

# ANATOLY V. TORKUNOV

## Rector of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University)

The general title of our session seems both vague and challenging. In any case while we elaborate on knowledge based economy and general field of education we need to outline pattern we deal within. So, I let myself put forward a few theses upon role of education and universities, which could be used for further discussion.

1) *On global role for university education*. Change of education's perception - from "national security resource" towards "global resource" happened to be rush and prompt and, probably, deserves term "revolution".

Education tends to be more international and more open. This evidence should change our strategic and practical approach towards education, universities management and academic development priorities.

When it comes to strategy, I hope, we could count on joint efforts of the political leaders who seem to be more sensitive towards universities, students and academic life. For the first time, we witnessed educational issues put together with economic and political problems at the G8 St. Petersburg agenda.

2) *On education in world economy and "corporate universities"*. Modern education becomes a part of world economy and could be potentially described as a specified service market.

The economy brings new market-like rules and business "intrusion" to the universities. Though, with exception of limited venture business cases in American universities – business interference into academic sphere looks new and unprecedented. Previously business was happy to recruit university graduates brought up partially or fully on state (or respective family) money without any kind of backwards "compensation".

Nowadays corporations have more exquisite requirements when it comes to professional quality of universities' graduates. This need provokes their corporate coming to educational sphere. It is perfectly remarkable in contemporary Russia, where booming business interest towards universities is simply glaring<sup>1</sup>. Certainly, business, Russian as well, brings to education market oriented, practical approach. Purely financial business contribution makes universities less dependent on state.

At the same time corporation often bring their own "global" vision of education, which in its extremes has been transformed to "corporate university" concept.

Corporate university potentially could be a "niche" case, but not a pattern for general university development. However, we should learn to work with business, probably, on a basis of university interested business pulls. I mean a pull of companies, which could finance a part of university activities, with subsequent response from university, but without monopoly of a specific company over university life.

I admit that corporate university idea is much more popular in Russia and USA, than in Europe, meanwhile generality of business orientation trend in education is evident.

---

<sup>1</sup> By the way, together with Russian national business, Western corporations started coming to Russian universities. One of the glaring examples is BP corporation which started longstanding cooperation projects with 3 Russian leading Universities – MGIMO, Mendeleev and Gubkin Universities – which have been included to BP sponsored Great Universities network. "Rosneft" and "Rostekhnologii", in spite the fact of their semi-state character could be seen as business entities, which operate closely with MGIMO.

3) *On social and society building role of education.* No doubt, that we still have to learn how to combine “market” character of education with its core task – social formation. By the way, French term *formation* seems to be more precise to what we do at universities that simply “education”. Though, sometimes, the old Russian term *prosveshenie* – *enlightenment* is also applicable.

Social role of education is strongly linked with sustainable development of nations, especially those who are under transition. Education is an objective prerequisite for a country’s civil society existence, which presupposes deep understanding and knowledge of democracy roots and principles. This is not about preaching a Human Rights Declaration. Democratic choice in modern civil society relays upon strong base of social, economic, political and humanitarian disciplines available to the youth. Though, universities are able to influence even grown-ups, including politicians, working as professional retraining institutions or through university research and publishing.

Surprisingly, education could be even instrumentally useful when it comes? to practical applications???? of great political ideas. Do look, at role played by European College in Bruges for European integration, or at Fulbright exchange programme.

Besides, in such geographically vast and ethnically diversified countries as Russia or India, or China education plays role of inter-country integrator. Really, it is a unique possibility to bring and keep together in Moscow or Saint Petersburg people who were born in North Caucasus or Far East. 4-6 years spent in the same dormitory? bring absolutely new feeling? of the country, which in its turn puts down ethnic or religious prejudices, and, certainly, creates basic precondition for civil society.

4) *Internationalisation of education.* I want to bring your attention to the **internationalizing** role of contemporary universities. These social institutions are among the first who showed its openness to the world without ideological barriers. You perfectly remember that just academic exchange programs linked intellectuals from East and West in late 1980s. Logically, research and academic rapprochement has brought Europe to a new formal scenario in dealing among universities. I mean Bologna process, which in spite to all its peculiarities looks as a way towards really single educational dimension for all Europeans. Bologna message on wider academic mobility contributes to greater tolerance and even melting together future country elites, which is simply essential for the globalised world.

Practical mechanism for educational internationalization are university joint programs, mainly at a master level, with due legal status and certificates.

The essential part, still underdeveloped, in international educational cooperation is joint manuals writing. It is an imperative for social disciplines, which could potentially change to the better “*les images des autres*” (image of others).

5) *On academic community and strategic changes in education.* Unfortunately, the world academic community, still have no commonly agreed understanding of above mentioned terms and phenomena. Some kind of criteria appears from bureaucratic circles, either national or international ones, which doesn’t satisfy real needs of academic community. Education often suffers from “politically” imposed changes. We need to learn how to provoke changes ourselves and how to cope with what we dislike.

Leading universities, with their rich traditions and tremendously high academic and scientific records, happen to be in opposition towards objective modernization of educational requirements, while much wiser is to be engines of the modernization.

More efficient functioning of these “engines” presupposes patterns of different universities consortia. They must be numerous, diverse, interlinked and surely international. Voluntarily created networks are inherent to keep real university freedom and autonomy.

Such consortia could base upon existing links and, I can say that around this table we see potential partners for this kind of groupings. My university already closely and institutionally works with SciencePo and Freie Universität.

That is all I want to say, and hope my points will help our discussion.