Moscow State Institute of International Relations costs 5000-7000 dollars. Even in Omsk You can't study at my faculty because it costs 23000 rubles a year. The official promise that a boy/girl from the rural can study in the most prestige universities will never come true because education there is worse than in big cities and they have less money. The issue here is that everybody will get the same exam but not the same education. The system is unfair.

For example, our officials believe that the CSE will reduce the level of corruption because the results will be counted in Moscow. Currently there is an analogical exam in Omsk State University. When I was an applicant I passed such exams, which are completed and checked in Moscow. I thought everyone had an equal chance but I was wrong. Some parents had such deep and strong connections with Moscow officials that they had access to the tests in advance. Thus their children received the highest marks, I know one boy who never was good in mathematics but he scored high on the math exam. Another boy sent his older brother to pass the exams. I can't explain why but Russians always try to twist authorities round their fingers. I think the state common exam will open a wide range of possibilities for corruption. Respecting laws and being honest isn't advantageous.

Everyone wants to give the best things to his/her children and the best education as well. The decade of "market economy" declined the teachers' revenues, so they are forced to work at more than 2 job places or take bribes. The Common State Exam will be passed once and it will substitute school's and universal exams. But the scale of informal economy won't

decline because, according to survey, 33% of pupils used additional courses for entering the university in 1998 in Omsk. This money wasn't taxed (*Dobruskin M.E. 2000:132*). The annual turnover of this business in Russia is about 1 billion rubles (*Zverev A. 2001: 14-19*). And people will use these courses because the school education system is not very good. The secondary educational curriculum does not prepare us to pass such exams. I want to raise the question that our Ministry of education should require the same level of knowledge in entering the university as we have after finishing school. While the gap between these two education institutions exists the corruption and informal economy will flourish.

There are three practical questions: the first one is that the certificate will be a document (<http://www.hse.ru/prensa/mk/20010525.htm>), which can be forgery. So we can receive a lot of "A" grades. And we won't have the actual picture of knowledge but we will have a wide spread forgery system. The second question was asked by my good friend if the most pupils received "A" and there is only limit amount of free places in universities how they will choose students? And the third one: How to evaluate creative skills, for example, for entering the Performance Arts University. This question was solved by retaining existing exams in such universities. The actual reform is not perfect it answers some questions and at the same time arises some new ones. So I think the corruption is here forever using this kind of reform. Our government should consider the CSE in details in order to avoid these questions.

2. Entering 12-year average education.

A 12-year school education suggests that children go to school at 6 year old. I know several people whose parents send their children to school earlier because they finished the school at 17 year and boys have two years in order to enter the university and not to go to the army. Under the 12-year system they would have only one year. This may increase corruption as parents have less space to legitimately enroll their children in college. This method won't decrease the corruption and won't work in the Russian context because there is the compulsory two-year draft in Russia and nobody want to serve in army because it is dangerous. So the corruption will covert from school/university to medical services because people will try to counterfeit the medic results.

There are two positive aspects of 12-year school system, one concerns health issue and the other is devoted to the international transferences of Russian High School diplomas. I see this one medicine problem: only 15% of graduates are healthy, others have some illness (myopia, the distortion of spine, etc). Previous education program will be prolonged on 1 additional year, pupils will have less classes a week. They will be able to participate in different sport activities. In addition, this measure allows graduates to enter any international university because they will have a diploma 12, foreign universities don't admit Russian a 10-11 year diploma. There are mixed feelings about this reform.

A teacher from my school Tatiana believes that 12 years will be much worse for the children. Our education system is based on working with a lot of materials and teachers will continue to give many tasks and children will lose a year of childhood. The positive feature of this measure; she believes in that the number of children is decreased in Russia so an additional year requires more teachers of elementary school. It will save job places.

Pupils from poor families usually begin to work in last grades because they need money for living and for education, too (even books, exercise-books, pens, pencils). One additional year will force them to earn more money. But if they don't manage to do this?

3. Decreasing the number of country school and providing each country school with computer and Internet.

There are 69000 schools in Russia, included 46000 in the province. There are 188 schools in Omsk and 128 of them have out-of-date computers. The situation in Omsk region is much worse: rural schools don't have computers and other devices. Uniting several rural schools allows to decrease the expenses and to increase the number of pupils in one class. It is good idea because when there are only 2 or 3 pupils in the 5th grade there is only one teacher who teaches all subjects (*Matveeva A. 2001:60*). The quality is absent.

The government also promises to provide each rural and city school with computers. But it is a very big task because only 3000 schools have the access to Internet. 1 billion rubles have already been spent on this project in 2001. Internet is an expensive service. Experts say that Russia needs annually 1 billion dollars for supporting Internet in all education organizations in Russia. And it is almost impossible because the whole federal budget on 2001 year equals only 40 billion dollars

(http://www.hse.ru/science/modern_ed/mass_menu.htm). So our government does not have this money.

In order to provide Omsk provincial schools with computers Omsk region Authorities are going to spend 27 million rubles until 2005 year (*The Memorandum*).

The next very big problem is that only 5 % of Russian population uses the Internet for others it is a mystery (*Internet education. 2000:7*). I think that provincial teachers are not in that 5%. The oil company "JUKOS" set up the organization "Federation of internet centers" where teachers will study the Internet. But there are only 20 centers in Russia.

In general this idea is perfect. But providing each school with computers and Internet services won't improve education without substantial training, which take time. Currently there is no allocation of funds for computer training in schools. Thus if significant training isn't done the old method to enter the university through additional courses and bribes will remain in place. I suggest attracting young teachers to work in schools because they have already know the Internet and computer in most cases and can share their experience. Additionally this measure save time and Russian (Omsk) authorities mustn't spend money on their training. In order to solve this problem the salary should be increased (it was increased by 20% in 2001), the status of teacher should be raised.

4. Creating online forum for discussing and developing new education programs.

This idea has been implemented. I can call the web-site where this principle has already worked <http://www.eidos.ru>. This is the Center of Distance education. I am sure that existing of such courses help people to study free of charge what they want. People in different age can study and develop their thoughts. The lack of training and computers in Omsk's schools leads to that this measure can't be effective. Omsk teachers meet once a year and exchange the experience orally.

5. Changing the system of investing the educational organizations.

Chart 2. Budget expenses on education,%.

1991 and 1992 – 3.6,
1993 – 4.1
1994 г. – 4.5
1995 – 3.4
1996 г. – 3.7
1997 - 3.6
1998 - 2.9.

Source:

The percent of federal budget, which is spent on the education sphere has been doing down. The situation has changed only in 2000 when the education budget was increase by 50% (46 billion rubles) in comparison with previous year. But this sum is low and additionally it is wasted. I see neither new equipment, nor furniture, nor equipment for chemical experiments in my school.

As a result of wasted funds the government decided to change the financing system. The reform suggests finance be based on students' results of the Common State Exam (SIFO). I think that this approach is very good but without other changes it won't fight corruption. Universities receive money and nobody will know how they spent it. Foreign schools and universities are usually legal entities and

have open public budgets. Thus they operate efficiently because they are interested in education quality and capital spending. Legitimately Russian organizations are mostly state run so they aren't efficient. We should reorganize schools and universities as state enterprises.

The reform offered to expand the universities and school economic activity. In this case organizations can earn money themselves. For example, publishing as in Cambridge. Also they can organize the courses for retraining personnel staff which different firms demand. Universities can open Research center that can do public or private research projects. Foreign people are interested in Russian's scholarship work. We could translate our papers to other languages and exchange with other universities. I think that Omsk universities should change from within. They should have public magazines, lists of graduates who were succeed, provide some kind of rating system between them in order to compete for smart students. Each corruption scandal or not very good level of education would decrease the rating and thus decline investment and the influx of applicants. I was surprised when I found that the author of educational reform had graduated my university and then had worked in Moscow.

We should attract domestic business for financing educational organizations. Companies are interested in qualified employees. It is necessary to change the legislation system in order for Russian firms to invest more money in education funds (now they can invest only 1-1.5% of their net profits). It is the obligation of our government. Our firms have alternatives they should compare which is cheaper and more useful: sending employee in foreign company for a year or studying in Russian university. In our universities there are the state places for students who are represented one's existing enterprise. They have low requirements to enter university (e.g. 10 scores when others need 15 scores for one exam) but it is the field for corruption. Market forces should decide what specialists are needed and people would decide to be unemployed or trying to get these qualifications. Members of government want to use some tax advantage for that enterprises which ordered and paid for several students. Of course, they will be sons, daughters, and acquaintances of enterprises' directors. I think companies should give money to universities for some projects or grants but not financing special students. I am sure that applicants should be equal thus universities shouldn't use this method for application and government should suggest something new.

There will be problems in implementing any reform of education because it is closely connected with other reforms (budget, tax, economic and public service reforms). If there is no heat or light in rooms what kind of education will we receive? Nevertheless I am proud that Russian government began to think about education reform. It is the first step. I believe that this is the inheritance of the Soviet Union period. Education like other sphere (economics, politics) needs some changes, new people. But politicians haven't seen during transition period that if they alter education system - they alter Russians. Therefore it would be easier to implement other reforms. We should base the new reform not only on the international experience but also on Russian contexts.

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