

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND MORAL EDUCATION IN MODERN UNIVERSITY

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In my presentation I will focus on two questions: what is the mission of the modern University? Whom and how should modern universities teach in accordance with their mission?

For any state universities are centers for the integration of science, education and culture. Hence the mission of University training: **to raise the intellectual tone of society, cultivate the public mind, purify the national taste.** The mission of modern University is based on three pillars: education – research - innovation. And to fulfill this mission, the Universities need to rethink their attitude to the tasks of education. "Do we need to educate adults?"

The answer to this question largely depends on what higher school understands by education. If education is understood as a coercive impact on a passive individual by imposing restrictions, intrusive monitoring and prohibitions, then the answer is definitely negative.

If we understand education as parenting, cultivation and creation of conditions for personality self-development during academic years, then, the answer is emphatic “Yes”. Universities definitely should foster, develop, and produce professionals and ideal citizens with ethical values and national spirit responsible for what is happening in their country and the world at large. In other words, University education should be aimed at creating conditions inspiring those involved to actively participate in the education process by making conscious choice of values and ideals to follow. So the task of modern University is to educate society through **transmission of cultural heritage** and distribution of academic standards. It follows that to achieve its goal modern University is to cultivate and develop all major actors of educational process: those who are educated (students), to those who educate (teachers). Let me consider each of these tasks at a greater detail.

The task of educating students

Mounting pressure is laid on modern Universities to continue to perform the function of families and schools whose role is that of socializing agencies. The dilemma here is that in addition to socialization of the young Universities should devote much of their time and energy to their primary task to give adults knowledge and help them become enlightened

citizens. If University continues parenting work initiated in families and schools, it is important to assess the achieved results.

Traditionally the selection of students to universities is made on the basis of intelligence while personal achievements, for example, in sport or in communal activities are practically neglected. For instance, at the entrance exams the level of subject knowledge is estimated up to 100 points at the same time different Universities can add applicant from **only!** 1 to 5 points for personal achievements in public benefit activities or in sports. Nowadays in Russia this ideology of the evaluation is changing, but still the formal results of the unified state exams outbalance individual achievements.

The question may well be asked: can a student with negative personality traits not be allowed to enter University? Of course not, as he does not violate the Law. It follows then, that Universities should not be held responsible for the results of fostering a professional, since the academic codes are not consistent with judicial norms. As a result Universities do not monitor the development of their students' personal competences.

In this case who should be responsible for the education at universities? Probably the state should exercise control over University education policy. In Russia these issues are now under discussion. And the Ministry of Education and Science is making every effort to execute the President Putin's instructions and specify in the Federal standards the individual components of education to not only make the education and training consistent at all stages and forms of education process but also bring them up to date with international requirements.

Let us now briefly discuss the elements promoting the development of spiritual and moral qualities of personality.

At first I would mention Arts and Humanities as they enlarge students' knowledge about human beings, mankind and humanity at large and provide them with a clear conscious view of their own opinions and judgments.

Then comes the humanitarian component of academic disciplines. As is well known such disciplines as math, physics, chemistry or astronomy are deprived of humanitarian component, but mastering them is accompanied with emotions and value judgments. Therefore, any subject at University can contribute to system of values development.

I could not but mention advanced educational technologies and methods which are characterized by interactivity and powerful information capacity. The diversity of techniques not only upgrades education, but also contributes to psychological and social readiness of individuals to constant innovation. It is vitally important, however, that in a constantly changing information environment a would be professional sticks to civil principles and

national system of values.

And last but not the least important educational component is the academic environment, that is University itself. John Dewy, the father of the movement of progressive education, held that: "Not a teacher and textbook is a source of knowledge, but the hands, eyes, ears, all body." It follows that Universities should organize study, and especially extracurricular activity to enable their students to do a productive task and play a productive role in society.

The example of such approach I've seen here during my previous visit to Your wonderful University, when we discussed the role of extracurricular activities in professional education. Back in Moscow I told my colleagues about the tradition of would be teachers - students of Your University – to go to villages in summer time to get extra practice with school boys and girls. Volunteering is important not only for professional pedagogical competences, but also for the social solidarity actions and initiatives.¹

President V. Putin regularly stresses the importance of voluntary work for society and state in his annual (since 2007) messages to the Russian Federation. Today in the Russian universities there are many voluntary organizations and movements in different spheres.

So, academic subjects, advanced teaching methods and extracurricular activities are important elements of modern University education.

Let me now briefly dwell on teachers' professional training.

Objectives of education teachers

The modern University should create conditions that would help teachers to cope with the role of "model of virtue" to follow. Established in 1755, Moscow University bore the name Moscow Imperial University. The very name emphasized its special role and status in Russia. At Moscow Imperial University there existed a set of Rules and Principles for teachers, through which education was governed. One of the principles run "Master, who does serve as an example of virtue, does more harm than good to his disciples".

Today to comply with modern trends and University mission teacher should be both a researcher and a tutor, which is a tough task for a number of reasons. The competition of

¹ Student volunteering serves several functions:

1. Educational function - participation in volunteer projects require student responsibility, the manifestation of such qualities as friendship, kindness, honesty, decency, generosity, and others;
2. Educational function - the student received no financial support for his work, but his reward lies in the experience he acquires over a period of volunteer activities.
3. The function of socialization - the students are faced with various social problems, adopting the social patterns of conduct of senior colleagues, that is, pass school life through volunteer activities.

universities for places in international and national rankings requires teachers to meet formal requirements, primarily in scientific work. For example, each member of the Department of philosophy of education, which I head at philosophy faculty, is to publish at least three articles a year in journals acknowledged by State Attestation Commission, a scientific public body.

Apart from publications, teachers are to conduct own research work, take part in scientific conferences and supervise students. In other words, modern Universities focus on research related to practice and innovation. As a result the University professor is evaluated by the number of credit hours and scientific articles published, just because the research results are visible, important and easy to score.

At the same time the individual component of teacher's pedagogical achievement is left beyond evaluation procedure as it is less visible, delayed in time and cannot be properly assessed by formal criteria. From my own experience I know, that the teacher's role as spiritual and moral values disseminator is invaluable not only for students' professional development but also for their future life. How to assess the results of daily pedagogical efforts of a teacher? Unfortunately, no comprehensible criteria have been offered so far.

Since teacher's activity is inseparable from his lectures, seminars, scientific supervision the question of teacher's professional development becomes of paramount importance. How to cultivate a teacher, who is eager to supervise the research of his students, and be effective lecturer and scientist? Salary is obviously not a panacea. Probably we should think about the creation of the professional environment that would motivate personal growth and conscious self-improvement. Yet there is no definite answer to the question how to aspire the teaching community to fulfill their educational mission and every University should do it its way. At the same time we as professionals, as University representatives, as citizens of our countries should not neglect University educational mission.

I would like to finish my presentation by quoting the Radhakrishnan Report on University Education in India: **“The purpose of all education is to provide a coherent picture of the universe and integrated way of life.”** In fact if education can achieve this objective then any product of our educational institutions could well play his role in life and help in building a better world.

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