

# Socio-cultural Dominants of Higher School Innovation Mission

## Dominantes socioculturales de la misión de innovación de la escuela superior rusa

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Received: 13/07/2018 • Approved: 28/09/2018 • Published 28/12/2018

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#### ABSTRACT:

The article deals with the value backgrounds to ensure the innovative potential of the Russian higher school. Based on the methodology of socio-cultural determination, the authors propose to apply large-scale civilizational dimension for understanding the higher school's innovative mission. This dimension covers a range of central ideas in the history of the higher school development in the framework of such dominants as: social-centered, theology-centered, anthropocentric, profession-centered, scientific-centered, ideology-focused, market-focused. Each of these models is defined by influence of a certain cultural tradition which sets priorities for education and innovative practice. The strengthening of higher school innovative potential can be promoted by the simultaneous presence and interweaving of different dominants. Meanwhile, the leading role has to belong to person-centered dominant which gives the chance for self-realization of the personality and for carrying out fruitful innovations. The authors show destructive influence of monopoly of market-focused dominant on innovative viability of Russian higher school. The main positive way that provides this viability is connected with restoration of the civilizational corps of higher school on the basis of recognition of its poly-cultural status and development of the values of personal knowledge and innovative experience.

**Keywords:** the higher school, innovative potential, mission and values of higher education, socio-cultural

#### RESUMEN:

El artículo considera los requisitos previos de valor para garantizar el potencial innovador de la escuela superior rusa. Con base en la metodología de la determinación sociocultural, los autores proponen aplicar una dimensión de civilización a gran escala para comprender la misión innovadora de la educación superior. Esta dimensión abarca una serie de ideas centrales en la historia del desarrollo de la escuela superior en el marco de dominantes tales como: centrado en la sociedad, centrado en la teología, antropocéntrico, centrado en la profesión, centrado en la ciencia, centrado en la ideología, centrado en el mercado. Cada uno de estos modelos se define por la influencia de una determinada tradición cultural que establece prioridades para la educación y la práctica innovadora. El fortalecimiento del potencial innovador de la escuela superior puede promoverse mediante la presencia simultánea y el entrelazamiento de diferentes dominantes. Mientras tanto, el papel protagónico debe pertenecer al dominio centrado en la persona, que ofrece la posibilidad de la autorrealización de la personalidad y la realización de innovaciones fructíferas. Los autores muestran la influencia destructiva del monopolio dominante centrado en el mercado sobre la viabilidad innovadora de la escuela superior rusa. La principal forma positiva de garantizar esta vitalidad está relacionada con la restauración del dominio de la civilización de la educación superior sobre la base del

dominants, the university sustainable innovative development.

reconocimiento de su condición multicultural y el desarrollo de valores de conocimiento personal y experiencia innovadora.

**Palabras clave:** la escuela superior, el potencial innovador, la misión y los valores de la educación superior, los dominantes socioculturales, el desarrollo innovador sostenible de la universidad

## 1. Introduction

Problems of the higher school excite today many researchers and are in epicenter of public consciousness. The future of the society and worthy life of citizens in many respects depends on what will be the higher education. In the modern unpredictable world the value of the higher school consists in its innovative function, in ability to produce progressive models and standards of civilized development. It is known that from the very beginning of the origin the higher school acted as the innovative project sent to the future. For many centuries, universities and academies have served as generators of innovative ideas and technologies that have provided the progressive growth of developed countries (Barnett, 2011).

Meanwhile, at the border of the last two centuries the innovative function of universities has significantly decreased. Unprecedented accessibility, specialization and mass character of higher education, a decrease in the fundamental nature of education led to the fact that today the higher school is transformed into one of the service structures in the market of educational supplies (Bok, 2004).

By the end of the last century processes of blurring and muffling of the innovation-cultural mission of the higher school were designated. J. Habermas points to the crisis of the university as a social institution (1994), B. Riddings describes the "University in Ruins" (1994), and R. Barnett argues that "the western university died" (1997). The state of the Russian higher school is described by terms that are also far from optimistic. According to I.M. Ilyinsky, "higher school ceased to be the highest" (2002), it lost the role of the social elevator, ceased to serve as a source of fundamental scientific knowledge, can not provide cultural growth of the personality, etc.

As noted by scholars and thinkers, crisis of the higher school arose in an era of "manufactured uncertainty" (Giddens, 1990) and was connected with system crisis of a contemporary individualized society (Bauman, 2001). This society is characterized by wasteful consumer culture (Bauman, 2007), adherence of universities to the values of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) in the logic of postmodern mentality (Lyotard, 1979). Being strengthened by the going globalization these transformations undermined intellectual immunity of traditional educational institutes including universities (Hutcheson, 2011). In our opinion, the main threats to the higher school proceed from attempts to impose on it the one-sided standards and the simplified approaches to an assessment of its own identity and a role in the real world overflowed with ambiguity and uncertainty (Bauman, 2000). In the present unpredictable and uncertain world, many people expect that higher school (and the university in particular) will realize its intellectual and innovative potential (Barnett, 2000).

It is undoubted that the main universal-innovative value of the higher school is the knowledge. As D.N. Tiwari remarked figuratively, "The attainment of knowledge is of the highest value; it is the light, the guide in learning the way that leads life from falsity to truth, from ignorance to wisdom, from mortality to immortality and for that reason it is value" (Tiwari, 2011, p. 35). Meanwhile, the value of knowledge can vary considerably depending on a cultural context and the social order. Different times and eras demand such type of knowledge which answers to necessary problems of society and can bring it to a new level of development. Therefore, the higher school innovative potential in many cases has a socio-cultural appointment; it consists in helping society to expand the horizons of self-consciousness for a sustainable development.

However, today these horizons are washed away by influence of deconstructive reformations in line with the postmodern culture. One of such trends is the tendency to *de-rationalization* of education as forms of devaluation of consciousness (Jacoby, 2008). According to

conclusions of some authors, under cover of Bologna Process the Humboldt's classical model of national university is dismantled (as outdated and not answering to post-industrial society, etc.) (Schultheis, et al., 2008). The unified-service model comes to this place; this model is directed on formation of *competences* instead of *knowledge* (Barnett & Griffin, 1997). This kind of institutional inversion leads to the withdrawal of the educational system from the sphere of knowledge, from its fundamental and theoretical function, from the culture of universal understanding (Liessmann, 2006).

So, in practice it is noted that on the one hand, there is a strengthening of a utilitarian component of education which focuses on assimilation not so much of knowledge, but procedures and technologies. On the other hand, there is a weakening of a scientific and fundamental component of training that stimulates unacademic forms of communication in educational sphere, and increases demand for unscientific schemes of outlook.

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## 2. Methodology

The purpose of our study was to describe the civilizational determinants of the innovative mission of higher education. We sought to show the dependence of higher school development on the cultural vector, which dominates in the public order.

This study was conducted on the basis of the method of socio-cultural determination and constructing, which developed in the fundamental works of well-known scientists (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Searle, 1995). We believe that the innovative potential and mission of the higher school lies in its ability to offer the society a promising project of progressive development. And this project is called upon to contribute to the dynamic and balanced development of society on an intellectually constructive level. In this sense, the innovative potential of higher school can be represented as a kind of genome of the self-reproduction of culture (Gasset, 1999). Ensuring innovative practices in higher education should be based on its understanding of a multivalve and multi-layered cultural process in which the unity of learning and research is achieved. This process can not be described and defined in the framework of unambiguous schemes, paradigms and concepts. Experience of history shows that the classical university as a social institution develops at the crossroads of various socio-cultural dimensions: religious, civil, educational, research, corporate, communicative, technological, etc. (e.g. Rudy, 1984). This set of dimensions in the university domain provided an expanded range of opportunities for innovation (which has always distinguished higher education from secondary and secondary special schools).

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## 3. Results

### 3.1. The basic dominants of the higher school's innovative development

For understanding of a driving intensions of university innovative practice it is necessary to address to cultural values which dominate in society and set a certain human dimensions of education. These dimensions represent implicit system of coordinates that define priorities, goals, principles and the corresponding standards of construction of the educational sphere. Such system makes itself felt and finds an embodiment in educational policy, in formation of mission, the purposes and content of education, in a choice of criteria of quality of education, and also in forms, methods and technologies of training, in management of the higher school and educational process (Shutenko, E. & Shutenko, A., 2015). Depending on prevalent social idea which forms a mainstream and the cultural priorities, all variety of forms and models of the higher school design can be referred to several basic dominants: social-centered, theology-centered, anthropocentric, profession-centered, scientific-centered, ideology-focused, market-focused.

- *Social-centered dominant* means that the higher school, first of all, is intended for educate of citizens which are capable to put into practice interests of society. The theory and practice of education are set by the value of a public duty. The higher education has to form competences of civil activity and been as the social elevator for active members of society.

The innovative mission of the higher school consists in its ability to develop progressive models of social functioning.

- *Theology-centered dominant* gives to the higher school and education the universal sense consisting in movement to the supreme values of a spiritual growth (Newman, 1917). This dominant provides unity of belief, truth and knowledge. The medieval university was appeared in a bosom of this dominant and its innovative role consisted in advancing of moral outlook and universal knowledge about reality and the world as a whole.
- *Anthropocentric dominant* turns the higher school to the values of humanism, answering on predominating idea of the human being as crown of nature. The innovative potential of such dominant manifests itself in the cultivation of creative thinking within the framework of progressive didactics aimed on perfection cognitive-productive abilities that open the way to Enlightenment.
- *Profession-centered dominant* is associated with the increasing of the specialization of economy and society with leading idea of employment. In this dimension, the value of education is determined by its usefulness. The higher school is called upon to form experience of effective functioning in the established system of labor division, and its innovative mission is to prepare of the advanced professionals and productive technologies.
- In *scientific-centered dominant* the higher school is obliged to serve science and, first of all, natural science. The value of truth and search of essential nature of things as a cultural dominant defines Humboldt's university model. Higher school has to form experience of objective research, scientific search, experience of experimenting. In education it is important to teach students to subject thought to the analysis and scientific check. In accordance with this dominant, the innovative mission of a higher school derives from its ability to implement discoveries and develop breakthrough studies.
- *Ideology-focused dominant* subordinates the higher school to political goals and tasks. This dominant is built in compliance with a cultural dominant of the power as main value of existence. The higher school is intended to strengthen state power and must first of all form experience of loyalty to a certain political system. Its innovative mission is to prepare constructive ideologies and their adepts.
- *Market-focused dominant* binds the higher school to purely economic interests and treat it as a commercial enterprise. According to dominant of monetarism in culture and economy the main task of the higher school is to make profit, and it's preferable in a money equivalent. Economic laws and mechanisms are moved to the sphere of higher education which is treated as a part of the market of educational services and scientific works. The innovative mission of higher school is seen in its ability to create a system of profitable proposals within the framework of education-as-consumption schemes that appropriate to a market conjuncture.

As a whole, the resultant moment of action of various dominants is a certain type and character of the personality. Therefore for understanding of what kind of educational dominant we deal, first of all it's necessary to pay attention to how it influences on a person. The higher school can prepare the person for community service, learn to bring benefit, to survive, to create and discover, but also can learn to obey and sacrifice, to use and adapt. And these patterns correspond to various aims, types and models of education which are reflected in some researches (Aldrich, 2010).

### **3.2. The person-centered dominant as source of higher school's innovative development**

The fruitful, centuries-old path of university history indicates that its sustainable innovative potential is maintained by combining in the design of the university various types of socio-cultural dominants (Rudy, 1984).

The main secret of the higher school's viability consists, in our opinion, in a variety of combinations and convergences described above dominants which create by their connection the whole institute for personality development. It is necessary just to understand what

binds all these dominants together in general unity?

The answer to this question can be found by detection of one more specific dominant which we consider as a key factor in development of the higher school's innovative capacity. There is a *person-centered* dominant of education and innovative activity that represents an internal dimension and implicit axis of the higher school's functioning as the institute of civilization renewal. This dominant is similar to a binding thread which passes through all socio-cultural layers of higher education sphere (*Doroshenko et al., 2017*). The special dominant generates and supports person-centered dominant, it also determines all other values of education. It is a dominant of a culture in primary form. It is about culture as universal unity of outlook and behavior, life and consciousness, science and practice.

Person-centered dominant is the not unified model of the higher school creation with rigid structure and hierarchy. This dominant represents a wide field and range of opportunities for determination of the higher school identity, offering plurality of various models and approaches of creation of the educational and scientific practice, aimed at the full development of the student as active participant of professional, civil, cultural, leisure, information and so forth types of activity (*Shutenko, E. et al., 2016*).

As soon as education moves away from the value of personality, all socio-cultural dominants are disintegrated. Meanwhile attempt to build an educational and research process in the higher school without person-centered dominant in a limited framework of the some one of dominant leads to deformation and degradation of the higher school institute because it closes the sphere of opportunities and conditions for students self-fulfillment and for carrying out fruitful innovations.

### **3.3. Monopoly of market-focused dominant as hindrance to sustainable innovative development of the higher school**

The concept of socio-cultural allows approaching to understanding of that difficult situation in which there was the Russian higher school at a turn of the last centuries. It was a real crisis situation which is caused by socio-cultural inversion in the educational sphere, made in the Post-Soviet period.

Then in a short time was made a replacement of opposite dominants of the higher school (market-focused dominant began to dominate instead of ideological) at simultaneous decrease and even cutting off other important orientations (social-centered, scientific-centered etc.). Such a sharp drop of values in the socio-cultural domain of universities led to formation of institutional vacuum with the subsequent emission of destructive energy which caused negative consequences in the sphere of the higher education, having rejected the country on the periphery of a civilization scale of development in this sphere. As a result, today we are dealing with a monopoly of the market-focused dominant in education, which seeks to establish commercial rules, mechanisms and standards of the higher education functioning. Following these standards, the higher school purposefully turns into an "educational supermarket" on the global market of educational services and innovative technologies (*Ryzhkova & Sergeev, 2010*).

This tendency especially clearly made itself felt at the beginning of the current century, then the market-focused dominant actually forced out other approaches to educational process in Russia as well as in western countries (*Roger, 2004*).

In market-focused dominant the basis of educational activity is deformed, students lose opportunity to get experience of self-changes as it is demanded by psychological and pedagogical sciences (*Davydov, 1999*). In accordance to the principle of expenses minimization students are exempted from the need for self-modifying, the logic of person development in educational process is replaced by logic of consumption of a teaching material, the logic of intellectual effort is replaced by logic of satisfaction and the logic of educational activity is replaced by logic of service. As a result the basic educational principle ceases to work, namely, the principle of the *leading role of teaching* in psychological development of human being (*Vygotsky, 1997*). Thus, there is a process of alienation of the student from educational activity.

The paradox of the higher education today is that owing to its commercialization and a mass character now not graduates of schools fight for their receipt in higher education institutions and vice versa. Moreover, universities by means of Unified State Examination are actually deprived of possibility of selection of suitable students personally. Such an institutional inversion is a logical consequence of the new "rules of the game" that were introduced into the higher school and do not meet its cultural appointment and mission.

Psychologically outcome of this pseudo-educational situation consists that the age logic in student's years of life demands intense cerebration, but education in a format of service ceases to be difficult, ceases to load. As a result during the time of training in higher school young people receive an irreversible development gap, which cannot be compensated in the next years. The person loses chance of fruitful development not only in professional, but also in the intellectual, personal relations.

Commercial invasion into the higher school affects the core of the educational process, causing the erosion and corroding of its foundations, such as: the goals of education, the content of education and the methods (technology) of education.

1. Market-focused dominant belittles the general idea and the aim of education in the higher school, to be exact lack of principles and aimlessness is offered as the basis for new identity. Therefore the general vector of development is lost, there is no advance to over-personal values. The target image of the human as a creator is no good because of his impractical nature and is replaced with the pragmatic human-user whom problems of reproduction of society and culture do not worry.

2. In regard of content of higher education, the pragmatism of learning forces out the universal and fundamental content of training. The level of education standards is lowered to tightly applied things, and the higher school gradually goes down to the level of a craft school of mass preparation of a cognitariat and a consumtariat with a necessary set of competences. The intellectual basis of education is replaced by operational, which instead of knowledge forms technical skills. Mass character of education (as a result of its commercialization) finally forces out Humboldt's research university model, leads to weakening of the intellectual resource of the higher school which in most cases becomes absolutely available. Thus, the higher school actually stops being elite (in cultural sense), turning into a step after secondary education with necessary specialization for broad use. In regard of the education content there are not qualitative differences between secondary school and higher school.

3. As for technologies of education, the market logic demands application of the facilitated forms and methods of preparation, which suit for market mechanisms of supply and demand. The main goal of education is to prepare for effective functioning, "to pack into a profession", therefore it is necessary "to train" (i.e. to pass through system) as much as possible students with the smallest expenses. In this regard, universities stake on a wide use of formalized courses, detailed didactic software packages (educational complexes, modules, etc.), as much as possible detailed technologies of education possessing high "capacity" at the rate of number of students in unit of training hours. There is also a great need for distant and virtual educational forms on the basis of new informational and communicative technologies.

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## 4. Conclusions

The decline in the innovative potential of higher school at the present period is a logical effect of monopoly of market-focused dominant which violates universality of the higher school's cultural construction (aimed historically on eternal values) to conform to the current requirements of the market. Under the veil of commercial values, higher school can no longer discover the fundamental heights of scientific knowledge, does not require perfection, and does not contribute to the inner moral development of the personality. Education and knowledge, being transformed into subjects of use, lose the sacred and timeless essence, becoming consumer goods in the structures which are called today as universities, academies and so on. As a result we have crisis of the higher school which captured not only Russia, but also the Western world as a whole where its signs were shown slightly earlier

owing to natural dissemination of the economic values fed by traditions of capitalist society. The way out of this situation may be connected with the restoration of the civilizational corps of higher school on the basis of recognition of its poly-cultural status and the development of its basic socio-cultural dominants which are grouping round the values of personal knowledge and innovative development.

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Revista ESPACIOS. ISSN 0798 1015  
Vol. 39 (Nº 52) Year 2018

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